



7/20/2020

Message from the Editor:

I am struggling to come up with something to say at the beginning of this newsletter. This is a recurring problem due to the somewhat similar nature of one academic year compared to another. However, this year the problem of what to write about comes from the momentous change that occurred due to the pandemic. My colleagues and I have a hard time remembering what occurred before mid-March because we were consumed by the staggering amount of rapid changes that we made to our classes and laboratories in essentially one week. We are still dealing with the fallout, although we realize our crisis was miniscule compared to what others have gone through. In addition, we are trying to imagine and prepare for multiple possible scenarios for classes in the fall. Rest assured that no matter how the situation unfolds, we are committed to doing the best job we can to help students achieve their academic goals. Whether we are meeting students face-to-face, behind a mask, 6-feet away, or remotely over the internet, student success will always be our focus in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at McMurry University.

Sincerely,

Dr. Edward Donnay

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Alumni News:

We are sad to report the death of alumnus Mr. Charles G. Hogsett, Jr. ('47) on August 14, 2019 at age 93. In the 1940's and 1950's Charles purchased or opened Chevrolet dealerships in Roby, Merkel, and Munday, Texas. While in Munday, he was elected president of Muntex Corporation, which opened the first refrigerated storage facility for locally grown vegetables. In January 1967, Charles accepted an administrative position at McMurry, becoming the first director of Alumni Services. Later he took on added responsibilities for Development and Planned Giving. He retired from McMurry in 1989 after a long and successful career.

Two other chemistry alumni that have passed away recently are Jake Weir ('50) and Irvin Hamilton ('71).

At the opening convocation ceremony on September 19th, Dr. Girvin Harkins ('60) was named Trustee Emeritus for his long and distinguished service on the McMurry University Board of Trustees. Dr. Harkins served on the Board from 2006-2018.

Dr. Donnay ran into Bill Arno ('69-Sociology) at Taco Bell on South 14th on January 20th. Bill is the husband of Kathy Arno ('69). They spoke about the start of the spring term and the recent renovation in the science building.

Ms. Sara Rixon Dodd ('01) accompanied her daughter to homecoming and spoke with Dr. Veltkamp.

Dr. Jennifer Coddington-Bui ('06) and her husband Holt announced the birth of daughter Emma Bui on July 23, 2019.

Dr. Allison White ('08) married Mr. Adam Nachbar in June 2020. The Nachbars live in Kansas City, MO and are proud pet parents of their dog Cooper.

Mr. Derek David ('09), his wife Kendall, and daughter Dahl welcomed the addition of Dex David to the family in November 2019.

Dr. Malaney (Lopez) O'Connell ('10) and her husband Neal adopted 4-year-old Karlee O'Connell in November after being her foster parents since June 2018. Congratulations, Malaney! Dr. O'Connell is our Department of Biology colleague here at McMurry and shares renovated lab spaces with Dr. Pyenta (see below).

Dr. Erica (Rawls) Wilson ('11), her husband Adam, and big sister Allie welcomed Nora Leigh Wilson to the world on Oct. 22, 2019. Dr. Wilson works as a Pharmacy Clinical Coordinator and PGY1 Residency Program Director at Medical Center Health System in Midland. Welcome, Nora!

Dr. Tara (Williams) Farmer ('12) and her husband Jace are expecting their first child this summer. She works in the pharmacy at Walgreens in Abilene. Congratulations Tara and Jace!

Mr. Brandon Copeland ('14) moved with his family and purchased a house in Springfield, MO, after receiving a BS degree in Clinical Laboratory Science from Texas Tech University Health Science Center School of Health Professions last year.

Dr. Bradley Rowland Jr. ('14) graduated from the University of Houston Medical School in May. He is starting his residency in Winston Salem, NC. Congratulations Dr. Rowland!

Dr. Daniel Kent ('17) completed his Pharm. D. degree at Texas Tech Health Science Center School of Pharmacy in Abilene. Congratulations Dr. Kent!

Sophie Southwell ('17-minor) was accepted into the MS in Biotechnology program at Johns Hopkins University.

Other recent graduates that have stopped by the department to see the renovated spaces or have spoken with department faculty include Rev. Sean Smith ('06), Dr. J. Eric Chacon ('07-Natural Science), Mr. Brandon Randell ('10), and Ms. Shantel Thomas ('17).

The McMurry Science and Math Advisory Board (SMAB) is an organization of science and math alumni that donate time and resources to their alma mater. Members interact with current faculty and students to provide mentorship and guidance. SMAB funding priorities include Charles and Lisa Bloomer Research Stipends and supporting student academic travel to professional meetings and conferences. If you would like to know more about SMAB, you can visit, <http://academics.mcm.edu/smab/> or contact Dr. Tikhon Bykov at bykovt@mcm.edu.

