Welcome to ‘Periodically Speaking’, the newsletter of the IPFW Chemistry Department. We value the opportunity to reach our target audience - alumni, current students, community members, IPFW faculty – and keep you abreast of recent developments in our department. Since the newsletter appears electronically, it will be accessible to any individual wishing to get a Chemistry Department update so please feel free to let others know about it.

Since our last newsletter, we have seen two members of our department retire: Dr. Ron Duchovic, associate professor of chemistry, and Alison Paul, departmental stockroom manager. We are very grateful for their commitment to our department and for all the valuable contributions they made during their 20+ years here.

We are pleased that Erin Turner has joined us as our new stockroom manager. Erin acquired B.S. and M.S. degrees in Biology, as well as an A.S. in Chemistry, all from IPFW. More recently, she was involved in ecological assessments of habitat in support of the Conservation Effects Assessment Project. Welcome, Erin!

In this issue, we spotlight one of our faculty – Dr. Steven Stevenson – and also one of our alumni – Shori Gerardot. I hope you will find their stories, on pages 2 and 4 respectively, both informative and entertaining. We also congratulate students who won Chemistry awards and scholarships in 2016 and look forward to seeing these students added in upcoming years to the list of departmental graduates; both the student awardees and the 2016 graduates can be found on page 3.

We have added a relatively new feature to our newsletter so that any of you who wish to make a donation to the department may now do so electronically through the newsletter. A major source of departmental scholarships comes through donations; we thank those of you who have contributed in the past and any of you who wish to do so in the future.

Again, welcome to this, now the third, issue of the newsletter. We would love to hear from you with your feedback and information for future stories.

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How did I become a Chemistry professor at IPFW? To answer this question, I must return to high school, where I was an athlete playing varsity sports, in the marching and symphony bands, and losing all my street cred, yes, I was a nerd. I was a member of the science team. Every Saturday each high school would send its top three science students to ~15 rotating high schools where about 50 students would compete. Each student would take three exams, in Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. There would be winners in each subject area and then an overall winner declared upon combining points for all three exams. Let’s just say that I wasn’t too thrilled at losing to those who had access to money to buy the resources. One Saturday morning, I begged and begged my puzzled parents to drive me to a university bookstore to please, pretty please, buy me the chemistry, biology and physics books that I wanted so desperately. They said yes on the condition that this would be my next three years of Christmas presents. To pay the 60 dollars for the three books would cost me one book for each of the next three years.

Colleges took notice of the success, which helped me receive a full scholarship to any university in the state of Texas. With cost being a non-issue, how does one decide? Being from a family of nine where food was scarce, I understandably and logically selected the one with the best cafeteria, Angelo State University, which is in the middle of nowhere in West Texas with nothing to do but homework and eat. I was a double major in French and Chemistry. With a graduation deadline and pressure from my parents to make the “financially responsible” choice, I dropped the French from a major down to a minor and graduated on time. My senior year I filled out applications to Chemistry graduate schools, where I was offered admission and a stipend to every university except the one that I had my heart set on.

Cornell rejected my application for graduate school. They explained to me that they received so many admission requests that all of their applicants had great grades, but for me, there was nothing that stood out from the others. Rather, the admitted students had the grades in addition to undergraduate research, and most, if not all, had at least one publication and a conference presentation. Feeling heartbroken, I asked my department, “What is this undergraduate research thing that cost me my dream admission? They explained to me that Angelo State was a “primarily teaching college,” and that research was optional for faculty. I had no idea of the importance of undergraduate research and its attractiveness for graduate school admission committees. (I swore that if I ever became a Chemistry professor, that I would tell everyone, freshman through seniors, about the importance of undergraduate research on their professional development and the doors that would open for them).

So I chose Virginia Tech for graduate school. Despite not having a cafeteria, Virginia Tech had the next best thing, a golf course across the street from the Chemistry building. What could go wrong with my plans? I spent 50-60 hour weeks in the classroom, library, and research lab. What free time I did have was spent with a baby boy and trading in tee times for diapers. I threw myself into research, day and night, which helped me graduate as a Ph.D. with multiple journal publications. From 2000-2011, I broadened my professional experiences by working in all three types of jobs: government, industry, and academia.

And that is how I came to be at IPFW (2011-present). Here, I am doing my best to balance teaching, service, and research. Working on my current grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), my research group is trying to maximize the creation of giant buckyballs to better accommodate bulkier metal clusters. Entrapping metal atoms inside buckyball cages creates opportunities for use in medicine and energy. This NSF funding is also used to develop novel separation science techniques at IPFW to manipulate cage reactivity differences for discovering a chemical based isolation method. Upon purification, the new molecules are available for further experiments, fostering collaborations, and for use by interdisciplinary scientists in a global sample dissemination network.

