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ACerS and USACA receive two-year extension funding for hypersonic materials training program

WESTERVILLE, OHIO—The American Ceramic Society (ACerS) and the United States Advanced Ceramics Association (USACA) have been awarded a two-year extension of funding from the Department of Defense (DOD) for their successful "Professional Development for Hypersonic Materials" program. This funding will enable both ACerS and USACA to build upon the strong foundation established through the January 2024 contract award under DOD's Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment (IBAS) Program.

The original program, part of IBAS' National Imperative for Industrial Skills initiative, attracted more than 220 participants from industry, government, and academia, and delivered three full-day short courses and two half-day online courses, focusing on materials for hypersonic applications. The two-year extension will expand this successful model with a comprehensive training approach targeting workforce development in this critical national defense sector.

"The overwhelmingly positive response to our initial program demonstrated the significant demand for specialized knowledge in these advanced materials," says Mark Mecklenborg, ACerS executive director. "Nearly 60% of attendees came from prime contractors or their supply chains, with another 25% representing military and government entities, validating our approach to workforce development in this critical field."

The extension program has three primary objectives: (1) reach new industry and agency audiences not currently served, (2) increase visibility of hypersonic materials workforce development through strategic marketing, and (3) introduce K–12 students to materials science career opportunities, including hypersonics.

"This ACerS–USACA partnership fills a critical knowledge gap for engineers, designers, technicians, and allied personnel working with hypersonic materials," says Ken Wetzel, USACA executive director. "This extension represents more than additional training. It's a comprehensive approach to building a sustainable hypersonics workforce pipeline. By combining professional development for today's engineers with outreach to tomorrow's talent through K–12 initiatives, we're creating a long-term strategy to ensure American leadership in hypersonic materials science and engineering for decades to come."

The expanded program includes 18 planned activities over two years, featuring conference-based short courses, regional in-person training, virtual courses, in-house training at prime contractors and DOD facilities, and K–12 teacher training workshops in collaboration with the Ceramic and Glass Industry Foundation (CGIF).

Questions and queries to get involved in the program can be directed to Amanda Engen, ACerS director of communications and workforce development, at aengen@ceramics.org.

About ACerS

Founded in 1898, The American Ceramic Society is the leading professional membership organization for ceramic and materials scientists, engineers, researchers, manufacturers, plant personnel, educators, and students. The Society serves more than 10,000 members from more than 70 countries. For more information, visit <https://ceramics.org>.

About USACA

Founded in 1985, the U.S. Advanced Ceramics Association champions the business interests of the advanced ceramic producers and end-users. Its members range from the largest U.S. industrial companies to smaller corporations dedicated to the manufacture of advanced ceramic products. For more information, visit <https://advancedceramics.org>.

About CGIF

In 2014, ACerS created the Ceramic and Glass Industry Foundation to attract, inspire, and support the next generation of ceramic and glass professionals. The CGIF helps students of all ages discover ceramic and glass science and encourages them to pursue careers in materials science through a variety of programs. For more information about teacher training workshops and other educational resources, visit <https://foundation.ceramics.org>.

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