Departmental News:

The department would like to congratulate the following students who won academic awards this past year: Ernesto Valle, Jr – Outstanding Senior, Anelisa Valenzuela – Outstanding Junior and Dr. W. Norton Jones Chemistry Scholarship, M. David Voogd – Outstanding Sophomore, Honna Turner and Jacy Bien – CRC Award and Outstanding Freshmen. In addition, Benny Todd was awarded the John Oliver Wallace Memorial Scholarship and Leila Reynolds received the Dr. Victor Tsang Endowed Scholarship. A few years ago the Ward-Bottom Science Fund that was established with the Department of Physics was altered so that chemistry and biology would receive benefits as well. While some money has been available to the department, the primary focus of the fund is to provide student scholarships. The department is pleased to announce that M. David Voogd will be the first non-Physics major to receive a Ward-Bottom Science Scholarship Award! The award will cover up to half of the normal cost of tuition, room, board, books, and fees.

Starting right before Thanksgiving and continuing over winter break the department moved into renovated teaching and research areas. The organic chemistry teaching laboratory has a new floor, new ceiling, and the addition of four fume hoods and three sinks. The biochemistry teaching lab was completely renovated and expanded by removing a wall with the adjoining classroom. The space is now used for class and laboratory for biochemistry taught by Dr. Pyenta, plus classes and labs in biology such as molecular biology and genetics taught by Dr. O'Connell ('10). Two small labs used for physical and inorganic chemistry were combined and renovated into a new biotech research space that is again shared by Drs. Pyenta and O'Connell. The research groups also share the

same equipment (some of which is new). These renovations were possible due to a Title V grant from the Department of Education. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on January 24th and attended by President Sandra Harper and members of the Board of Trustees including Dr. Rick Quy ('70) and Dr. Kay Younggren ('02). Unfortunately, the faculty and students had barely begun to get comfortable in the new surroundings before the term went to remote instruction at spring break. We are looking forward to getting a chance to get settled in at the earliest opportunity.

On October 22nd during National Chemistry Week, McMurry University and the local section of the ACS used a "Program-in-a-Box" to host a viewing of a webinar titled "Marvelous Metals". The McMurry University Student Affiliates Chapter of the ACS also used a "Program-in-a-Box" from the ACS on February 25th to view the webinar "The Future of Food". The boxes contain advertising flyers, balloons, and items to be given away as door prizes so they make programming events easy. The chemistry club also participated in a "STEAM" themed edition of Art Walk in downtown Abilene and the club hosted 4th grade students from Jim Ned elementary during homecoming in October. A web simulcast of a local section ACS meeting concerning plastic recycling rounds out a relatively busy chemistry event calendar this year.

Departmental Research:

Drs. Pyenta and Shin, along with students Yuwei Bao and Ernesto Valle, attended the Gulf Coast Undergraduate Research Symposium at Rice University (Houston, TX) Nov 1-3, 2019. Each student delivered an oral presentation over their contributions to ongoing research in the Shin/Pyenta laboratory. Ernesto's presentation was "Evaluating Dual Targets of Fluorine Derivatives as Histone Deacetylase and Metallo- β -Lactamase Inhibitors." Yuwei's presentation was "Analyses, using Computer Modeled Docking Studies, of Potential Anti-Cancer Drugs as HDAC Inhibitors." Students and faculty were able to network with Rice chemistry faculty as well as with other attendees.

Hyunshun Shin participated in the CUP (Customers, Users, and Programmers) 2020 Conference held at La Fonda on the Plaza in Santa Fe, NM, March 10-12, 2020. The CUP Conference is OpenEye Scientific Software's annual scientific meeting where they bring together top scientists, customers, users, and programmers in the industry to discuss the challenges in drug discovery.

On November 1st – 2nd, two McMurry students, Cassidy Futrelle and Benny Todd, were accompanied by Dr. Donnay to the 12th Annual Baylor University Advanced Instrumentation Workshop. Schools from as far away as Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Brownsville in Texas were in attendance. All meals as well as overnight accommodations were provided by Baylor, but McMurry's Science & Math Advisory Board (SMAB) covered the travel costs. Baylor offered a large selection of hands-on sessions that introduced the students to a variety of cutting edge instruments and techniques. Attendees were required to submit their top-5 choices from a list of 11 sessions before the trip. This sparked an interesting conversation between the students and Dr. Donnay about what the sessions might involve since the students were unfamiliar with practically all of the equipment and techniques (some were unfamiliar to Dr. Donnay as well). The schedule of the workshop allowed participants to attend three different sessions which were generally led by graduate students. Both Benny and Cassidy were enthusiastic about a session where they were able to undertake a synthesis of a phosphorous(I) complex in an inert atmosphere glovebox. They were able to collect and keep data for the complex they made. Throughout the workshop the students were able to get an up close perspective of life as a graduate student working in a research laboratory. They were able to ask questions to multiple people in different research environments about the expectations, benefits, advantages, and disadvantages of graduate school. The interaction with students who are currently in graduate school may be more worthwhile than the actual activities during the sessions. Overall the workshop was an opportunity and an experience that can't be replicated easily at McMurry where we

don't have the resources for multiple pieces of advanced equipment and faculty have been away from the graduate school environment for multiple years.