I have enjoyed working with numerous IPFW undergraduate students and been delighted to see their names appearing as my research co-authors on conference presentations and journal article publications.

IPFW is a place where you have a choice to be who you want to be. There is flexibility for each faculty member to carve out their own career path. Your dreams are up to you. For me, my dream of being a Chemistry professor started with asking my parents to trade in three years’ worth of Christmas presents for some science books. It was a win-win for my parents and me. Suppose my parents would have said no to the books. Hmm. Something to think about.
The department held its annual spring award banquet in April 2016. Students were recognized for their academic achievements and service to the department.

Arthur W. Friedel Endowed Chemistry Scholarship: Brandon Hacha

CRC Freshman Chemistry Award and ICUC-First-Year Chemistry Award: Jenna Cavacini

Outstanding Organic Chemistry Student Scholarship: Grant Lyle

David P. Onwood Scholarship: Benjamin Burris

Outstanding Student Affiliate: Andrea (Shriner) Moore

Faculty/Alumni Scholarship: Nichole Davis, Cody Davison, Thomas Klingenger

William F. Erbelding Award in Analytical Chemistry: Morgan Gascoyne

Undergraduate Award in Organic Chemistry: Ryan Curtis

Leepoxy Plastic Inc. Scholarship: Ayasha Faria

Outstanding Chemistry Major: Ryan Curtis, Jacquelyn Kelty, Nathaniel Moser

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Congratulations 2016 Graduates!

Spring 2016:
Seja Culpepper,
Ryan Curtis,
Morgan Gascoyne,
Tycias Grobias,
Jacquelyn Kelty,
Josiah McMillen,
Nathaniel Moser

Summer 2016:
Danni Hamilton

Fall 2016:
Amanda LaFontaine
Andrea Moore

Congratulations to our graduates!
Alumni Spotlight: Shori Geradot

1. What made you decide to pursue a degree in Chemistry?
As a Pre-Med student, I knew that I had to choose a hard science. Therefore, the only real question was which one! The deciding factor that led me to choose a degree in Chemistry was having the potential to understand a fundamental component of life. The interactions that chemistry teaches laid the brickwork for a deep understanding of the interactions within the body as well as outside. That is what made me choose Chemistry.

2. What did you personally gain from earning a degree? How do these skills help you in your duties at your current job?
I had always been intrigued by the intricacy of the world. It was through my study of Chemistry that I was truly able to grasp these more elusive concepts. Through understanding the most fundamental interactions, an atom with another, I was better able to comprehend elusive concepts that I am learning today.
Chemistry has helped me tremendously in medical school. It taught me a fundamental understanding of interactions, as well as how to interpret and understand them.

3. Do you have any memorable experiences within the IPFW Chemistry Department that you would like to share?
One morning before one of the many Instrumental Chemistry Labs that we had, a group of classmates and I were hanging out in the Mole Hole (the chemistry club’s hang out spot in the science building). As we were getting ready for class, probably being a boisterous bunch, Dr. Friedman (the chemistry department chair) came walking by. He stopped by the door and began to engage everyone in conversation. Partway through him reminding us that we were going to be late for lab, the conversation shifted to himself. After a few entertaining words, Dr. Friedman explained to us the wonders of a mystical food, matzah. Dr. Friedman entertained us with a few short stories of his past experiences with it, as well as even offered (threatened) to bring us some! It was this experience, of a group consisting of students, teacher, colleagues, and even friends all having a good time that really stuck with me through the years.

4. Do you have recommendations for future students that are considering pursuing a degree in Chemistry?
The best recommendation that I have for future Chemistry majors is simple: READ THE LAB MANUAL BEFORE LAB.
On a more serious note, the IPFW Chemistry department is full of very knowledgeable professors who have a compassion for chemistry. They are very friendly and willing to help. They even let someone like myself graduate!

5. Is there anything you’d like to share with us about your family, your hobbies, your job, etc.?
As for my life, as a medical student I do not think that we are allowed to have family, hobbies or anything else like that; it’s just books.

Friends of Chemistry: Give the Gift of Opportunity

Gifts of all sizes to the Department of Chemistry at IPFW make a difference and impact the lives of our students.
To make a gift, simply mail a check to:

IPFW Department of Chemistry
2101 East Coliseum Blvd.
Fort Wayne, IN 46805

Make checks payable to: IPFW Foundation and write Dept. of Chemistry in the memo.

Gifts can also be made online at www.ipfw.edu/chemistry by selecting our Give Now button. To make a gift over the phone or learn more about ways to give, call the Office of Advancement at 260-481-6962.

Have you considered partnering with IPFW through estate planning? Annuities, bequests, and endowments create new opportunities for our students, including financial support and access to educational resources. To learn more, including how your gift impacts students, contact IPFW Office of Advancement at 260-481-6962 or giving@ipfw.edu.

Thank you for giving the gift of opportunity!