

COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Greetings from the Department of Chemistry! I am happy to share news from the Department since late Fall 2024. This past year has undoubtedly been challenging, yet there are legitimate reasons to be optimistic. Faculty and staff hiring has been robust with 17 tenure-track faculty lines either filled or in various stages of planning since Fall 2023. In addition, the past two years have seen record levels of graduate student interest and recruitment. Many efforts, in partnership with numerous campus colleagues, are doing much to raise the Department's stature so as to achieve an eventual and sustainable top-30 ranking on the national stage.

Thanks again to all of you who supported our 2025 [Giving Day](#) effort – we successfully raised \$9,257 for our Excellence Fund! Many thanks to all who donated as well as to the efforts of **Norma Reyes, Quinton Bruch, and Harini Jaishanker**, who coordinated our Giving Day campaign. Please join us again this March! Also, in addition to the **acquisition of notable gifts** from Drs. Novick, Ojima, and Aron **totaling more than \$250K**, an additional **\$250K anonymous donation** was made to the Lauterbur Frontier Research Endowment Fund last fall. The Department was also very pleased to have acquired **Jacob Bigeleisen's historical memorabilia** from his family and are planning its display.

To support our students while protecting and promoting our research and teaching missions, we held multiple town halls and conversations with upper administration over the last several months to ensure that elevators, labs, and offices were renovated as necessary. I'm pleased to share that we've upgraded 5th floor **graduate student lounges, and faculty/emeritus faculty lounges (room 314)**. We also installed functional **water fountains** on every floor and provided updates to **student and faculty offices** on the 6th & 7th floors.

Enjoy reading this issue and feel free to share with us, too! Send us a note about your current activities so we can highlight your news on our website and in our next newsletter. Also, connect with us on our [LinkedIn page](#).

We look forward to meeting up with you soon, perhaps at Alumni Weekend or an upcoming ACS meeting. All the best for peace, prosperity, and success in the new year!

With warmest wishes and regards,

Stan

Stanislaus Wong
Distinguished Professor and Chair

COMMUNICATIONS

Faculty and Staff News

Welcome to Assistant Professor **Jill Alty** who started in Fall 2025. [Jill](#) leverages fundamental organic chemistry reactions to drive material transformations during polymerization, upon stimulus, or post-use to interrogate outstanding biological questions.

This semester, we are also excited to welcome **Xiaoji Xu** and **Prakriti Joshi**. [Xiaoji](#) focuses on advancing nanoscale imaging and spectroscopy techniques to study the chemical and physical properties of materials at the nanometer scale, while [Prakriti](#) analyzes the spatial direction of energy flow in 2D materials which is critical for developing next-generation optoelectronic and thermoelectric applications.

Christopher Johnson was promoted to Full Professor in September 2025, and we recently gained new affiliated faculty members, namely **Ivet Bahar**, Laufer Center director and Biochemistry and Structural Biology; **Sara Mason**, Theory Group Leader, Center for Functional Nanomaterials at BNL; and **Michael Airola**, Biochemistry & Cell Biology.

We also welcomed new staff including **Beniam Berhane** (mass spectrometry director overseeing six instruments), **Jasmine Gomez** (general chemistry lab technician), **Jennifer Dalton Singh** (student affairs), **Lisa Mitchell** (business manager), and **Hayley Murphy** (lab technician).

Thanks to former lab technician **Patti Nolan**, who retired in April 2025, and to **April Musano**, who retired in October 2025, for their skill and dedication to the Department. We wish them well!

In November 2025, the Department was pleased to announce the **Dr. Michelle Millar Endowed Chair in Molecular Inorganic Chemistry**, a position established by the thoughtfulness and generosity of emeritus professor, **Dr. Stephen Koch**, in honor of his late wife. The successful candidate is expected to have trained in fundamental molecular inorganic chemistry studies in the vein of Richard Holm and F. Albert Cotton.

Faculty and Staff Highlights

Katherine Aubrecht: [2024 American Association for the Advancement of Science \(AAAS\) Fellow](#)

Surita Bhatia: [2024 Stony Award winner in the SB You award category](#).

Elizabeth Boon: 2025 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities

Isaac Carrico: [2025 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching](#)

Ken Dill: [Biophysical Society's 2026 Founders Award](#)

Brian Horan: 2025 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Adjunct Teaching

Lobna Kahek: [2025 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Professional Service](#)

COMMUNICATIONS

Benjamin Levine: Vice Chair Elect of the ACS PHYS division for 2025; he will become the chair of the division in 2028.

