A DEDICATION TO **excellence AND innovation...**

In the chemical sciences has always defined Illinois chemistry, from educating the next generation of brilliant chemists to ground-breaking research that pushes forward the frontiers of modern chemistry. This 2021-22 overview shares some of the high points in that tradition of excellence that continues today.

Just over 180 students graduated this past year increasing our alumni network to 9,778 people spread across 54 countries around the globe, and the department welcomed another 166 new students in Fall 2022, both undergraduate chemistry majors and graduate students. The number of incoming undergraduate majors is the highest in at least five years, and the Class of 2026 includes 21 first-generation college students and 19 students who are underrepresented in the chemical sciences. Recently, UIUC was designated a First-Gen Forward Institution, and received the 2022 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award.

I am so thankful for our alumni and friends who so generously support our faculty, students, programs and research. The $7.7 million in gifts received this past year was also the most in five years.

And the number of research projects plus the funding for those projects was the highest in five years – a result of the ingenuity, enthusiasm, and dedication of our faculty members, post-doctoral researchers and students.

Those 48 research projects that received new funding embody a rich variety of visionary interdisciplinary science, a hallmark of our department for decades. The projects include efforts to explore molecular therapeutics for cystic fibrosis, genomics-accelerated natural product discovery, machine learning for quantum chemistry, new ways to do energy conversion, more efficient catalysis and drug discovery and nano-target fabrication for radioisotope production. Other researchers are investigating how to combat neurotoxic effects of dietary mercury, harness light and model endosymbiosis to produce natural products, develop degradable polymer materials for recycling and upcycling, develop new breast cancer treatments, discover new methods and materials to capture and release carbon dioxide, develop a saliva-based diagnostic test to detect oral cancer, and optimize materials properties by exploiting the defects inherent in the materials.

As both Head and an alum, I am proud to be part of this diverse scientific community at Illinois and hope you enjoy reviewing this summary of our achievements over the past year.

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### 2021-22 HIGHLIGHTS

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<td><strong>JULY</strong></td>
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### 2022 Timeline

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**Catherine J. Murphy**

Head, Department of Chemistry

Larry K. Faulkner Endowed Chair in Chemistry

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**Alumni Career Panel: Chemistry and Beyond**

- Dr. Karla Ewalt (BS, ’89); Dr. Katlyn Gray (PhD, ’11); and Dr. Nicholas Ndiege (PhD, ’08)
- Tepora Su’a joins Department as Assistant Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Chemical Sciences

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**2022 Achievement Highlights**

- Mei Shen wins Scialog Award
- Lisa Olshansky named a Vallee Scholar
- During Homecoming Week, the Alumni Association honors inaugural Young Alumni Award winner Markita Landry (PhD, ’12)
- Jonathan Sweedler, Rohit Bhargava make list of world’s top analytical scientists
- Alumnii Lecture featuring Dr. Robert Yu (PhD, ’67, Carter); he later passed away on May 18, 2022

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**2022 Research Highlights**

- Danielle Loving, Alexis Lower, Marya Omelas, and Amy Wahlmeier named National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships
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**2022 Recognition Highlights**

- Mei Shen wins Scialog Award
- Lisa Olshansky named a Vallee Scholar
- Martin Burke elected American Association for the Advancement of Science fellow
- Lisa Olshansky named a Cottrell Scholar
- Bronze Tablet graduates: Evan Dray, Andrew Feng, Austin Huang, and Jacob Wolf
- Douglas Mitchell honored as John Witt Professorship in Chemistry during Investiture ceremony
- Ralph Nuzzo named Kavli Prize Laureate in Nanoscience
- Catherine Murphy wins Royal Society of Chemistry prize
Chemistry at Illinois graduates land first destinations

A specialized chemistry major in the Class of 2022, Maya Chattoraj graduated in May and is now a PhD student at MIT. Her goal is to have a career in research combining materials and physical chemistry with projects that combat environmental issues. Chattoraj was an undergraduate researcher in the Department of Chemistry this past year. In the lab of professor Prashant Jain, Chattoraj worked on the electroreduction of CO2 to value-added chemical fuels using intermetallic gold-copper nanoparticles as the catalyst. She learned to synthesize nanoparticles, characterizing them with ultraviolet-visible spectroscopy, X-ray power diffraction, and transition electron microscopy, ran CO2 reduction reactions and used gas chromatography to identify products. She said she chose to attend UIUC in chemistry because of the “amazing research opportunities” available to undergraduates.

