

Joseph A. Heppert, Ph.D.

Associate Vice Chancellor for Research
Professor of Chemistry
University of Kansas

Dr. Heppert is currently Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of Kansas (KU), and Vice President for the Kansas University Center for Research, Inc. a 501(c)3 corporation formed to administer externally sponsored research on behalf of KU. In these roles Dr. Heppert provides oversight for many of the University's Centers and Institutes, all of KU's Core Research Laboratories, research facilities and infrastructure, and the Office of Research Development. He plays a key role in setting priorities for research investment, and for establishing policy on research compliance and institutional collaboration with the private sector. He chaired the KU Chemistry Department from 2005-2009 and was the founding director of the University's Center for Science Education from 2001-2009. Dr. Heppert was chair of KU's University and Faculty Senate Executive Committees in 2006. He is a Fellow of the American Chemical Society, and currently serves as vice chair the American Chemical Society's Committee on Budget and Finance.

Dr. Heppert's initial research focused on organo transition metal chemistry. This research resulted in the isolation and characterization of the first class of air stable terminal transition metal carbide compounds. These compounds could be an important link in understanding the conversion of CO and H₂ produced from coal into hydrocarbon fuels. More recently, Dr. Heppert's group has investigated the mechanism of formation and reactivity of these unique compounds. These studies are relevant to understanding chemical processes catalyzed by ruthenium alkylidene complexes. Ruthenium alkylidene catalysts have become a powerful tool in the selective synthesis of a range of organic molecules, including a wide variety of new biologically active compounds.

Dr. Heppert has also been active in projects to improve science teaching and science teacher preparation. He is past chair of the American Chemical Society's Committee on Education. In this role he testified before the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Science and the National Science Board on science education policy issues. He currently works with the KU Center for Teaching Excellence on the introduction of innovative teaching strategies in the natural sciences. Dr. Heppert was the lead investigator of a National Mathematics and Science Institute (NMSI) award to replicate the UTeach model of math and science teacher preparation at KU. UKanTeach currently has over 200 enrollees at the beginning of its seventh year of implementation. He also is leading efforts to create a regional Educational Research Consortium drawing on the expertise of social science, science and education researchers from KU, the University of Missouri-Columbia, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and Kansas State University. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation has provided major funding in support of this program.

Dr. Heppert received a B.S. in Chemistry from San Jose State University in 1978, where he participated in heavy elements research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He was awarded a Ph.D. in Inorganic Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1982, studying under Donald Garies. He completed postdoctoral training at Indiana University under the direction of Dr. Malcolm Chisholm. He joined the chemistry faculty KU in 1985.