

CHEMISTRY ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

CFS in Chicago: American Chemical Society Meeting



This August, Gretchen Dunn, Ian Wolniak, Ella Tynan, Alexis Lueders, Jack Lamm, Alexander Sweetman, Jesse Mindes, and Devin Jugan traveled to the Fall ACS National Meeting. Representing the Wallen, Bobadova, and Culpepper research labs, the students experienced the energy of a national scientific conference. Special thanks to Dr. Wallen and Dr. Culpepper for leading the trip. Dr. Culpepper especially enjoyed introducing students to some of her old stomping grounds, including a visit to Chicago's iconic Bean. She was thrilled to share the excitement of the conference with students while reconnecting with colleagues and App State Chemistry alumni along the way.



CFS faculty before Spring 2026 commencement on May 9.

SUMMER RESEARCH

16 faculty members and
50 students logged hours:

- Analyzing sulfur reactivity of a new electron-rich three-coordinate ligand (Wallen lab)
- Optimizing peptide synthesis conditions in nano-reactors (Shaw lab)
- Expressing cytochrome P450 enzyme variants with non-iron porphyrins (Reddish lab)
- Synthesizing a sensor to detect two different nerve agent classes (Weerasinghe lab)
- Quantifying heavy metals in foraged mushrooms (Swarthout lab)
- Expressing and purifying tardigrade proteins for stabilization studies (Christian lab)
- Purification of seizure enzymes for downstream testing (Culpepper lab)
- Investigating spectral patterns for new medical imaging dyes (Bobadova lab)
- Quantifying silver in food samples (Babyak lab)
- Investigating antifungal cellulose and starch-derived materials (Schwab lab)
- Quantum chemistry calculations to examine metal-metal bonding and magnetic properties in extended metal atom chain (EMAC) systems (Bates lab)
- Examining binding of inhibitors to multi-drug resistance proteins (Cecile lab)

Students Build Community

Dr. Jeb Bates helped form a new **Student Advisory Board** in March to give students a greater voice. Inaugural members Nate Heberlein, Gretchen Dunn, Charlie Weeks, MJ Jackson, and Elliana Proctor have already hosted two cookouts at Brookshire Park, provided input on the student handbook, and helped create a “covalent” student study space in Garwood Hall.

The student chapter of the **American Chemical Society** has been building community in a slightly sweeter way. The club recently held a Chemistry Bake-Off, where classic snickerdoodle cookies took top honors thanks to their soft texture. A pumpkin pie was certainly seasonally appropriate and mathematically sound, but unfortunately that wasn't quite enough to secure the win. Next up, the club looks forward to an industry panel and connecting students with chemistry professionals.

The Periodic Times: Our Student-Run Newsletter



Read the latest issue here!

dcfs.appstate.edu/students/newsletter



We Want to Hear from You!

We would love to hear where life has taken you. Scan the QR code to complete our alumni update form. Your update could become a future alumni story, or you might want to return for a seminar, career panel, or other department events.



Faculty News: Teaching, Research, Getting Messy

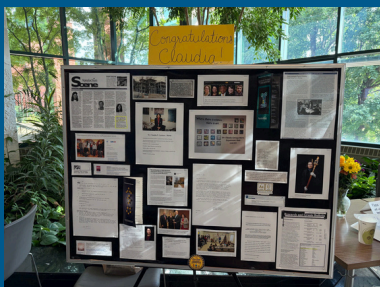
After six years away from the course, **Dr. Carol Babyak** is back in the first-semester Introductory Chemistry lecture classroom. She is excited to give students their first look at chemistry, hear their questions, and help them start exploring the subject. She will also take her research beyond Boone this spring after being invited to present a talk at PittCon.

Dr. Prem Chanda joined the department from Southeastern Louisiana State University. In addition to teaching the organic sequence, his research lab is growing with undergraduate students. Dr. Chanda approaches chemical synthesis with diastereo- and enantioselective strategies, aiming to produce new chemicals for medicinal purposes. We can't wait to hear news from his lab.

Meanwhile, **Dr. Amanda Howell** has been making her Introduction to Chemical Forensics class a little messier. Students recently conducted a blood spatter analysis (see above photo) using Hershey's chocolate syrup and red food dye. Don't worry, the activity took place outdoors! Students enjoyed hands-on experience analyzing spatter patterns and applying forensic concepts.

Forensic Science is also moving beyond the classroom. Brynleigh Armstrong completed a summer forensic laboratory internship with the State Bureau of Investigation, gaining firsthand experience in a professional forensic laboratory.

Celebrating Retirements



August brought the opportunity to celebrate **Dr. Claudia Cartaya** and an extraordinary 40 years of service to the Chemistry program. During her career, Dr. Cartaya taught organic chemistry and biochemistry, mentored generations of students, and served as department chair for many years. A memory board at her retirement celebration captured many of her contributions and the people whose lives she touched. We are especially happy that she still calls Boone home.



Many of you may have already heard that **Dr. BJ Yoblinski** retired in December 2025. His final class brought his career full circle, with several alumni returning to attend, including one member of his very first cohort of students. Afterward, BJ treated the group to burgers at Come Back Shack. We miss seeing him in Garwood 112 and, of course, hearing the familiar declaration: "Jeez, I make good coffee!"



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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



As you read these stories, do some of the people, places, and experiences sound familiar? Maybe you remember a research conference, a favorite professor, a club activity, a department gathering, a late afternoon in a teaching lab, or simply time spent with friends in Garwood. Those experiences, and the people who shared them, are part of what makes an undergraduate degree here so special.

I hope to see you in Garwood in the future!

Jennifer Cecile

Professor and Chair