



# Department of Chemistry Newsletter

## May Issue, 2022

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Syilx Okanagan Nation Territory

## Announcements



This May issue marks the first anniversary of our Department of Chemistry Newsletter. Started during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, bulletins have been compiled and sent out regularly in our collective attempt to promote departmental collegiality and communications, to keep everyone informed about important news and dates, and to celebrate each others' accomplishments. *From this year, the newsletters will be posted on the Department's website.*

We hope the newsletters have been up to the expectations, and continue to receive your supports.

## Congratulations to:



**Dr. Thu-Thuy Dang** for being awarded the NSERC Alliance International grant (\$289,703) for the 2022–2024 period to collaborate with Prof. Jakob Franke's group at the Leibniz University of Hannover (Germany). The two teams will link gene discovery with metabolic engineering towards biotechnological production of high-value plant alkaloids.



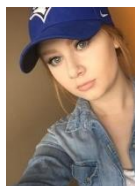
**Dr. Gino DiLabio** for securing \$71,400 through a collaborative research agreement with Promerus LLC (a Sumimoto Bakelite subsidiary) to explore the properties of norbornene polymers using classical molecular dynamics simulations. Dr. Emilian Tuca, a postdoctoral researcher in the DiLabio's group, will be leading the study.



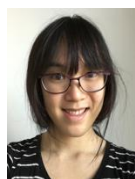
**Dr. Lauren Erland** (Murch's group) for starting her new faculty position as the Director of Berry Research at the University of the Fraser Valley in July. Dr. Erland's own research program comes with an opportunity to apply for a Canada Research Chair position.



**Dr. Robert Godin** for being awarded France–Canada Research Funds (\$ 14,961) to initiate a collaboration with Prof. Marc Robert (University of Paris). Marc Robert is a world-leader in electrocatalysis and had recently developed a variety of earth-abundant metal based catalysts that are able to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> selectively and with high efficiency. The collaboration will aim to couple these catalysts with carbon nitrides to improve the photocatalytic efficiency and investigate charge transfer at their interfaces.



**Amanda Darbyshire** (Wolthers' group) for having passed her PhD comprehensive examination.



**Brooke Kwan** (Dang's group) for being awarded the British Columbia Graduate Scholarship for her master's study.



**Shilong Pan** (Li's group) for being awarded the NSERC's Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's Program.



**Micah Yang** (Li's group) for receiving the Poster Award at the annual meeting of the Biophysical Society of Canada in Ottawa, and being awarded the Irving K. Barber Faculty of Science's Entrance Scholarship for her master's degree.



**Adam Yasunaga** for receiving the Trainee Paper Award (for the paper entitled "Quantification of fast molecular adhesion by fluorescence footprinting", *Science Advances* 7:eabe6984) and being invited to give a talk at the annual meeting of the Biophysical Society of Canada in Ottawa.

***And big congratulations to all students on their graduation this spring!***

Information about the convocation can be found at: <https://graduation.ok.ubc.ca/schedule/>

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## Community and outreach

### UBC Okanagan STEM Outreach Collective started the Spring term with a bang!

The *Scientific Marvels* earned 8<sup>th</sup> place during the 2022 Staff and Faculty Sports Day on May 6<sup>th</sup>, crushing our Rock-Paper-Scissors competitors and mopping the floor during seated volleyball.



If you are interested in getting involved with STEM based outreach, check out <https://stem.ok.ubc.ca> for information about programs and events.

Contact Dr. Tamara Freeman directly at [tamara.freeman@ubc.ca](mailto:tamara.freeman@ubc.ca) if you are interested in joining the *CHEMBASSADORS* for chemistry outreach. As a heads up – we will be hosting a campus wide **STEM Engagement Day on November 9<sup>th</sup>**. Make sure to save the date!

## Recent publications



**Trinh-Don Nguyen, Thu-Thuy T. Dang** (2022). *News and Views: Old path, new frontier: Discovery of long-existing terpenoid biosynthetic pathways in soft corals. Nature Chemical Biology.* DOI: [10.1038/s41589-022-01045-z](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41589-022-01045-z)



Rachel L. Spietz, Devon Payne, **Robert Szilagyi**, Eric S. Boyd (2022). *Review: Reductive biomining of pyrite by methanogens. Trends in Microbiology.* DOI: [10.1016/j.tim.2022.05.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tim.2022.05.005)

## New members



**Ally Badry** joining our Department as the new Administrative Assistant.



**Laura Stephanie Amaya Porras** joining Dr. Robert Godin's group (SolarSpec). From Bogotá, Colombia, Laura is a Mitacs Globalink student who will look into time-resolved emission spectra of carbon nitrides to better understand processes such as charge trapping.



**Nishtha Singh** joining Dr. Isaac Li's group (Single Molecule Mechano-Biology Laboratory) as a master's student with a Graduate Dean's Entrance Scholarship. Nishtha earned a BSc degree in biochemistry at the University of Leicester.



**Hrithik Shankar** joining Dr. Thu-Thuy Dang's group (Plant BioCoRe). From Birla Institute of Technology in India, Hrithik is a Mitacs Globalink student who will work on structure-function analyses of alkaloid biosynthetic enzymes.



**Sofia Ventosa** also joining Plant BioCoRe. Sofia is an International Undergraduate Research Award recipient and will be elucidating the metabolic pathways of alkaloids in some medicinal plants.



## Seminars

### Departmental seminars

None scheduled for June

### UBC Okanagan Biochemistry & Biomedical Graduate Student seminar

June is the last month of the Biochemistry & Biomedical Graduate Student seminar series for this academic year with the following presentations.

**Day, time and venue:** Friday, 3–4 pm in EME 1101

- Date:**
- June 3<sup>rd</sup>: **Mahdi Abassian** (Barker) and **Andrea Verdugo** (Gibson)
  - June 17<sup>th</sup>: **Matthew McConnachie** (Dang) and another student (Bergstrom)
  - June 24<sup>th</sup>: Series closing ceremony with prize announcement

# Student affairs

## Research proposals, committee meetings, examinations

None scheduled for June

## Recent and upcoming events

**May 23<sup>rd</sup>–27<sup>th</sup>:** Dr. Isaac Li together with Scott (Minh) An, Seongho Kim, Allison Leam, Micah Yang, and Adam Yasunaga from the Li's group attended the annual meeting of the Biophysical Society of Canada in Ottawa.



**June 13<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup>:** Several faculty, staff and students from our Department will join the Canadian Chemistry Conference and Exhibition (CCCE) this year in Calgary.



Dr. Robert Godin is looking for a roommate while attending CCCE. Please contact him ([robert.godin@ubc.ca](mailto:robert.godin@ubc.ca)) if you are interested in sharing the accommodation cost.



**July 24<sup>th</sup>–28<sup>th</sup>:** The annual meeting of the Phytochemical Society of North America (PSNA) this year will take place in Blacksburg, Virginia (USA) after the 2021 PSNA (60<sup>th</sup> anniversary) meeting successfully hosted by UBC Okanagan.



We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.

If you would like to contribute to, or have any suggestions for, our Department's upcoming newsletter, please contact Thuy Dang ([thuy.dang@ubc.ca](mailto:thuy.dang@ubc.ca)).