

From the Desk of the Chair

It seems like just yesterday that we ended the spring quarter and here we are now at the beginning of fall. Classes have started up and everyone is eager about the beginning of the new academic year. This is especially true in the Department of Chemistry as we begin our preparations to move into our new facility. We are scheduled to begin our move on 01 Dec 08, but it will likely take several weeks for us to unpack and get our labs ready for the winter quarter. I hope you all received the notice about the “sneak peak” tour of the Msgr. Andrew J. McGowan building that will occur on 17 Oct 08 during the alumni weekend. If you are in town, consider stopping by, otherwise your next chance to see the building will be after we open to the public in January.

The department welcomes two new faculty members this year. Dr. Justin Maresh and Dr. Melanie Schroeder-Patterson join our staff and bring with them expertise in the field of biochemistry. More information on them will be published in the next issue of *The Catalyst*. In addition to new faculty arriving, we have one faculty member who moved to another institution. Dr. Layne Morsch left the university at the end of July to accept an appointment in the chemistry department at the University of Illinois - Springfield.

We are currently working on plans to update *The Catalyst* over the next few issues. We will be soliciting articles from current faculty members and students, all of which will be published at the end of each academic quarter from here on out. I also anticipate contacting our retired faculty members for short interviews to let you, our

readers, know what they have been up to since leaving DePaul. On that note, we are always interested in what our alumni are up to. Please drop us a line once in a while to let us know what you are doing these days!



Richard F. Niedziela
Associate Professor and Chair
Class of 1988



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Chemistry Major = Lab Rat: Rule and Exceptions

On February 8, 2008, the Chemistry Department at DePaul University hosted another Life after DePaul event for students to gain information on various career avenues available to chemists with a B.S, M.S., or Ph.D. degree. Dr. Richard Niedziela was the emcee for the event, and he introduced the following speakers.

Dr. Quinetta Shelby discussed the differences between M.S and Ph.D. programs, and she recommended that interested students at all academic stages attend graduate school fairs and get involved in undergraduate research.

Dr. Matthew Dintzner revealed possible career options that many chemistry students do not readily recognize as science-related professions for themselves that do not require work in a laboratory (e.g. patent law, chemical sales, medicine, or culinary arts).

Nick Richert (2003 DePaul and Dintzner lab alumnus) explained the importance of being able to use laboratory instrumentation and to analyze data, which are skills he uses as an employee at the Illinois State

Forensics lab. He also recalled a rewarding experience where he personally helped to analyze key evidence in a criminal case.

Dr. Cathrine Southern provided a presentation that described briefly the research conducted by the chemistry faculty. She also informed students about funds available to support student research at DePaul and other research facilities.

Mike Wemhoff (2007 DePaul and Parra lab alumnus) recalled the preparation and interview processes he underwent during his successful application to the Loyola Stritch School of Medicine. He challenged students to gain experiences that set them apart from other applicants vying for limited spots in medical school.

Afterward, the speakers were available to answer questions during a casual gathering for refreshments. Chemistry students walked away from the event with a better idea of the importance of getting involved in activities that will help them to be more competitive when considering the numerous career options available to them.

Summer 2008 Researchers

Twenty-one students conducted research in the laboratories of several faculty members during Summer 2008. Many of our undergraduates successfully obtained competitive funds from the College of LA&S to support their projects. Other dedicated students volunteered their time.



Photo by Dr. Melanie Schroeder

Summer 2008 research students with the new Monsignor Andrew J. McGowan Science Building in the background.

Spotlight Shines on Students at the Research and Awards Symposium

The DePaul University Department of Chemistry held its Annual Chemistry Research and Awards Symposium on May 30, 2008 to celebrate student research, academic accomplishments, and dedicated service to the department.

Dr. Richard Niedziela, department chair

and emcee of the symposium, started the program by asking all to observe a moment of silence to remember and honor Professor Emeritus Avrom Blumberg and Celeste Diener, who was a promising graduate student in the department. Celeste was a student of or teaching assistant for most

faculty members in the department. Her helpful involvement in the department and her beautiful infectious smile are sincerely missed by all she touched. Shortly after Celeste's untimely passing this year, the department wholeheartedly agreed on Dr. Ruben Parra's motion to celebrate her contributions to the department by renaming the graduate teaching assistant award the Celeste Diener Memorial Award for Outstanding Graduate Assistant Performance.



Photo by Marina Damiano

Celeste Diener (lower right) in a circle of friends.

