

## “Why is Mr. Burns being so nice to me?”

— Homer Simpson

Rodney Andrews,  
CAER Director

On my desk I have a small plastic toy one of my kids received as a marketing aid in some fast food meal. It is a fairly typical movie promotional item: Mr. Burns from the Simpsons sitting in his chair with his usual evil grin. Since the kids have many (more than is probably healthy) of these things, they did not notice when it disappeared and took up residence on my desk. Why, you ask? Well, aside from the nostalgia value, pushing the button on the back results in a fairly annoying recording of his catch phrase “Excellent.” This, I find to be just ([push button now](#)) “Excellent” -- childish, annoying to those coming to see me, and with just the right tone to express approval of successful outcomes of our various activities in and around the university.

And so, with Mr. Burns precariously perched atop my teetering stack of unread trade journals, HR memos, and research manuscripts awaiting my overdue review, I would like to take the opportunity to pass out a few of those “Excellent’s.”

First, I want to thank everyone involved in the CAER’s 30th Anniversary activities. The Energy Summit was a real success, and I thank the sponsors (UK, Kentucky Governor’s Office of Energy Policy, and E.ON-US); speakers (especially our Master of Ceremonies, KentuckyHouse Majority Leader Rocky Adkins and keynote speaker, US Senator Jim Bunning); and our staff who worked on very tight deadlines to pull it all together despite my constant need to meddle and rearrange the program. The 30th Anniversary Dinner was a great social event, and we had the opportunity to thank many of the people who made the Center what it is today, including former Senator/Governor Wendell Ford, former Dean Jim Funk, and past state Secretaries of Energy, Bill Sturgill and Charles Haywood. I would especially like to pass on an “Excellent” to former state Secretary of Energy, CAER Advisory Board Chair, and chief CAER supporter, David Drake, who served as the evening’s host.

In terms of research accomplishments, despite a few technical hurdles and at



Mr. Burns - handy for expressing joy and annoying one’s coworkers.

least one ‘BANG’ loud enough to cause Kunlei Liu to levitate briefly, the Power Generation and Utility Fuels group has commissioned its pilot scale CO<sub>2</sub> scrubber system. This unique capability will allow CAER to play an active role in addressing the needs of the utility industry. Similarly, the Carbon Materials program has brought its new carbon fiber facility online and is churning out miles (literally) of new materials. In both cases, an “Excellent” is in order.

Another important accomplishment for the Center is the education and creation of new scientists and engineers -- the future of our industry. This has been a banner year for the Center, and an “Excellent” is due to Matt Weisenberger, Courtney Fisk, Brock Marrs, Link Shumaker, and Sarah Mardon. Despite our best efforts to keep them in permanent servitude, they have all managed to graduate. We also undertook to teach the teachers, with CAER staff hosting a workshop for local teachers to demonstrate experiments that they can then perform in their classrooms to illustrate scientific principals using energy-related examples. Not only was it “Excellent,” but also electrifying, heated, and only a tad bit sticky.

This has also been a year for “Excellent” adventures (with no reference intended to the Keanu Reeves *actus reus*), including a recently-completed tour with federal legislative staff. The tour included stops at a Lafarge wallboard

plant, the Eastern Kentucky Power Cooperative’s Spurlock Power Station, Charah’s ash processing facility, the Kentucky Rural Energy Consortium meeting, a tour of Süd Chemie’s Louisville facilities and Owensboro Grain’s new biodiesel plant. The efforts of UK Federal Relations Director, Bill Schweri, who arranged the tour, CAER staff who gave tours and dealt with last minute changes in schedules, and our very generous industrial hosts all deserve an “Excellent.” Such opportunities to educate and inform on energy issues are a key aspect of the Center’s mission, and this fall’s “Kentucky Energy Tour” was a great success due to their efforts.

Lastly, and most importantly, the staff members at CAER deserve the loudest “Excellent” for their hard work, determination, and genuine desire to accomplish something meaningful for the people of Kentucky. Thirty years is a long time for an organization such as CAER to keep focus and remain relevant, but the staff, students, and faculty associates working at the Center have managed to do just that. And now, with energy again in every newscast and political stump speech, the Center is moving ahead with programs focused on developing technologies to address the energy and environmental challenges we face.

“Excellent.” 