

Department of Chemistry

Newsletter, April 2021

Greetings from the [Department of Chemistry](#)! It is now more than a year since the pandemic started, and I am writing to give you an update on events and activities in the Department. The spring semester is much like the fall semester -- most of our courses are online, with a few of the smaller courses in-person. General Chemistry Lab 2 (CHE134 ~1400 students) is being taught remotely using kits prepared by Dr. Alicia Mullaley, while organic and pchem labs are in-person. Although classes this summer will also be online, the University is planning to be back fully in-person in the fall.

Research groups have most of their personnel back in the building with everyone following social distancing and PPE requirements. We are indebted to Prof. Rich Reeder, Vice President for Research, who has worked tirelessly to enable research to restart following the shutdown last year. I am also very proud of how all the Chemistry faculty, staff and students have worked together to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the research and education mission of the Department of Chemistry.

April 15 was decision day for students offered admission to the Chemistry graduate program. About 19 students deferred from last year and we are aiming for an overall class size of about 40 students. This is the culmination of much work by many faculty and staff including our recruitment committee, co-chaired by Profs. Eszter Boros and Chris Johnson, and our admissions committee chaired by Prof. Barney Grubbs.

Chemistry Research Day

Chemistry Research Day 2021



Elizabeth Boon



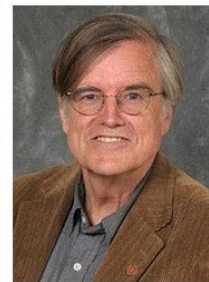
Karena Chapman



Melanie Chiu



Benjamin Levine



Stephen Koch

Each year we celebrate research in the department at Chemistry Research Day, in which students and postdocs present posters of their research in the Student Activities Center. This year we moved Chemistry Research Day to the spring and combined it with a virtual recruitment event aimed at encouraging admitted students to accept their offers. One advantage of holding the event online is that students from all over the world could join the event. Profs. Elizabeth Boon (Chemical Biology), Karena Chapman (Materials/Inorganic

Chemistry), Melanie Chiu (Organic/Polymer chemistry), and Benjamin Levine (Physical/Computational Chemistry) presented their exciting research in the morning followed by a scientifically stimulating poster session in the afternoon. The day concluded with a keynote lecture in which Prof. Stephen Koch, who is retiring at the end of the semester, shared his deep love of chemistry and highlighted his life-long contributions to the scientific community. The day wrapped up with a Departmental Social on SpatialChat.

We are having a very active virtual Departmental seminar series! The Bridging Science and Diversity: An Anti-Discrimination Action Committee hosted Prof. Yamuna Krishnan from the University of Chicago, who gave a seminar, "Quantitative Chemical Imaging in Immune Cells." Prof. Krishnan also shared her career path and challenges with students and postdocs in a special career talk with students and postdocs.

We continuously strive to remain connected with our community. To that end, I recently gave a highly informative presentation about the development of the Department, the quality of its research and how we have gone #FarBeyond to build on the legacy of Nobel Laureate Paul Lauterbur. This talk was sponsored by the Stony Brook Alumni Association and the College of Arts and Sciences. Check out the recording [here](#).

Our students, faculty, staff continue to excel!!

Two of our graduate students, Gabrielle Elise Kamm (Prof. Chapman) and Madani Ahmed Khan (Profs. Drueckhammer/Hsiao) recently received the first-ever SUNY Graduate Research Empowering and Accelerating Talent ([GREAT](#)) awards, which provides \$5,000 to each student in flexible funds for research expenses, professional development, and supplemental stipend support. We are so proud of them to receive this honor!



The latest issue of [Stony Brook University Magazine](#) launched earlier this month, featuring Professor [Carlos Simmerling's](#) path to SBU, his dedication to student mentorship, and his groundbreaking research (see below), as well as an homage to the late Professor Patrick Herley through an [annual joke](#) told at the Department of Chemistry's Convocation each May.