The event continued with the recognition of student participation in research activities. Four undergraduate students provided abstracts and presentations of their research studies throughout the academic year. The student speakers were:

- **Stephanie McKean** (Dr. M. Dintzner, Advisor) on "Montmorillonite K10 Clay-Catalyzed Hydration of Alkynes"
 - **Massimo Pacilli** (Dr. M. Dintzner, Advisor) on "Synthesis of Phenazine and Derivatives"
 - **Natalie Rizzo** (Dr. R. Sommer, Advisor) on "Steric Modifications to the $P_4(NR)_6$ Ligand and Preparation of Coordination Polymers"
 - **Pawel Zbyszynski** (Dr. L. Jin, Advisor) on "Thermodynamics of Copper and Zinc Ion Binding to Amyloid β Peptide (A β) 1-16"
- Announcements of the awards and scholarships followed. The awards and award recipients for the 2007-2008 academic year were:
- Senior Honors Convocation Award – **Massimo Pacilli**

- The Merck Index Award – **Dominic Pileggi**
- American Institute of Chemists Award – **Adrienne Stich**
- Departmental Award for Outstanding Performance in Analytical and Physical Chemistry – **Lorelei DiTommaso**
- POLYED Award for Outstanding Performance in Organic Chemistry – **Alex Spore**
- Departmental Awards for Outstanding Performance in Organic Chemistry – **Peter Hendrickson** and **Kevin Schwalbach**
- CRC Awards for Excellence in Freshmen Chemistry – **Annika Andersson**, **Terah Cheatham**, **Michael Kelliher**, and **Natalie Rizzo**
- Celeste Diener Memorial Award for Outstanding Graduate Assistant Performance – **Sheena McDaniels**
- Outstanding Undergraduate Assistant Awards – **Sean McCormick**, **Massimo Pacilli**, and **Matthew Zuziak**
- Outstanding Student Operations Award – **Adrienne Stich**
- Jonaitis End Scholarship – **Michael Kelliher**
- Sanat K. Dhar Endowed Scholarships – **Natalie Rizzo** and **Elizabeth Sisler**
- Chemistry Scholars Awards – **Irina Doncheva**, **Danielle Gaynor**, **Paula Hoffmann**, **Sarah Lopez**, **Natalie Rizzo**, **Elizabeth Sisler**, **Pawel Zbyszynski**, and **Mathew Zuziak**
- Ueberbacher Scholarship – **Ansonia Badgett**, **Irina Doncheva**, **Danielle Gaynor**, **Michael Kelliher**, **Vincent Pansino**, **Elizabeth Sisler**, and **Matthew Zuziak**

The Chemistry Club ended the symposium with an entertaining slide show that included photos of students dressed as their favorite elements at the Chemistry Club Halloween party and photos of students posing beside their posters at the American Chemical Society National Meeting in New Orleans earlier this year.

After the symposium, students, faculty, and staff enjoyed guacamole, quesadillas, and other Mexican dishes at La Canasta restaurant.



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*DePaul chemists
know not to lick
the spoon even if
it does smell like
bananas!*

We're on the Web!

See us at our **NEW** site:

<http://chemistry.depaul.edu/>

Chemistry and Biology Clubs Sponsor Fundraiser

On the afternoon of Friday, June 6, 2008, the Chemistry and Biology departments battled each other in no-holds-barred game of softball at Wish Field. Students, faculty, and staff from both departments competed in a rarely fierce, and mostly laugh-out-loud hilarious, struggle for departmental dominance on the softball field.

Spearheaded by the Chemistry Club and the Biology Club, this event was held as a fundraiser to assist the family of John Lawler, a DePaul alumnus and current Project Director of Construction for Facilities Operations at DePaul, whose son needs a heart transplant. There were well over 50 players (22 on the chemistry roster at our last count) and at least as many onlookers. Players donated at least \$10, and

others donated \$5 or more.

At the end of this epic battle, er, softball game that is, a curious thing was realized: no one knew the final score of the softball game. Those on the Biology team might say that after they were ahead by 18 or so homeruns, there was no need to keep track of the score. Although the Chemistry team concedes that Biology team won the game, its members might say that the ballgame was a symbol of inter-departmental unity to help one of our DePaul family members and, hence, score keeping was not necessary. Besides, Chemistry won the pre-game smack talk competition by a landslide. In either case, the softball game was fun and viewed by all as a success.



Photo by John Lawler

Players on the Chemistry (in red) and Biology (in blue) softball rosters.

Where Are Our Graduates Now?

The department conferred degrees to 15 of its graduates in June 2008. One alumna will enter Rush Medical College this fall, and an alumnus will attend the UCSF School of Pharmacy. Other alumni will start chemistry graduate programs at Northwestern

University, Texas A&M, UC Berkeley, and the University of Georgia. The chemistry department wishes all our alumni success in their continued education and professional careers.

Catalyst Contributors...

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