This summer the department has seven undergraduate students conducting research on the Welch Foundation Departmental Grant: Lara Meyer, Nicole Doyle, and Ernesto Valle, Jr. are all returning for a second summer, while M. David Voogd, Anelisa Valenzuela, Benny Todd, and Jiawei (Stacey) Hong are participating in research for the first time. Drs. Shin and Pyenta involve the students in a collaborative project to evaluate histone deacetylase inhibitors as anticancer agents against two different cancer cell lines, MDA-MB-231 and MCF-7. Synthesis of the inhibitors occurs in the Shin laboratory while the Pyenta laboratory grows and maintains the cancer cell lines for testing. Other aspects worked on in the two groups include computational docking studies and isolation of possible anticancer compounds from West Texas plants.

School and Miscellaneous News:

Of course the biggest news is the switch to remote delivery of all courses after spring break, which was extended one week to allow faculty to get ready. Later it was decided that students could elect to change any grade they received to a Pass/No Pass option where any passing grade would allow a course to count for a degree plan, but have no effect on GPA. A side effect of that decision was that some students who had already assured themselves of a passing grade or a failing grade (no pass) decided to stop doing any more work. Unfortunately, faculty could not elect that option and stop delivering classes. You may be wondering how the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry adapted to remote delivery. Most classes and labs met on MS Teams or lectures were pre-recorded and posted. When appropriate for some experiments, sample data was generated and students just focused on doing the calculations. An organic synthesis project was changed to a computer modelling project. In other cases, experiments were performed and recorded by faculty with the help of a new digital camera. The videos were uploaded to Dr. Pyenta's YouTube channel which the students viewed to obtain the data. Two of these videos were even made available for use by a first year chemistry faculty colleague at Hardin Simmons University because we all needed to pull together in this crisis. None of the adaptations we did were anywhere close to face-to-face instruction, but we made it through.

McMurry will complete the second year of the Department of Education Title V grant in October. This year of the grant saw two rooms in Biology renovated which when combined with the extensive renovations in 2009-10 means the entire Biology space in the building has been updated except for the stockroom and a storeroom. One of the two recently renovated rooms will be the base of operations for the new Human Health Science program. It features new anatomy visualization software on computers in the room. Another space undergoing renovation right now is the greenhouse, which will add an outdoor classroom to the north, along with providing a new shell on the existing structure. The grant also supports the hiring of a new faculty member in a new position to develop a program in Sustainability.

McMurry University's athletic department opened the new softball field in February and a facility for "e-sports". Plans for the expansion and renovation of the campus center were approved and then put on hold due to the pandemic.

40 Years Ago in the Department

(Below are news items and excerpts from the department newsletter from May 1980. The entire newsletter can be seen under the "Department News" tab on our website, www.mcm.edu/chemistry)

“On May 11, 1980, seven chemistry majors were graduated from McMurry: David Anderson, David Randell, John Walrath, and Max Wynn received the B.S. degree and Tom Bunner, Michael Jones and Mark McClure were granted the B.A. degree.”

“Michael Jones received the outstanding chemistry major award this spring. He was also given an award by the Texas Chapter of the American Institute of Chemists. Mr. Jones was selected by the Texas Chapter because of his leadership on campus and academic achievements. ... Donna Jean Anderson...was the recipient of the Analytical Chemistry award.”

“Tom Bunner has started an oil well service company that is based in Abilene. Mr. Bunner designs and services gas chromatographs that are used at well sites.”

“This spring Dr. Margaret Day-Francesconi attended a workshop on nutrition. ...The regional ACS meeting in Austin, Texas was attended by Dr. Sonntag. ...Dr. Harris has evaluated a laboratory manual...Dr. Klassen attended the Welch Conference in Houston in the fall.”

“This summer, Dr. Klassen will continue his research on a grant from the Welch Foundation. Mark McClure, Michael Jones, and Mansel Harris will assist Dr. Klassen this summer. In May Dr. Klassen was notified by the N.S.F. that his request for a uv-visible spectrophotometer was approved. He has ordered a Cary Model 210 instrument ... The grant was for \$14,000.” *The department still has this instrument and it is in the process of being refurbished by the physics department.*

“This past year the Chemistry Department was reevaluated by the American Chemical Society. The Department program has been approved by the ACS since 1967. After the recent evaluation, the ACS accreditation was reaffirmed. Out of 3000 colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada, there are about 500 schools that have certified programs.”

Alumni Search:

For the following alumni we have no contact information. If you know the contact information for one of these alums, we welcome your sharing that information with us, or you might contact that person and ask him/her to contact us.

Gayle Hart Long ‘64

Michael Haralson ‘68

Susan Arth ‘75

Gregory Guy Alexander ‘79

John Walrath ‘80