In addition, a few of the accolades over the past six months include:

- Alumni news! Dr. Tianbo Liu, PhD 1999, (Prof. Benjamin Chu, advisor) was elected as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Prof. Eszter Boros was awarded a Jonathan L. Sessler Fellowship by the American Chemical Society, which recognizes emerging leaders in bioinorganic and medicinal inorganic chemistry.

- Prof. Peter Khalifah was featured in a [news article](#) on a computation-enabled technique to decipher the atomic-level structure of materials, which he and his collaborators used to solve the structure of a material that shows promise for shuttling ions through sodium-ion batteries.



Prof. Peter Khalifah

- Dr. Zachary Katsamanis was elevated to Senior Lecturer.
- [Prof. Surita Bhatia](#) was selected as a [Fellow of the Society of Rheology](#) and of the [American Institute of Chemical Engineers](#) (AIChE)
- Prof. Carlos Simmerling and his team were winners of the Gordon Bell Prize for their work on [COVID-19](#). The prize is commonly referred to as the Nobel Prize of Supercomputing and recognizes outstanding achievement in high-performance computing applications.
- Distinguished Prof. Iwao Ojima, who throughout his research career has had numerous ties to the European scientific community, was [elected to the European Academy of Sciences](#).
- Dr Grzegorz Kowzan, a postdoc working with Prof. Tom Allison, was awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship from the European Commission.

- Prof. Chris Johnson was the winner of the 2021 Journal of Physical Chemistry (JPC) and Physical Chemistry Division of the American Chemical Society (PHYS) lectureship.
- Prof. Chris Johnson was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure.
- Prof. Benjamin Levine, an IACS Endowed Chair in Chemistry, was granted tenure.

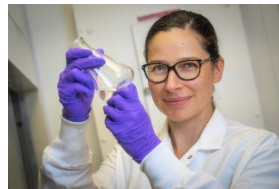


Prof. Chris Johnson Prof. Benjamin Levine

- Distinguished Professor [Esther Takeuchi](#) was elected as a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences
- Gaurav Sharma, an undergraduate in Elizabeth Boon's lab, was selected to receive the Dr. Kenneth M. Nicholas Undergraduate Fellowship for Summer 2021. Gaurav is currently studying the chemical biology of quorum sensing pathways in bacteria. Gaurav currently has a 4.0 GPA and wants to pursue medical school.
- Daniel Amarante has been selected as a recipient of the 2021 College of Arts and Sciences Godfrey Excellence in Teaching Award.
- April Musano, Director of Chemistry Facilities and Operations, is a recipient of a 2021 College of Arts & Sciences Staff Excellence Award. April has done an amazing job supporting our Department and our community of faculty, students, and staff.

Finally, we are looking forward to two events in the near future:

- Prof. Eszter Boros is one of four finalists in the 2021 Stony Brook University [Discovery Prize](#), on April 28. [Watch Eszter describe her research](#) and join us for the [live event!](#)
- The University plans to hold 10 in-person commencement ceremonies the week of May 17; Chemistry's ceremony will be held on Wednesday, May 19. The Department will also hold our own virtual ceremony on May 21 as we did last year. Dr. Ingrid Yin (PhD 2002, Sampson), Co-Founder, Managing Partner and Portfolio Manager at MayTech Global Investments will be this year's Department commencement speaker.



Prof. Eszter Boros



Dr. Ingrid Yin

As always, we are grateful for the support of our alumni and friends, as so many of the activities and accomplishments of our Department are made possible through your support. If you are interested in learning how you can [support our students](#) and Department initiatives, please feel free to contact Hodan Hassan, Assistant Dean of Advancement at 631.632.4055.

We hope you will also connect or reconnect with our faculty soon. We'd love to hear your news, hear how you're doing, where your career has taken you, and any life events you would like to share. And if you haven't already, please join our alumni group on LinkedIn, [SBUChemistry Alumni](#), so that we can stay connected.

Best wishes,

Pete
Peter J. Tonge
Distinguished Professor of Chemistry
Chair, Department of Chemistry