



# A Year in Review: Chemistry GSA Efforts and Priorities

## A Message from the President and Executive Board

### A Few Words from Chemistry GSA President, Santina Cruz

The 2019 – 2020 Chemistry Graduate Student Association (Chemistry GSA) executive board has had a busy term where we achieved important progress for graduate students in the Department of Chemistry at Penn State. The Chemistry GSA President communicates regularly with department leadership and attends monthly faculty meetings to bridge communication between department faculty and graduate students. The executive board meets regularly to advocate for chemistry graduate students by hosting events that uphold the mission of the Chemistry GSA. Through these avenues and others, **we have achieved the following successes:**

### Professional Development

- Completed industry tours with 15 chemistry graduate students each to facilities of four different industrial leaders – ExxonMobil, Arkema, Avery Dennison, and MilliporeSigma
  - Provided unique opportunities for students to network with industry recruiters
  - Two of the four companies visited were newly established GSA relationships – Avery Dennison and MilliporeSigma
- Brought in more than 8 unique seminar speakers from a variety of career paths to offer career guidance to our students
  - Speakers were from: The Naval Research Laboratory, The National Institute of Standards and Technology, Pacific Northwest National Lab, Furman University - a Primarily Undergraduate Institution, Intellectual Property, 3M, Arkema, Dow, ExxonMobil, MilliporeSigma, and more.
- Partnered with Penn State's Materials Research Science and Engineering Center (MRSEC) to ensure chemistry graduate students were aware of and able to attend all of their seminars.
- Held professional development workshops to help prepare students to be competitive applicants at the Career Networking and Recruitment Fair, the Chemistry Department's largest annual recruiting event (formerly known as Sponsors Days).
  - Workshops were on writing a strong resume and interviewing
  - Established additional professional development workshops with ExxonMobil, which will provide students with more resume feedback and interviewing tips for the coming years.

### Community Outreach

- Presented chemistry demonstrations to the students of Bellwood-Antis Elementary School in Bellwood, PA. This event helped bring science to kids outside the "Penn State bubble" where less outreach occurs.
- Led a workshop for Young Women in STEM (YWIS formally known as Girl Scout Workshop) hosted by Graduate Women in Science (GWIS). The students were introduced to separation science and separated the dyes in M&M's using paper chromatography.



## **Community Outreach (continued)**

- Partnered with members of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and the Department of Astronomy to run various science activities for 150 local 4<sup>th</sup> graders. With the Chem GSA, the students explored the exothermic reaction that occurs when iron reacts with oxygen, causing the formation of rust.
- Led a pop rocket create-and-launch activity at the Art of Discovery booth during the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts (Art's Fest). Participants used film canisters to create their pop rockets and then subsequently used effervescent tablets and water to launch them.
- Worked with ca. 30 high school students from the Penn State Deaf and Hard of Hearing Summer Academy. Each student built their own device for measuring luminescence and studied the impact of temperature on the brightness of glow sticks.

## **Website Overhaul**

- Revamped the Chem GSA website to more accurately reflect the focus of the organization
  - Added links to various social media
  - Added pages to help incoming students ("Prospective Students") as well as existing grad students ("A Survival Guide" and "Sponsor's Days")
- It is our hope that this website provides a central location for information relevant to Chemistry graduate students.

## **Recruitment**

- Created brochures for prospective graduate students on the topics of general advice for choosing a graduate program, including considering cost-of-living and insurance packages offered by the university and program, as well as questions to ask faculty and graduate students.

## **Peer Mentoring**

- Matched 42 incoming graduate students, both first years and transfer students, with current senior graduate student mentors.
- Hosted mentoring events on the topics of Choosing a Lab (October) and First-Year Meeting Advice (May).

## **Town Hall**

- Sponsored a town hall for graduate students and post-docs on the topic of *Ongoing Improvements to the Department* which was attended by over 30 graduate students and post-docs and invited department leadership as guest speakers: Phil Bevilacqua (Department Head), Scott Showalter (Graduate Program Chair), and Miriam Freedman (Associate Head for Climate & Diversity).

## Town Hall (continued)

- Sponsored a department wide town hall for all members of the chemistry department on the topic of *Department Climate & Culture* which was attended by over 70 members of the chemistry department and invited department leadership as guest speakers: Phil Bevilacqua (Department Head), Scott Showalter (Graduate Program Chair), and Miriam Freedman (Associate Head for Climate & Diversity).

## Elections for 2020 – 2021 Executive Board

We held successful elections for the 2020 – 2021 executive board, whose terms will commence on March 1, 2020:

- **President:** Lily Mawby
- **Vice President:** Eli Wenger
- **Treasurer:** Ryan Szukalo
- **Secretary:** Laura Wickham
- **Chairman of Professional Development:** Auston Butterfield
- **Chairman of Community Outreach:** Sonic Cheon
- **External Liaison:** Jessica Schulze

We thank our outgoing officers Santina Cruz (President), Varun Mandalaparthi (Secretary), Andrew Veenis (Outreach), and Gabriella DiDomizio (External Liaison) for their tireless efforts and service to our graduate students. We wish them luck in their future endeavors!

## Stay connected with the Chem GSA



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