



CHEMISTRY NEWS

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SPECIAL EDITION: ACS SPRING NATIONAL MEETING

Will you be at ACS New Orleans? So will we! In this post, CURChem Chair Joe Reczek shares some great advice on making the most of an ACS meeting for the undergraduates you are bringing along...

Taking Students to the ACS meeting? Mix Structure with Freedom.

Their first exposure to a National ACS conference can be overwhelming for most undergraduates. It can also be overwhelming for faculty trying to decide how best to introduce undergraduates to a conference that's so large with so many sessions and opportunities. I have taken approximately 10 students (4-5 who are members of my own research group) to the Spring ACS meeting for the last several years. During this time, I've figured out that a good way to help students get the most out of the experience is to provide a mix of structure and freedom.

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Allow for Exploration

First, it's important not to schedule every second of the students' time. Part of the beauty of attending the conference is

that it is a unique opportunity to experience the breadth and scope of our discipline(s) in a limited time and space that is not matched by anything else they will experience in their undergraduate career. For example, making sure students have unscheduled time to wander the floor of the expo allows them to see not only the variety of equipment and instrumentation used in the field but also the different types of employers, from instrument companies to textbook publishers. This year I've told my students to go check out some HPLCs, something our department is interested in acquiring.

I typically encourage students to attend the awards talks of various divisions...because they usually represent a high caliber of research (which can be difficult for undergraduates to judge for themselves)

What talks to highlight?

Regarding attending talks, I encourage students to choose the ones they would like to attend. However, I provide some suggestions to help them select these. I typically encourage students to attend the awards talks of various divisions, both because they usually represent a high caliber of research (which can be difficult for undergraduates to judge for themselves) and because these talks tend to present more introduction while having a broader scope, making them more accessible for

undergraduates as apposed to most general sessions. I will also search the program for talks by researchers that I know personally or by reputation for being good communicators, selecting 8-10. For example, if I see a talk by Geoff Coates on the program, I recommend they attend because I think he's a great chemist and speaker, and also my former undergraduate mentor. In addition, Geoff happens to be a polymer chemist, which is an area of chemistry to which many undergraduates don't get a lot of exposure. I also point out the variety of undergraduate programming available (typically on Sundays): There are sessions on applying for graduate school, writing a resume, etc., that most students will find beneficial.

When to Require Attendance?

In addition to the talks the students choose, I also require their attendance at two other events in addition to attending whatever session they are presenting in. I choose one of the afternoon plenary talks and require everyone to attend as a group. In recent years, the Kalvi lecture series has been an excellent choice because of the prestige and quality of the speakers (get there early to save seats!). We then all walk together to a local restaurant for a group dinner that includes all of the students and faculty attending from my university. This is a highlight of the trip for many, and we always make sure to take a picture!

I want them to enjoy their experience without focusing on completing an assignment.

One thing that may surprise some readers is that I do not require students to

write a paper about attended talks or their time at the conference. I want them to enjoy their experience without focusing on completing an assignment. That said, I set clear expectations that the trip is not just about enjoying themselves in a new city.

The mix of structure and freedom I suggest above is designed to maximize the student experience and ensure you get what you want out of the meeting – you shouldn't spend all your time worrying about your students. Remember, this meeting is for you too!

~ Dr. Joe Reczek is Chair of CUR's Chemistry Division and Professor of Chemistry at Denison University in Granville, OH. Research in the Reczek group spans Organic and Materials Chemistry, including Organic Synthesis, Supramolecular Chemistry, Crystal and Liquid Crystal design, and Organic Photovoltaics. They are broadly interested in the design, synthesis, and study of molecules that self-assemble via non-covalent interactions to exhibit new and unique properties. These properties are studied for potential application in new materials, specifically in the areas of molecular electronics and photovoltaics.

