This year has gone by very quickly, and here I am writing my final column! During that time I rediscovered what I have always observed during my years as an STLE member: Our members are a great group of professionals. This was apparent as I visited our local sections in the U.S. and Canada, meeting so many wonderful people.

During the last 12 months my focus has been on three major items; increasing STLE’s international presence, expanding our educational opportunities and forming a strategic plan for STLE’s future. Let me describe some of the activities in each area.

First, our international presence. It is extremely important that STLE demonstrates to our international members that we are aware of their particular needs. It is also important to our U.S. members that we stay keenly aware of international issues. Things that start in one country tend to work their way around the world—the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS) is but one example. Therefore, I made every effort to attend events such as the Metalworking Fluid Technical Forum in Shanghai, the UEIL Congress in Portugal, the OilDoc Conference and Exhibition in Germany, and the 8th International Conference on Industrial Tribology in India.

Research conducted for us by association consultancy Interel has shown an appetite by European countries for what STLE has to offer, but our name is not well positioned or recognized there. Consequently, we have formed a European Advisory Council to advise us on new initiatives and program development in Europe to help maximize our potential there. I am grateful to this group for all it is doing.

I am also extremely proud that the board approved our two newest sections in Latin America (Bolivia) and Ghana, West Africa.

In our second focus area of education, STLE continues to work on opportunities for our members, as well as our future members. As a former high school chemistry teacher, the most exciting thing about the 68th STLE Annual Meeting in Detroit is our tribology camp! Forty juniors and seniors from Cass Technical High School in Detroit enjoyed participating in 10 different tribology experiments. This is a first for STLE, and I thank Dr. Maureen Hunter and her team for putting on a very successful educational experience for these future tribologists!

I am also pleased to announce the approval of two new college-level student sections at Auburn University and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Canada. We welcome these new student members.

Finally, the activity that has kept our board busy during the last 12 months has been forming a strategic plan for STLE. These are objectives designed to take our organization into an intentional future. The plan has five broad goals: (1.) grow the STLE community, (2.) increase conference attendance, (3.) improve the expertise of technical professionals, (4.) become a stronger global advocate for tribology & lubrication and (5.) strengthen the STLE resource base. Within these five broad goals are 40 different supporting action steps. We are currently developing pathways to reach the desired end state for each by 2016. I am indebted to Vice President Rob Heverly and the members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their hard work preparing this roadmap into the future. It will be the work of the new board to ensure that we follow the plan.

As I leave this office, I want to thank the staff at STLE, led by Executive Director Ed Salek, for their cheerful and competent assistance; my wife Barbara who has been continuously supportive in everything I have done; and the management of Cimcool Fluid Technologies for allowing me the opportunity to serve as STLE president.

Lastly, thanks to all the faithful STLE volunteers for your support. Nothing happens without you! STLE is a great group of professionals, and I am proud to be associated with you!