“My research work has given me the opportunity to learn a wide variety of skills under the guidance of my advisor and my graduate student mentor,” Chattoraj said. “I really value my research experience, which has given me insight into the research process and prepared me well for graduate school.”

Graduate success data is self-reported and represents a 54% response rate (163 of 303) from those who received an undergraduate degree in 2020-2021 from the School of Chemical Sciences (Department of Chemistry and Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering). Visit illinisuccess.illinois.edu for more information.
The number of research projects funded and the total amount of funding in 2021-22 is more than the previous four years – 48 proposals totaling $26.8 million. One of the NSF funded projects included Professor Zaida Luthey-Schulten’s lab where researchers built a living “minimal cell” with a genome stripped down to its barest essentials and a computer model of the cell that mirrors its behavior. By refining and testing their model, the scientists are developing a system that can predict how changes to the genomes, living conditions or physical characteristics of live cells will alter how they function. Minimal cells have pared-down genomes that carry the genes necessary to replicate their DNA, grow, divide and perform most of the other functions that define life, said Luthey-Schulten, the Murchison-Mallory Endowed Chair in Chemistry.

“What’s new here is that we developed a three-dimensional, fully dynamic kinetic model of a living minimal cell that mimics what goes on in the actual cell,” Luthey-Schulten said.
GET TO KNOW OUR INCOMING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

125 Incoming Undergraduate Students

114 Freshmen
- 78 Illinois
- 16 Nonresident
- 20 International

11 Transfer
- 11 Illinois
- 0 Nonresident
- 0 International

0 URCS* Freshmen
- 1 URCS* Transfer
- 5 First Generation

FUNDING

36 undergraduates
(8%) received a departmental/donor-funded scholarship

$174,500 awarded in departmental/donor-funded scholarships

287 graduate

46 Full Fellowships

139 Research Assistantships

102 Teaching Assistantships

INCOMING GRADUATE STUDENTS

422 Applicants

180 Offers

41 Accepted

24 Male

17 Female

1 URCS* Male

4 URCS* Female

25 Domestic

16 INT'L

INCOMING GRADUATE STUDENTS (full & partial)

21 Campus

148 Departmental/Donor-Funded

9 External: NSF

10 External: Other

Highlights of Chemistry at Illinois' newest class of undergraduates, graduates

The 2022-23 incoming class of 7,957 first-year students at UIUC is the second-largest-ever, bringing the university’s total student enrollment to 56,644 – a record-sized total. Numbers are also up in the Department of Chemistry. The 2022-23 incoming class of first-year chemistry students is the largest in five years – 125 (114 freshmen and 11 transfers). And 26, or 20.8 percent, of those incoming students are first-generation college students. UIUC was recently designated a First-Gen Forward institution by the Center for First-generation Student Success – a program acknowledging higher education institutions for their commitment to first-generation success. Also, 15 percent of the incoming undergraduates in chemistry are students traditionally underrepresented in the chemical sciences. And underrepresented students comprise 12 percent of the incoming graduate student cohort. For the second consecutive year, the newest graduate student class includes a former St. Elmo Brady Summer Research Scholar, Micah Robinson, who graduated from Tougaloo College in Mississippi with high honors and was the 2022 Chemistry Academic and Leadership Excellence Award winner. Robinson said her summer research experience at UIUC was a big reason she chose Illinois to pursue her PhD.

“I enjoyed my time last summer. It also helps that UIUC’s analytical chemistry track is ranked high in the country,” Robinson said.
A gift establishing a new endowed chair and planned gifts supporting faculty and undergraduate research led the way to a record-breaking $7.76M in gifts and commitments in 2021-22 — more than twice Chemistry’s average total over the past five fiscal years. This year also saw the launch of new initiatives — like the data science class featured here — and the continued generosity of the hundreds of you who choose to give year after year.

Not only do your gifts directly support our students and faculty, they signify confidence in our ability to excel in teaching, research, and public service, and for that we are grateful. Thank you for your generosity, which is building a better future for us all.

NEW NAMED FUNDS

Andrew Loh Endowed Scholarship Fund
Carolyn J. and David A. Matthews Fellowship Fund for Current Use
Chuanjing Xu Memorial Scholarship Fund
Craig P. Baskin Endowed Undergraduate Chemistry Scholarship Fund
Dr. Sandra Murawski Graduate Student Award Fund
E. Philip Horwitz High Achievement Scholarship in Chemistry Fund
Eunice S. Wu Memorial Scholarship in Chemistry Fund
Jerry A. Walker Endowed Chair Fund
Milan Mrksich Scholarship for Undergraduate Research Fund
Peter and Dorothy A. Kovacic Scholarship Fund
Steven C. Zimmerman Scholarship for Undergraduate Research Fund
T.M. Balthazar Award Fund
Thomas Remec and Susan Morisato Fund for Data Science in the Chemical Sciences

This is a selection only.

