2008–2009 Chemistry Staff Recognition

On April 1, 2009, the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences held a ceremony and reception to honor staff who have attained between 5 and 30 years of continuous service to the University of Florida. Twelve staff members from the Department of Chemistry were recognized for having achieved one of these milestones. Sara Klossner (5), Antoinette Knight (5), Joey Lott (5), Christy Nguyen (5), Melinda Olszak (10), Lawrence Hartley (15), Beverly Lisk (20), Joe Shalosky (20), Glennis Brown (25), Maribel Lisk (25), Gwen McCann (25), and Steven Miles (30). Congratulations and thank you for your dedicated service to our department.
Professor Rodney J. Bartlett received the prestigious 2008 Schrödinger Medal of The World Association of Theoretical and Computational Chemists. Bartlett was awarded the medal for the systematic development of correlated wave function methods, especially many-body perturbation theory and coupled cluster theory. The Schrödinger Medal, recognizing the world’s most outstanding theoretical or computational chemists, was presented at the WATOC 2008 World Congress held in Sydney, Australia, in September 2008.

**Undergraduate Awards: Congratulations!**

Many congratulations to our recent BS graduates and also to our undergraduate award winners.

On the first Sunday in May, 87 students received their bachelor’s degrees, 28 in the standard chemistry program and 59 in the biochemistry track. This record number adds to the 28 Summer 2008 and 18 Fall 2008 graduates to give 133 new chemistry graduates over the entire academic year. The diplomas of 69 of these graduates also bear the words cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude. We are all very proud of our thriving presence in the Gator Nation.

With so many students having excellent records in both course work and undergraduate research, we faced the difficult (but happy) task of choosing the outstanding graduating senior for the Colonel Allen R. and Margaret G. Crow Award. In the end, the department decided to split the award among three graduates: Nathan Strutt, Frank (Chris) Curran, and Jennifer Mattler.

Nathan Strutt, who performed undergraduate research under Mike Scott, is headed to Northwestern University for graduate studies in nanotechnology under Prof. Fraser Stoddart. Jennifer Mattler’s undergraduate research advisor was Ron Castellano. She will work on her Ph.D. in synthetic organic chemistry at Stanford University under Prof. Paul Wender. Chris Curran, a major in our biochemistry track, is taking a two-year hiatus from his academic pursuits to serve in Teach for America. Chris worked with Lisa McElwee-White on his undergraduate thesis, and he eventually will seek a Ph.D. in chemistry.

Every year, the department also awards several outstanding junior chemistry majors with funding provided by donations from Howard and Brenda Sheridan, Joseph P. Lafornara, and Gordon M. and Joyce L. Smith. The 2009 winners are Srinivasan Venkatesan, Travis Lajoie, Alex Wang, and Laura Fishwick. Congratulations to Srinivasan, Travis, Alex, Laura, and our many other excellent undergraduates.

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A note from The Chair

We spent a lot of time watching the newspapers this year, wondering like everyone else about the state and national economy. While waiting for the economic picture to clear, we’ve continued to move forward. Let me update you on some exciting developments.

You may have heard that we have a new building planned for the corner of University Avenue and Buckman Drive (17th street). Tentatively called the Chemistry/Chemical Biology Building, it will be the new home to general and organic teaching labs as well as chemical biology and organic graduate research space. The architects are here as I write this, and we hope to have renderings and plans available for viewing very soon.

We made three successful tenure track faculty offers this spring. Professors Stephen Bruner, Rebecca Butcher, and David Wei will be joining us during the 2009-2010 academic year. Steve will be moving from Boston College, where he is currently an Associate Professor and Rebecca is coming from a postdoctoral appointment at Harvard Medical School. Both Rebecca and Steve are biochemists. David, currently a Postdoc at Northwestern, is a physical/materials chemist. We look forward to welcoming our new colleagues.

The students continue to flock to chemistry! As reported elsewhere in our newsletter, we had a record number of graduates this academic year. Among high numbers, the incredibly high quality of our students is really keeping us on our toes. We are adding several new instruments to our research and teaching labs. Khalil Abboud along with several other faculty colleagues were successful with a major instrumentation proposal to the National Science Foundation for a new single crystal X-ray diffractometer. We also acquired a second 500 MHz NMR this year. In the teaching labs, we added two new FTIR spectrometers for the organic labs and an ion chromatograph to the upper level instrumental analysis laboratory.

Incidentally, our efforts to acquire all the new instrumentation this year started with alumni donations. We were able to use these resources to leverage additional funding through grants or university matching to make very significant enhancements to our program.

We are grateful for continued support by our alumni and friends, which enables us to look forward, ever increasing the quality and competitiveness of our teaching and research endeavors.

—Daniel R. Talham