Jeffrey Lipshultz: "first article" featured in [Angewandte Chemie](#)

Ping Liu: named to the [2024](#) & [2025 Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers list](#)

Iwao Ojima: recognized for [his work with Martin Kaczocha on the drug compound ART 26.12 \(licensed by Artelo Biosciences\)](#), as highlighted on Association of American Universities' website

Carlos Simmerling: his team's *Journal of Chemical Theory and Computation* 2015, v.11 (8), 3696-3713 article received over 10,000 citations

Esther Takeuchi: featured in a [National Inventors Hall of Fame documentary on transformative technologies](#) and profiled in the [Times Beacon Record](#)

Kenneth Takeuchi: 2025 Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC)

Kimberly Toell: [2025 College of Arts and Sciences Staff Excellence Award](#)

Stanislaus Wong: 2025 recipient of the Outstanding Four-Year Graduate College and University Chemistry Faculty Teaching Award (NY ACS section)

Profs. **Iwao Ojima** and **Benjamin Hsiao** were lauded for their student mentorship efforts in the [Simons Summer Research program](#)

Elizabeth Boon and **Benjamin Hsiao** were recognized as SBU faculty mentors of [Regeneron STS Scholars](#)

Noteworthy Grants

A team led by **Robert Grubbs** along with co-PIs **Benjamin S. Hsiao**, **Jeffrey Lipshultz**, **Quinton Bruch**, and **Jeffrey Gustafson** was successfully awarded an MRI grant, "Track 3 Acquisition of Helium Recovery Equipment For a Sustainable NMR Facility for Campus-wide Research & Education," starting in Fall 2025. **Elizabeth Boon** and **Jessica Seeliger** had a successful renewal of their \$2.3M NIH training grant, which funds the Chemical Biology training program (CBTP) and will support 11 students per year.

Student Highlights

Jason Withorn (Boon Group): President's Award to Distinguished Doctoral Students

Luke Cacic, Samantha Horgan, and Brendon Persad: Inaugural 2025 Senior Undergraduate Ronald T. Garry Awards for academic merit and volunteerism

Thomas Knoll (Levine Group): 2025 American Chemical Society Pride Merck Graduate Research Award

Zain Zaidi (Levine Group): [2025 Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence](#)

COMMUNICATIONS

Event Highlights

In addition to our 18th and 19th annual ICB&DD symposia covering "[Frontiers of Neuroscience and Drug Discovery](#)" and "[Drug Discovery & AI: Advances and New Directions](#)", respectively, a number of **named lectures** were successfully held over the course of the year:

- **Franklin** (Jeffrey R. Long, University of California, Berkeley, "Cooperative Adsorption and Gas Separations in Metal–Organic Frameworks")
- **Ojima** (Véronique Gouverneur, University of Oxford, "Rethinking Fluorine Chemistry with Global Challenges in Mind")
- CAS **Sir Run Run Shaw** lectures (Shelley D. Minter, Missouri University of Science and Technology; "Bioelectrocatalysis for Electrosynthesis;" and Sarah E. Reisman, California Institute of Technology, "Necessity Is the Mother of Invention: Natural Products and the Chemistry They Inspire")

We also celebrated **Professor Iwao Ojima's 80th birthday** with a [two-day symposium](#) in June 2025, featuring talks from alumni and distinguished guests working at the interface of chemistry, biology, and medicine.

2nd Annual Student-Led Research Symposia Organized by the [Graduate Chemical Society \(GCS\)](#), this series celebrated the amazing research done across all fields of chemistry by students at the graduate, undergraduate, and high school level.

Convocation 2025

Our celebration featured a discussion by Dr. **Songnian Lin**, PhD alumnus of the Ojima Group. Talks were given by graduate students **Annapoorani Kobuvayur Hariharan** and **Jason Withorn** as well as undergraduate **Zain Zaidi**. Warmest congratulations to all graduates and their families!

Chemistry Research Day 2025

As always, the event sparked active and broad Departmental engagement with awards given for best research-related posters and photos. **Benjamin Hsiao** spoke on his group's research theme, "[From Water Purification to Food - My Nanomaterials Journey to Sustainability](#)."

5K Challenge with the Department of Physics and Astronomy This annual event promotes inter-departmental collaboration and socialization! Though P&A won this year, faculty, staff, postdoc, and student participants from Chemistry made a memorable impression, with several winning their individual categories.

Arts Everywhere: Showcasing Transformation from Chemistry to Art.

The Department was pleased to be part of the [soft launch of this CAS initiative](#) last November. The exhibition, curated by art history majors

COMMUNICATIONS

Rebecca Zhang and Ynuel Spencer, featured works by four undergraduate student artists, as visual metaphors for change, connection, and material transformation. The works will remain in the Chemistry Building Lobby through May 2026.

Visit our website

We've made significant updates to [our website](#) to improve the visitor experience! We've added links to group websites and faculty Google Scholar pages, and also articulated our research focus into relatable, non-divisional areas that coincide with the strategic priorities of the University in artificial intelligence, quantum information, global health, and climate science. We plan to share Alumni news, announcements, and highlights in the near future.

Coming soon: In collaboration with CAS, the Department commissioned a series of short videos featuring four Chemistry graduate students. The videos will soon be posted to our website to assist with student recruiting, define Departmental identity, and improve student morale.