

THE SEA GULL Chemist

2024-2025

Salisbury
UNIVERSITY

Greetings Sea Gull Chemists!

We have another year of exciting happenings to share from the Salisbury University Department of Chemistry. Our students and faculty have been working hard and accomplishing exceptional things in the classroom, in their research labs and in the community. The next few pages will give you a very brief overview of some of these efforts. In particular, we will tell you about:

- **Our Students.** The SU chemistry students continue to do amazing things, including securing grant funding to support their research and traveling to conferences to present the results of their work locally, regionally and nationally.
- **Our Faculty.** We have said farewell to three faculty members this past year. We are filled with gratitude for all the years of service and dedication they have shown to our department and University.
- **Our Recent Happenings.** With so many events and activities this past year, we can't share it all, but we have selected a few of the highlights from our department.
- **Our Alumni.** Finally, we would love to hear from you! Send us a note or stop by to let us know how you are doing.



Student Achievements

The **Allen R. Dudley Memorial Award in Chemistry** is given each year to a senior chemistry major who has demonstrated consistent academic excellence and who has the potential for an exceptional future in chemistry.

- **Ally Wagner** is the 2024 recipient of the Dudley Award. Ally graduated with an ACS-certified B.S. in chemistry and is currently in the first year of a Ph.D. program at the University of Oregon.



The **James F. Glenn Chemistry Award** is given to a senior chemistry major with outstanding academics who has made significant contributions to chemistry education.

- **Megan Spicer** is the 2024 recipient of the Glenn Award. Megan graduated with a B.S. in chemistry and is currently in her first year at the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore School of Pharmacy.



The **Dorothy Ruxton Chemistry Student Research Fund** was established by SU's past president Dr. Charles Wight and his wife Victoria Rasmussen in honor of Dr. Wight's mother. The endowment provides travel grants for students involved in chemistry research to present their work at professional conferences and network with other scientists in the field. Some of the recent Ruxton Award recipients, along with the conferences they attended, include:

- **Julia Frankis**, National Conference on Undergraduate Research, Spring 2004
- **Min Thway Khant**, Intercollegiate Student Chemist Convention, Spring 2024

The **Irving and Sylvia Cort Scholarship in Chemistry** was established by Bruce Cort (SU Class of 1971) in honor of his parents, Irving and Sylvia Cort. The award is given to entering first-year chemistry majors based on academic excellence in high school.

The current Cort Scholars are **Wren Adkins** (2024), **Gabe Miksa** (2026), **Rhona Lynch** (2026), **Bryce Greenlee** (2027), **Marcus Gjini** (2027), **Emily Hoard** (2027), **Cassidy Thomas** (2027), **Leah How** (2028), **Kashan Nasir** (2028) and **Kayleigh Sweeney** (2028).

Many students presented their research at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (pictured left), our Chemistry Department symposium, and the Salisbury University Research Conference.

Faculty Farewells

Dr. David Rieck has been a faculty member in the Department of Chemistry since 1987, specializing in inorganic chemistry but teaching a wide variety of courses over the years. He contributed greatly to the department and to SU, including being chair of the department for many years and being the Faculty Senate president for two terms. Dr. Rieck was dedicated to enriching the quality of the chemistry program for both faculty and students. He was the “catalyst” for attaining American Chemical Society certification (1992) and for developing a nationally recognized laboratory safety program. He was beloved by students, which earned him the SU Alumni Association’s Faculty Appreciation Award in 2016. His former student, Donna Bullock Taylor, Class of 1994, nominated him for the award and had this to say about him:

I took General Chemistry I and II with Dr. Rieck back in the early 1990s. The classes took place in the large lecture hall. I remember sitting there as a first-year student, a bit overwhelmed by my choice to major in the sciences and feeling a little out of my element (pun intended). One thing that sticks in my head was his response to a question I had. I can’t recall exactly what the question was, something about light and color, and I knew that it wasn’t a great question, so I felt silly asking it. But he was patient and kind. He listened and responded in a way that made sense to me. He made that big lecture hall class a bit smaller that day and made me believe in myself a little more. I went on to become a teacher myself, and it was experiences like this that shaped the teacher I have become. It’s hard to believe the young professor I remember is ready for retirement, but I wish him well and hope that he continues in some way to inspire others as he did for me so many years ago.

