The chemical bond

SPRING 2010
University of Florida
Department of Chemistry

The Spring 2009 Cover Story

Brings Back Memories…

I spent many hours working in that Movie Lab preparing the materials for Dr. Baxter’s classes. I had graduated that summer and had a three-month wait to go onto active duty through the ROTC program. Since my dad (Dr. Woodson C. Tucker, Jr.) and Dr. Baxter split the teaching of Freshman Chemistry classes for many years, I was well known in Leigh Hall. I had the job of running the planned experiments under the movie lights so we could get the timing right. Since the lights drove the counter top up to about 100+ degrees F, it changed the length of time the experiment took to occur and the chemicals had to have the right strengths if we wanted a delayed reaction. It was exciting to see what would happen. In one case it worked as advertised. The freshly prepared reagent, when mixed with another solution, resulted in a reaction that created a gas bubble. The bubble rose through the condenser and into the collection jar. The jar was filled to the brim when the reaction was complete. We ran the experiment many times and each reaction was different. I learned to expect the unexpected and was always prepared for the unexpected. I look forward to the summer and find a chance to work to spend some time on the chemistry department’s campus.

—Woodson C. Tucker III, class of ’58 BS with a group Major Chemistry, Math, and Physics.
Welcome New Faculty

Dr. Rebecca A. Butcher joined our department on January 31, 2010 as an Assistant Professor in our Biochemistry Division. Her research interests are focused on identifying novel natural products from biological systems and studying their biosynthesis and mechanism of action. Rebecca received her Ph.D. from Harvard University with Stuart Schreiber, during which time she was supported by an NSF Graduate Fellowship. She received further training as a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard Medical School with Jon Clardy, on an NIH Postdoctoral Fellowship. She was also awarded a prestigious NIH Pathway to Independence award which funded the last year of her postdoctoral studies and will also provide funding during her first three years as an assistant professor. She is developing new undergraduate and graduate coursework in the field of chemical biology, the use of chemical methods to study biological systems and processes.

Dr. Steven D. Bruner joined our department on December 31, 2009 as an Associate Professor in our Biochemistry Division. Steven received his Ph.D. from Harvard University with Prof. Gregory Verdine studying repair of DNA and trained as a post-doctoral associate with Prof. Chris Walsh at Harvard Medical School examining the biosynthesis of antibiotics. Steve joined Boston College as an Assistant Professor in 2003 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2009. His research program incorporates an interdisciplinary approach using synthetic organic chemistry, protein structural biology and mechanistic enzymology to understand the biosynthesis of antibiotic and anticancer natural products. Steve’s research accomplishments have been acknowledged with the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Fund Scholar Award, Camille Dreyfus New Faculty Award and an NSF CAREER award.

CHOICES FOR SUCCESS

On February 22nd, Dr. Howard Sheridan visited our department and presented a talk entitled, “Choices for Success—Watch the Animals.” Dr. Sheridan presented his own spectacular photographs of wildlife behaviors to illustrate choices affecting our professional, personal, and business life and their impact on our careers. Dr. Sheridan received his BS in chemistry at UF in 1965 and graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine in 1969.
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—Woodson C. Tucker III, class of ’58 BS with a group Major Chemistry, Math, and Physics.