Dear Alumni and Friends

It has been another great year in the Department of Chemistry and a very busy time for the department chair. I’ve managed to keep my wits about me with the help of a dedicated group of faculty and the support of our amazing staff.

In 2018, we added two new full-time lecturers to the department – Dr. Christopher Borman and Dr. Angeline Wairegi. Along with their teaching duties they are actively engaged in discussions about lecture and lab curriculum, and have already become valued members of our team. In addition, with the retirement last year of Dr. Robert Rittenhouse I lost my associate chair. This duty has been taken up by Dr. Dion Rivera, who will lead our assessment and strategic planning efforts (as well as taking part in important counseling sessions with the chair at Whipsaw Brewing).

In May of 2018, we hosted the first ever meeting of the Chemistry Professional Advisory Council, and the group came to campus again for their second meeting in October. Conversations with this group have been extremely productive – they have already made a number of suggestions about ways we can better serve our majors. I feel very fortunate to have this group of professionals willing to volunteer their time and I am excited to continue working with them moving forward.

As I enter my third year as chair, I have found that the job is getting a little bit easier. I truly believe we are the best department on campus, and I am lucky to be part of the CWU Chemistry family. Here is wishing all of you a healthy, happy and productive 2019.

Anthony Diaz

News from the PAC...

The Chemistry Department’s Professional Advisory Council (PAC) held its inaugural meeting in May on the CWU campus. The PAC meets twice annually to evaluate and offer feedback as to how well the department is meeting professional needs of students in terms of curriculum, facilities and quality as well as to be advocates of the program. Current students had the opportunity to have lunch with the PAC at the May meeting and expressed how valuable it was to meet professionals who took classes at CWU and could offer them practical career advice and suggestions....as well as commiserating about how challenging chemistry classes are at CWU.
Staffing changes...

Christopher Borman joined the department in fall 2018 as a full-time lecturer to replace Becky Coates. He earned his doctorate in analytical chemistry from the University of Wyoming in 2007, and was most recently an assistant chemistry professor at Heritage University.

Angeline Walregi joined the department in fall 2018 as a full-time lecturer to replace Robert Rittenhouse. She earned her doctorate in physical chemistry in 2016 from Utah State University, and was a chemistry lecturer at Mount Ida College before coming to CWU.

Rittenhouse retires...

Robert Rittenhouse retired in June after 11 years of service to the CWU Chemistry Department. He joined the department in the fall of 2007 as a Lecturer to teach primarily in the general chemistry sequence. Over the course of his time at Central, he taught at all levels, from Chem 101 to graduate courses in physical and computational chemistry. He made substantive and lasting contributions to the department beyond the classroom, not the least of which was the implementation of the Chemistry Tutoring Center and this is part of his legacy at CWU. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2012, and for the last two years served as the Associate Chair to the department. For his retirement celebration, we asked him to present a seminar on his long-standing research project: Can the Meaning of Life be Calculated? Applications of Computational Chemistry to the Mysteries of DNA Repair. The event was well attended by current faculty and students, as well as emeritus faculty and several alumni. The department recommended him for emeritus faculty status upon his retirement and the CWU Board of Trustees granted him the title of Emeritus Senior Lecturer of Chemistry at their May 18, 2018 meeting. His plan is to pursue a degree in Computer Science and continue his research and mountain climbing adventures.

Career Talk Event...

The department hosted a Career Talks event on February 23, 2018, inviting four alumni back to campus to share with current students how they came to CWU and, once they got here, how they came to graduate with a chemistry degree, and how that led them to their current position. Speakers included Erin Davis (class of 2001), Senior Product Manager at Schrodinger, Lacy Ledbeter Jones (class of 2005) Deputy Program Manager at Oak Ridge National Laboratories, Tabitha Liebrecht (class of 1999) Environmental Specialist 3 with the Department of Ecology, and Tyler Varnum (class of 1998), Pharmacy Investigator with the Washington State Department of Health. We always appreciate having alumni back on campus, and look forward to hearing from the next round of speakers in February!
Award Winning Thesis...

We are proud to announce that graduate student Shirley Orellana’s thesis was chosen for the 2018 Dale & Mary Jo Comstock Distinguished Thesis Award!

Each year the Office of Graduate Studies solicits nominations from across campus for this award; each department offering graduate programs with a thesis option may nominate one thesis for consideration. A thesis is then selected by Dale Comstock, a retired CWU faculty member and benefactor of this award, and Kevin Archer, Dean of the Graduate School.

As recipient of this award, Shirley was honored at CWU’s first-ever separate Masters Commencement and Hooding ceremony in June with a certificate and check (pictured at right with Dean Archer).

Shirley’s graduate thesis research, “Geographic Classification of Wines Using their Elemental and Water Isotopic Composition”, was conducted with Dr. Anne Johansen. Shirley graduated in June and is now working at Tree Top, Inc. in Selah, Washington as the Corporate Laboratory Manager.

Research Highlight...

Every day humans are exposed to chemicals that may have adverse effects on their health. One example is the plasticizers used in plastic food storage bags, children’s toys and medical tubing. Another example is nanoparticles used in manufacturing. Carin Thomas and her students study the adverse effects of these chemicals at the biochemical level using cultured rat liver cells or isolated mitochondria. They investigate the generation of oxidants and their ability to disrupt protein and membrane function which can lead to cell death and disease. Students measure cellular oxidants, the so-called Reactive Oxygen Species, and correlate their levels to cell viability and other parameters of cell function. Pictured left to right are Juan Flores, Khatoon Albahrani, Carin Thomas and Utshaha Maharjan who presented research results at the ACS national meeting in San Diego. Zach Miller, who also made significant research contributions, was unable to attend.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Career Paths: February 22
Concert for a Cure: February 23
SOURCE: May 15-16
Chemistry Student Appreciation Picnic: May 17

CWU is an EEO/AA/Title IX Institution. For accommodation e-mail: DSO@cwu.edu.