Gifts in Action

Students at UIUC who want to learn data science combined with machine learning and how to apply these techniques to their own research now have the ideal course thanks to a gift from two Illinois alumni.

The Thomas Remec and Susan Morisato Fund for Data Science in the Chemical Sciences was established in July 2021 by Thomas M. Remec (BS, ’74, Chemistry; MS, ’83, Metallurgical Engineering) and Susan C. Morisato (BS, ’75, general curriculum; MS, ’77, Mathematics).

This gift funds a new data science course specific to chemistry for undergraduates and graduate students that began in Fall 2022. And it also funds online technology resources to increase access for students and a summer research experience for Illinois undergraduates in data science and chemistry. The inaugural year Summer 2022 undergraduate scholars were Ayu Seiya and Swaroop Thammineni.

Remec said this new course teaches skills that can help students put together a research program, and also assist in data analysis that may improve the professionalism and breadth of their theses. Remec explained why he and Susan chose to make this gift.

“While the state of Illinois has been more than generous with respect to funding our campus, there comes a time when we who benefitted must step up and make their own contributions in order to spread the financial burden,” he said.

Professor Nick Jackson, who teaches the course in Fall 2022, said the fundamental objective is for students to learn how to “do” machine learning and data science on real experimental data sets using Python. Based on a staple of machine learning methodologies that are standards in academia and industry, Jackson teaches these topics entirely in the context of chemistry, chemical engineering, and materials science applications.

“Provided the way data science and machine learning have transformed and continue to transform our everyday experiences, it is critical that our students at UIUC be educated in many of these techniques so that they are ready to benefit both in their research projects and in the workforce,” Jackson said.

“Data science is not a subject that just benefits ‘computer people’ — it has the power to impact nearly every avenue of chemical research and industry.”

Thammineni’s research focuses on proteins, which carry out many biological processes and are linearly synthesized by amino acid sequences.

It is important, Thammineni explained, to model the various dynamic conformations of proteins to understand internal mechanisms and functions that can help design novel drugs and provide insight into diseases. And a new approach for modeling protein dynamics is using machine learning, he said.

For more information about supporting the Department of Chemistry, please visit chemistry.illinois.edu/giving.
Aastha Sharma (Josh Vura-Weis Lab)

*Behind the Scenes – Light Matter Interaction*

These optical instruments are the workhorses behind research in the Vura-Weis Lab where researchers are exploring a better understanding of light and matter interaction – for example, finding a way to harness the tremendous amount of energy that is in sunlight.

Azzaya Khasbaatar and Prapti Kafle (Ying Diao Lab)

*Seizing the Darkness*

This is a cross-polarized microscopy image of a crystallized anticancer drug material, Amonafide, prepared by solution printing. By tuning the solution printing speed, the crystalline behavior of Amonafide is controlled, and at a very high speed, it forms the as-shown crystallite within the dark amorphous region.

Brittney Gorman (Mary Kraft Lab)

*The Creation of a 3D Lipid Map*

Cellular morphology fades into a 3D map of subcellular cholesterol (green) and sphingolipids (blue & orange). The morphology heights were determined using luminosity in the secondary electron images collected during secondary ion mass spectrometry analysis. Then, the ion signals collected from the cholesterol and sphingolipids were shifted using heights in this morphology.

Moeen Meigooni (Emad Tajkhorshid Lab)

*The Great Wavy Membrane*

The curvature induced by cardiolipin (red) in a cell-scale model of the mitochondrial membrane bilayer highlights undulations. The image was rendered using VMD and post-processed with neural style transfer in the style of Katsushika Hokusai’s famous woodblock print, The Great Wave off Kanagawa.

Professors Zhaleh Ghaemi, Emad Tajkhorshid and Martin Gruebele and student Dara Nafiu, Carle Illinois College of Medicine

*The in silico liver cell*

This is an image – modeled in a computer – that shows a 15-micron-long liver cell with all its glorious organelles. This computer model is part of a collaborative research project among the image authors.

Anda Trifan, Defne Gorgun (Emad Tajkhorshid Lab)

*Silver Lining of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus*

This image represents the linking of two scales of resolution: Fluctuating Finite Element Analysis (FFEA) and All-Atom Molecular Dynamics (AAMD). These techniques have been combined in a multiscale resolution workflow to uncover the mechanism of function for the replication transcription complex of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

On the Cover

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