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# KSU Chemist

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Dear Friends –

*“The more things change . . . , the more things change!”* could describe the past year on campus.

As of June 15, K-State has a new President in Kirk Schulz. Provost Duane Nellis has departed to assume the presidency of the University of Idaho, so we have a new Interim Provost, Ruth Dyer. In the wake of Dean Steve White’s transition to phased retirement, we have a new Interim Dean of Arts and Sciences, Brian Spooner (Director of the Division of Biology). There have been other administrative changes across campus, including a new (or is it re-newed?) head football coach, Bill Snyder.

In the face of so much transition, some things remained constant: our faculty, staff and students continue to do amazing things that reflect great credit onto the department.

Last November, Ken Klabunde received the Dr. Ron and Rae Iman Faculty Award for Research. That followed hard on the heels of him being named as a Fellow of the ACS Division of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry – an award given to only two individuals last year and for which a special symposium was held in his honor at the Spring 2009 ACS National Meeting.

Senior Scientific Glassblower James Hodgson was honored twice in the past year by the American Scientific Glassblowers Society: he received the Andrews Glass Award in recognition of the best technical paper presented at the Society’s National Symposium, and also the J. Allen Alexander Award for his outstanding contributions in furthering the aims and ideals of the ASGS.

For the third time in the past three years, one of our undergraduate Chemistry majors was awarded the prestigious National Science



Foundation Graduate Fellowship: Mike Reppert, who had an exceptionally productive research experience in Ryszard Jankowiak’s lab, will use the award to pursue graduate work at MIT in Biophysical Chemistry. MIT will have to wait until Fall 2010 for Mike to join them, however: Mike also received a Fulbright Student Scholar Award, and he will spend the upcoming year at the Polish Academy of Sciences, where he’d previously spent a month doing collaborative research.

Christer Aakeröy was invited to join the Board of Governors of the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, the world’s foremost repository for molecular crystallography data. He is the only Governor’s Board member from North America.

In Spring 2009, our B.S. program was re-accredited by the ACS for another five-year period. As part of the massive data submission, we were required to offer copies of our students’ Senior Thesis research reports (which are a curriculum requirement for all of our majors). It was particularly gratifying that the ACS Committee on Professional Training explicitly noted the quality of our students’ projects and their reports.

Although it is too early to know for certain, it seems quite likely that 2009 will wind up being a record-setting year for our faculty members in terms of securing extramural funding for their research. Their successes are occurring individually and collaboratively, and for both “normal” and instrumentation awards. This is tangible proof of our faculty’s expertise and dedication, and you should share in our sense of pride in these accomplishments.

Last Fall, Alumni Advisory Council members shared with our students their experiences in dealing with unexpected workplace challenges. It was an excellent and enjoyable afternoon (except for the bucketing rain that forced us to move the wrap-up Ice Cream Social indoors). The Council will gather again in October, and will offer their insights on workplace safety.

Last year’s Distinguished Chemistry Alumni Seminar speaker was Jim Spigarelli: he shared his thoughts on the role of not-for-profit research institutes in the nation’s research agenda. Jim’s analysis was keen and perceptive, informed by his many successful years as CEO of the Midwest Research Institute. Jim’s talk was part of a very strong year for our seminar series, which also included visits by Richard Crooks, Joe Hupp, Henry White, Dick Zare, Royce Murray and Jonathan Sessler.

Your support is crucial in helping us to sustain something truly special here, and all of us are grateful for it.

Eric Maatta

## Eight Years Talking About It; Two Semesters Doing It



The new Main Office features Mitsugi Ohno's "Mayflower".



A long-term goal is to update this classic Periodic Table.

Neglecting for the moment several as-yet-unpacked boxes strewn around the department head's office, the Chemistry Department's move out of Willard Hall is complete.

The photo above left shows the new Main Office in the "CBC" Building: now that the biochemists are gone, we didn't want to keep the name "Chemistry-Biochemistry", and CBC was the best we could do without either a) incurring the wrath of the US Postal Service or, b) finding a donor willing to contribute the substantial sum needed to rename it (call us – collect! – if you are interested).

The Main Office (formerly a biochem teaching lab) now displays Mitsugi Ohno's Mayflower glass sculpture – we moved it out of the second floor foyer in order to free up space for gatherings, although his three Columbian ships remain there.

The photo above right shows the Periodic Table in its new home on the first floor of CBC. Prof. Levy and AXΣ members put in a lot of effort preparing it for transport, and Facilities did a nice job accommodating its excess height into the existing ceiling panels.

Other new spaces include a larger Help Room, the Accounting Office, a student room/mailroom, assorted storage rooms (needed because we no longer have a vault), and a faculty conference room suitable for group meetings or small classes. The next time you stop by, we'll be happy to show you around.

None of this would have been possible without a huge amount of sustained work by all of the office staff, along with Tobe Eggers, Jim Hodgson and (especially) Ron Jackson.



Left to right, above: the Chemistry Help Room, Faculty Conference Room, and the Accounting Office.

Donors to the Chemistry Department 7/1/08 - 6/30/09: Thanks to one and all for your support!

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Call, write, e-mail, or  
better yet, stop by.  
We'd enjoy hearing  
from you.

## Progressing Through Tough Times

The lousy economic times have adversely affected everyone and everything; KSU is no exception. While it is probably true that academic institutions offer a bit of an insulating bubble, the Department has been forced to make some very tough budget decisions, as you undoubtedly have also.

As is true for most organizations, the largest component of our budget is people. We have a very lean department, and there was no thought of "letting someone go". Everyone we have is vital, and colleagues voiced their preferences for voluntary furloughs in lieu of dismissing anyone. We also were in agreement to protect our GTA budget to the fullest extent possible: graduate students are the engines driving our research, and they serve a critical instructional role in our teaching laboratories. We actually were able to achieve a modest boost in our GTA stipend this year. In this economy, that is a tremendous accomplishment, enabled by our faculty's broad success in securing research grants. In the end, we opted to surrender about 70% of our operating budget: that is what pays for expenses such as mail, phone, copying, maintenance, seminars, etc. Clearly, we're sailing close to the wind. Adversity can reveal the character of a person or an organization: I think that the department's decisions and actions speak clearly about ours.

### A Round of Applause for:

*Maria Paukstelis*, who will be recognized in September by Kansas Governor Mark Parkinson for her 40 (!) years of teaching excellence.

*Jackie Johnson*, senior in Prof. Aakeröy's group, recipient of the ACS Undergraduate Award in Inorganic Chemistry.

*Olga Koper*, Chief Technology Officer of NanoScale Inc., who was appointed as Adjunct Professor of Chemistry.

*Ryszard Jankowiak*, recipient of the Sigma Xi Outstanding Senior Scientist award.

### *In Memoriam – William G. Fateley*

University Distinguished Professor Emeritus Bill Fateley passed away on July 30, 2009 at the age of 80. He will be sorely missed.

Bill was colleague, collaborator, mentor, teacher and friend to so many people around the world. He served as Department Head from 1972 – 1979, and was internationally recognized for his expertise in vibrational spectroscopy and sensing, and for his pioneering work with Hadamard Transform Spectroscopy.

A memorial service was held on the KSU campus on August 10, and featured tributes and recollections from colleagues and former members of the Fateley-Hammaker group. Those remembrances, and others contributed by friends who were not able to attend, will be available on our departmental web page in the coming weeks at the following address:

<http://www.k-state.edu/chem/news/bill.html>



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