Greetings from the Chemistry Department at Central Washington University (CWU).

The COVID-19 pandemic has made 2020 a roller coaster for everyone and our department is no exception. This past March all finals for winter quarter were given online and all spring and summer courses were 100 percent online. Faculty, students, and staff had to adjust quickly to an online reality. During spring quarter chemistry faculty put all lecture and lab courses online with only three weeks notice. I’m pleased to say that we were successful in this endeavor and all our graduating seniors were able to complete their requirements. Since an in-person commencement ceremony could not be held, the department held a virtual graduation ceremony for our majors and graduate students. While not ideal, friends and family of the graduates were able to virtually attend.

During fall quarter of 2020 most departmental lectures were online and several labs were taught online. However, our general chemistry labs and most upper division labs were offered in a hybrid format where half the class would be in the lab one week and half the class would perform an online exercise. The lab groups would switch the following week. This allowed us to maintain social distancing within the lab environment. During the fall quarter we did not have any COVID-19 related issues in our teaching labs with this arrangement. We plan to continue this lab model in the winter and spring quarters but that will ultimately be dictated by the spread of the virus.

While 2020 had its challenges there were several good things that happened in the department. Sam Lohse, a new tenure-track analytical/environmental faculty member, was hired. Brittany Holmes, a non-tenure track analytical/environmental chemist was hired. Timothy Beng, an organic chemist, was tenured and promoted to associate professor. Yingbin Ge, physical chemist, received the university’s Distinguished Professor of Teaching award. Lisa Stowe, departmental fiscal specialist and office manager was named CWU classified employee of the year. The department was able to replace our 20 plus year old NMR with a new Bruker NMR thanks to support form the College of the Sciences and the Provost Office at CWU. A brief write up of the NMR can be found in this newsletter. There is also a web link to an article discussing the research done with the NMR by one of our organic chemists, Dr. Gil Belofsky. Sadly, two of our emeritus faculty, Helmi Habib and Clint Duncan, passed away this past year. Brief biographies of their accomplishments can be found in this newsletter. On a bittersweet note, JoAnn Peters (formerly Deluca) retired this past June. She and her husband are enjoying retirement in the northern Minnesota woods. While we are happy for JoAnn, her presence in the department is already missed.

Stay Well,

Dion Rivera
Professor and Chair
In memory...

2020 has been a rough year, and it has been particularly difficult in that the Chemistry Department lost two emeritus faculty members. Though pages could be written about these wonderful men and their accomplishments, here are brief summaries.

**L. Clint Duncan** passed away on June 9, 2020. Dr. Duncan was a member of the CWU Chemistry Department from 1965-1999 and was awarded emeritus faculty status upon his retirement. He served as department chair for 16 of his 34 years on campus. At CWU he transitioned from a fluorine/inorganic chemist to an analytical and environmental chemist, and was instrumental in planning the Science Building. He also started the “acid rain project” collecting rain water from Mt. Rainier National Park, and that research project is still active today. After he retired he lived in Lummi Bay, Washington for a few years, then moved to California for a while before settling in Florence, Arizona where he was residing with wife Sara when he passed.

**Helmi Habib** died of congestive heart failure on August 30, 2020. Dr. Habib was a member of the department from 1964-1995 and he was awarded emeritus faculty status upon his retirement. While at Central, he served as the department chair, chair of the Faculty Senate, taught in the Honors Program as well as the Physics Department, was the director of Academic Advising for 13 years and was a consultant to the United States Testing Company in Hanford for five years. Following his retirement, he and his wife traveled extensively and spent many pleasant days at their time-share in Hawaii and at their cabin on Discovery Bay where he developed long standing friendships. His enjoyment came from his family, classical music, reading, golf, and friends.

University Recognition...

**Yingbin Ge** was recognized by the CWU Board of Trustees as CWU’s 2020 Distinguished Faculty for Teaching. Ge joined the department in 2008 and students frequently comment on his prodigious knowledge and content brilliance, but also on his sense of humor, empathy, support for students, and timely feedback. Student success has always been a priority for Ge, who has mentored 31 undergraduate research students, served as chair for one distinguished thesis award-winning graduate student, and mentored 15 other graduate students.

CWU also recognized its best-of-the-best workers during a Zoom recognition ceremony on June 2 to honor two 2020 Employees of the Year. **Lisa Stowe**, fiscal specialist in chemistry, was named Classified Employee of the Year. One of Stowe’s nominators wrote, “what really sets her apart is the attention she pays to ‘my students,’ as she refers to them. Lisa truly wants every CWU student to navigate through the educational process smoothly.”
Staffing changes...

The department welcomed Brittany Holmes into a one-year lecturer position to teach analytical, introductory and general chemistry courses.

Sam Lohse, our newest tenure-track analytical chemist, also joined the department this fall. Sam comes to CWU from the University of Colorado-Mesa. His research includes the behavior of nanoparticles and microplastics in environmental and biological systems.

Research Highlight...

The CWU College of the Sciences has generously funded the replacement of the Bruker Avance-DRX 400 MHz NMR spectrometer that was installed in 1998. The new Bruker Avance-Neo 400 MHz NMR spectrometer was installed in the CWU Science Building in September and uses cutting-edge technology, featuring faster control, improved dynamic range and greater flexibility and scalability. The Avance-Neo is unique in its ability to transmit and receive on each NMR channel, allowing far greater flexibility in configuration compared to previous models. Additionally, a new 24-holder automatic sampler allows experiments on multiple samples to be queued, greatly increasing the amount of samples run per day. With the automatic sampler at waist-height and the magnetic field now contained within the magnet, our new NMR is easily accessible by all. No more climbing a ladder to insert samples!

Please see an article on our website about Gil Belofsky’s research group and how they are utilizing this new instrument in their lab! cwu.edu/chemistry/

Career Talk Event...

Mark your calendar for the next Career Talks event on February 22, 2021! This will be the first virtual event where chemistry alumni share their insights into their careers and how to prepare for the workforce. For the 2020 Career Talks, the department hosted three alumni: Ben Howie (class of 2004), Sports Medicine Physician at Providence Health & Services, Kaylee Troth (class of 2016 and 2018) Chemist III at Eurofins-Cascade Analytical Inc., and Brian Kraft (class of 1998), Assistant Vice President for Innovation and Research Engagement at Washington State University. We always appreciate connecting chemistry alums with current students and look forward to the coming event.
Students are facing some of the toughest challenges we've seen. Now more than ever, they need your support.

DONATE to the CWU Chemistry Scholarship fund. Your investment is key to student success!

Jorge Garcia
Biochemistry major

[a departmental scholarship] allow[ed] for an increased level of focus on my education resulting in elevated performance, reinforced mental health, and an increase in my GPA. [Without it] my financial situation would have been overwhelming and a hindrance to my success.

To give visit: cwu.edu/sciences/giving

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