Several other students also wrote glowing recommendations for Dr. Rieck for the award, and the praise was not limited to students. Bruce Cort, a longtime benefactor of the Chemistry Department and founder of the Irving and Sylvia Cort Scholarship, had this to say:

He is extremely dedicated to his students, faculty and the University. Dealing with him is always a pleasure. He takes great delight in science and has motivated many students to move beyond the B.A. to Ph.D. and medical degree programs. He does all of this by staying very close to his students and acting as a guiding light and role model to them! Having seen Dr. Rieck in action, he is true to his mission and is a tremendous asset to Salisbury University.

Dr. Rieck’s last semester at SU will be spring 2025. He has been a pillar of the department and of SU for decades, and he will not be easily replaced. Here are some words of thanks and farewell from colleagues and students:

- *Dr. Rieck was the first chemistry professor I ever had at Salisbury. He was the person who inspired me to become a chemist and always encouraged me along the way!*
- *David is a wonderful colleague and mentor to faculty in the department. His many years of service have contributed to the growth of the chemistry program over the last 30+ years. He will be greatly missed.*
- *Such a wise dude. I have learned so much from him about teaching and about SU. I will sorely miss hearing his perspective. What a mentor!*
- *Thank you, David, for being a great colleague, leader, and friend during our 30 years in the Chemistry Department. I have always appreciated your optimistic attitude and desire to help others. Look forward to the future! Retirement is great!*

Dr. K.J. Winchell joined the Chemistry Department in fall 2021. She taught many General Chemistry I and II labs and contributed to updating the general chemistry lab manuals and experiments. Because of her background in inorganic and physical chemistry, she also taught Advanced Experimental Chemistry I for several years. She was very involved with running the Chemistry Support Center and collecting data on its usage to help the department figure out how to best utilize that resource. Dr. Winchell’s last semester at SU was spring 2024. She was a treasured member of the department, as attested to in these quotes from students and colleagues:

- *A real delight to have in the department. She went above and beyond with teaching upper-level labs and with improving some of the lower-level labs. I only wish she could have stuck around longer!*
- *K.J. was a perfect complement to our department as she maintained very high standards for her students. Her personality, work ethic and creativity will be greatly missed!*
- *K.J. will be greatly missed. She is an outstanding colleague and excellent teacher. Thank you for all your contributions to the department.*
- *Always fun to talk to, always willing to pitch in, and always put our students first.*

Dr. Chuck Wight was the president of SU from July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2022. He was compassionate and down-to-earth, which was a great boon to SU during his leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic. He was a member of the Department of Chemistry throughout his presidency and through spring 2024, when he retired. Even as president, his love of teaching led him to teach courses for the Department of Chemistry, including General Chemistry I and Chemistry: A Humanistic Perspective. He generously allowed the department to use his self-developed chemistry homework platform, ChemVantage, for our General Chemistry I pre-assessment, and he created and funded the Dorothy Ruxton Chemistry Student Research Fund. The department always valued his input and contributions, as seen in these quotes from member of the department:

- *For such an accomplished person, he was always so humble. I always appreciated that when he became a chemistry faculty member after being SU president, he became one of us.*
- *Thank you, Chuck, for your generous contributions to the chemistry program. From teaching chemistry courses, to supporting assessment projects, to creation of the Dorothy Ruxton Chemistry Student Research Fund – you have made a significant impact on our students. Thank you.*
- *We wouldn’t have made through COVID as well as we did without you. We owe you a great debt.*

There is not enough space to express the gratitude that colleagues, former students and friends have for the dedication and service you all have shown our department, University and the community. We all wish you the best as a new journey begins!

News & Events

LuCurts Scholars Begins. In 2008, an anonymous donor pledged a planned gift to the Salisbury University Foundation, Inc., naming the foundation as a beneficiary of their life insurance policies to create the Violet B. LaCurts Memorial Scholarship.

In the fall 2023 semester, the Foundation announced the scholarship's first three recipients, realizing a legacy of impact created by that donor 15 years ago.

That legacy continues today as students in SU's Richard A. Henson School of Science and Technology who declare majors in chemistry and physics during their freshman year and who demonstrate financial need through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are eligible to apply for the Violet B. LaCurts Memorial Scholarship.

New Tools for Teaching and Research. The Chemistry Department recently acquired a site license of Gaussian and a new FT – IR.

An increasingly integral part of chemistry is using computational software, as evidenced by the fact that the American Chemical Society (ACS) requires this component in our curriculum as part of the ACS approval process. To facilitate access for students and faculty alike, the department has acquired a site license for Gaussian, which will enable all researchers and upper-level chemistry courses to use this software as we train our future graduates.