This piece was adapted from a post originally appearing March 27, 2017 on the CURChem blog at URL:

<https://curchem.wordpress.com/>



Joe Reczek
Chair – Chemistry
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About CUR's Chemistry Division

The Chemistry Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research—CUR's oldest and largest division provides networking opportunities, activities, and resources to assist chemistry administrators, faculty members, students, practitioners, and others in advancing mentored undergraduate research.

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Council on Undergraduate Research

CURChem at the ACS Fall 2025 National Meeting: Harnessing the Power of AI in Undergraduate Research and Training

Sudeep Bhattacharyay (University of Wisconsin Eau-Claire)

["Harnessing the Power of AI in Undergraduate Research and Training"](#) is an opportunity for all chemists to engage in the conversation about the role of AI in undergraduate education, training, and research in the broader fields of chemical sciences. Please share and encourage CUR faculty to submit an abstract. It would be very beneficial to have faculty involved with an AI-based undergraduate research and training program.

Please Join Us on Chemistry's CURCommunity

Chemistry now has its own CURCommunity! As a Division member, you have been automatically enrolled. Note that you can opt out. Like all communities within the CURCommunity umbrella, you can set how you want to receive postings, including daily or weekly digests. As your division representatives, we plan to highlight the division's activities and create an archive of useful resources for our members. We also want this to be a virtual community among those in the chemical sciences who are passionate about research with undergraduates. Use this as a place to ask questions and get input from other members about resources and ideas. The threaded archive will allow us to go back and find what has been shared in the past and reactivate a conversation or start a new one. We will highlight and provide links to

our podcast series, blog posts, and other resources. We invite you to engage with us and each other in this virtual space. If you have any questions, please email Bridget Gourley bgourley@depauw.edu

Introducing Our CUR Chemistry Councilors

In case you have not noticed, recent changes to CUR's organizational framework and governance are now in place, and they are here to help reinforce our core values and ensure we continue with our mission of advocating for the undergraduate research community. One sizable change for this year is with the Council. The notable difference you will see is that the newly assigned elected positions (called Councilors) will provide a crucial link between the Board of Directors and the Divisions. We (Rebecca Jones and Kraig Wheeler) are excited to serve in this capacity, where we see our efforts advocating for CUR Chemistry by encouraging and facilitating meaningful discussions of the trends, challenges, and opportunities with the Division and CUR community.

Our first season with The Council has been rewarding, with initial efforts focused on CUR's new strategic plan (to be launched this summer), shaping the organization's advocacy efforts, and how to serve the various divisions effectively. These first discussions have been deep and worthwhile and show significant promise for shaping communication between CUR's leadership and our community.

Here's more about us:

Rebecca M. Jones – Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry and Interim Director, STEM Accelerator, College of Science, George Mason University, Fairfax,

VA. CUR engagement: Member since 2006, Chemistry Division Councilor (2016-2022); Division Editor (2016-2018) and Issue Editor, *Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research* (2018-2022); CUR Chemistry Blog Contributor and Editor (2017-2018); CUR Chemistry Twitter (2016-2020); National meeting presenter and panel organizer (2012, 2013, 2016, 2018).

Kraig Wheeler – Professor of Chemistry, Whitworth University, Spokane, WA. CUR engagement: Councilor (2008-17, 2018-21, chair 2015-17); Broadening Participation Institute, host institution (2019); Fellows Selection Committee (2013-15); Chemistry Program Review (2016-2019); Nominations (2019-21, chair 2021); national meeting session organizer.

This is an excellent time for CUR Chemistry, where we can work together on the Division's goals of impactful advocacy, nurturing meaningful connections with our community, and developing value-added resources that continue to broaden CUR Chemistry's impact. What a great year it has been, with many positive opportunities shaping up on the horizon for us.

Rebecca Jones (rjones22@gmu.edu) and Kraig Wheeler (kraigwheeler@whitworth.edu)

Scholarship & Practice of Undergraduate Research (SPUR) Wants You!