The FT – IR upgrades a previous instrument and will be used by research students and those taking organic chemistry and advanced lab to analyze samples for functional groups.

Henson Faculty Awards. Dr. Alison Dewald received the 2024 Award for Excellence in Service and Dr. Seth Friese received the 2024 Award for Excellence in Research Mentoring.

Alumni Seminars. This past semester, our department was able to welcome back several alumni to give seminars and presentations:

On October 17, SU chemistry alum **Gillian Choquette ('20)** returned to campus to give a seminar titled "The Impact of Fatty Acid Beta Oxidation on Skeletal Aging." Choquette is currently a third-year Ph.D. candidate in molecular medicine at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

On November 18, we welcomed back SU chemistry alumni and current University of Maryland School of Pharmacy students **Gabrielle Guy ('23)** and **Zachary Geesaman ('23)** for a pharmacy school seminar and question and answer session.

On November 25, we welcomed back yet another SU chemistry alum, **Dr. Sam Labb ('18)**. She is finishing her postdoc at Lawrence Livermore National Lab. She gave a seminar titled, "Radiochemistry at the National Ignition Facility (NIF): Advances in Nuclear Astrophysics and National Security."

We always love having alumni return to campus. If you would be interested in giving a seminar or presentation back at your alma mater, please contact Dr. Alison Dewald (ahdewald@salisbury.edu).

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Over the past year, the Chemistry Department said good-bye to some very talented seniors (1) and welcomed in some enthusiastic freshmen (2). The chemistry faculty and students had lots of departmental events, including a liquid nitrogen ice cream senior send-off party (3), the fall semester welcome back breakfast (4), our annual fall beach bonfire (5), the seventh annual Golden Goggle Trivia Night (6), our annual spring faculty versus students kickball game and participated in the Henson School of Science's Spooky Science Spectacular for Halloween (7).



SU is an Equal Opportunity/AA/Title IX university and provides reasonable accommodation given sufficient notice to the University office or staff sponsoring the event or program. For more information regarding SU's policies and procedures, please visit salisbury.edu/equity. A copy of the current financial statement of the Salisbury University Foundation, Inc. is available by writing 1308 Camden Avenue, Salisbury MD 21801 or on its website, salisbury.edu/foundation. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies, from the Maryland Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis MD 21401, 410-974-5534.

Alumni Updates

Karen Wiles, (formerly Godfrey), Class of 2003, earned a Ph.D. in pathology from Vanderbilt University, with a research focus on the protein biochemistry of blood clotting. She is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Physiology at the Medical College of Georgia, where she serves as program director for the Master of Science in Medical Physiology Program and teaches physiology in the M.S., Ph.D. and M.D. programs. She recently authored an open access textbook on histology for undergraduate students (<http://pressbooks.pub/aandp1histologyatlasandworkbook/>). Karen and her husband, Paul, have three children, ages 15, 13 and 11.

Andrea Becker, Class of 2014, earned a Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee. She is currently working as a senior consultant at CGI.

Caroline Colgan, Class of 2015, earned a M.A. from the University of Maryland College Park. She is currently working as an instructional designer at the Defense Intelligence Agency. Caroline and her husband, fellow SU alum Josh, have a son, age 2.

Samantha Labb, Class of 2018, earned a Ph.D. in radiochemistry/health physics from Colorado State University. She is currently doing a postdoc at the Lawrence Livermore National Lab in California.

Stefani Lanahan, Class of 2024, is working as a Researcher at PreludeDx.

If you are interested in being included, please send a brief email to chemistry@salisbury.edu letting us know the year of your graduation and what you have been up to since then. We really do want to know what you are doing!

Giving Day Is Coming!

If you are able to make a contribution to the Department of Chemistry, please consider doing so on Giving Day, which this year will be Tuesday, April 1, 2025. We appreciate your generosity at any time; however, alumni donations made on Giving Day are matched up to \$50 per contribution. Be sure to specify that your donation be directed to one of the following areas:

- Department of Chemistry
- Dorothy Ruxton Chemistry Student Research Fund
- Allen R. Dudley Memorial Award in Chemistry
- Irving and Sylvia Cort Scholarship in Chemistry

Also let us know if you would be willing to offer our students support through networking, job seeking advice or general life guidance. We appreciate anything you can do to help our students!

GET CONNECTED

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 facebook.com/SUChemDept

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