CUR's scholarly journal is [Scholarship & Practice of Undergraduate Research](#) (SPUR). SPUR welcomes submissions for research studies and reviews on all forms and aspects of undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative inquiry across disciplines year-round. Please contact Pam Mabrouk, Editor-in-Chief, if you have any questions about SPUR. We would love more

contributions from the chemistry community and are eager to recruit peer reviewers. SPUR is now an electronic journal indexed in Clarivate; publication is free.

Did You Know CURChem Has a LinkedIn Group?

We would love to have you join us on LinkedIn! The group is open to everyone, so please encourage your colleagues - graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and administrators - to join our LinkedIn group. LinkedIn is a great platform to share your undergraduate research accomplishments, such as news about funded grants, undergraduate researchers presenting at conferences or receiving awards, and recent publications co-authored with your students. If you are unfamiliar with LinkedIn, please email Pam Mabrouk at p.mabrouk@northeastern.edu for a quick-start guide. We look forward to connecting with you soon!

Have you listened to the Chem4REAL Podcast?

The CUR Chemistry Podcasting group has just released a new episode on networking! Check it out on your favorite podcast platform. We have just recorded an episode talking to Ali Chunovic from the Dreyfus Foundation and have another in the works to discuss D2D. Right now the Podcasting team is Joe Baker, Sudeep Bhattacharyay, Bridget Gourley, Katie Mauck, Vanessa McCaffrey and Kari Stone. We meet the first and third Fridays of the month at 10AM eastern. Contact Vanessa McCaffrey at vmccafrey@albion.edu if you would like to join the team or have suggestions for a future episode.

CUR Chemistry Social at ACS

If you will be at the ACS Meeting in San Diego, please plan to join us for a "Meet CUR Chemistry!" event. We will meet on Monday, March 24 between 7:00 – 8:30 pm at [The Blind Burro](#) located at 639 J St. for food, drinks, and conversation. It will be a great opportunity to meet other members of the Division of Chemistry! Prior to this CUR event, consider attending the RC/PRF undergraduate research reception to meet even more members of the thriving undergraduate research community!

Spring ACS Meeting Undergraduate Research Programming

Sunday, March 23

Undergraduate Research in Catalysis
8–11:50am, SDCC Room 25B

Undergraduate Research at the Frontiers of Inorganic Chemistry
8–11:40am and 2–5:50pm, SDCC Hall G/H Room 9

PUNC: Nanomaterials Research at Primarily Undergraduate Institutions
8–11:45am and 2–5:45pm, Marriott Grand Ballroom: Section 12

2025 ACS Award for Research at an Undergraduate Institution
2–6pm, SDCC Room 25B

Monday, March 24

Undergraduate Research at the Frontiers of Inorganic Chemistry
2-5:40pm, SDCC Hall G/H Room 9

**PUNC: Nanomaterials Research at
Primarily Undergraduate Institutions**

8–11:45am Marriott Grand Ballroom:
Section 12

**Starting a Successful Research Program at
a Predominantly Undergraduate
Institution**

8am-12pm, SDCC Room 3
CELL Undergraduate Showcase
2–4:30pm, SDCC Room 24B

CUREs Across the Chemistry Disciplines

8–11:10am and 2–5:45pm, SDCC Room 4

**Undergraduate Research in Polymer
Science Posters**

1–3pm, Marriott Pacific Ballroom Foyer

**Undergraduate Research Posters all
disciplines**

12–2pm, SDCC Hall B2/C

Tuesday, March 25

**Undergraduate Research in Polymer
Science**

8–11:50am and 2-5pm, Marriott Pacific
Ballroom: Section 17

**Teaching Tools and Techniques:
Undergraduate Research**

8–11:25am, SDCC Room 3

CUREs Across the Chemistry Disciplines

8–11:10am, SDCC Room 4

Many thanks to Jeff Cannon for compiling
this list!