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a bimonthly publication of the  
department of chemistry  
university of alberta

# chemNEWS



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## BUILDING UPDATES

Jill Bagwe

### Chemistry West Renovations:

After a little more than two years, when a major renewal to Chemistry West was but a mere dream, all of our occupants have now moved into the refurbished space in CW4N and CW5N. The space is gorgeous and I invite those of you who have yet to tour through the space to do so. As was mentioned in the last newsletter, the term "renovations" is not an accurate term. It was more like a major overhaul with the footprint of the entire wing being shifted to the east side of the building. Case in point: I was touring an administrative chemistry colleague through the space last week and her response was, "This is chemistry?" Indeed, this is the new vision for chemistry and it is so exciting to see how an old building can be refurbished and brought up to modern day standards for research and safety.

We are coordinating our efforts with Government Relations to establish a date for a Grand Opening. Given we received both federal and provincial funding to realize our dream, we ideally want to have representatives from both branches of government. However, since a majority of funding was the federally based

Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP), the backdrop for the final announcement on completion of the project may not be Chemistry West. Rest assured, Jed and I will organize something in-house if it is decided to hold the announcement elsewhere and everyone in the department will be invited.

### Chemistry West Renovations – Phase II:

We've been asked to dream again. Engineering and Infrastructure (the umbrella unit to Facilities and Operations) have

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## Important Dates & Events

<b>December 3:</b>	CGSS Winter Gala
<b>December 7:</b>	Last Day of Fall Term Classes
<b>December 12:</b>	Department Winter Social
<b>December 23:</b>	NASA Support Staff Paid Day Off
<b>December 25:</b>	Christmas Day
<b>December 26:</b>	Lieu Day for Christmas Day
<b>December 27-30:</b>	Winter Closure
<b>January 1:</b>	New Year's Day
<b>January 2:</b>	Lieu Day for New Year's Day
<b>January 3:</b>	NASA Support Staff Paid Day Off

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

Laura Pham

## CONGRATULATIONS TO...

**Deepika Parasuraman** (Dr. Serpe) passed her MSc defense November 2, 2011

**Jeremy John** (Dr. Bergens) passed his PhD candidacy exam November 2, 2011

**Avena Ross** (Dr. Vederas) passed her PhD defense November 7, 2011

**Teague McGinitie** (Dr. Harynuk) passed his PhD candidacy exam November 7, 2011

**Wenmin Ye** (Dr. Harrison) passed his PhD candidacy exam November 8, 2011

**Jose Rodriguez** (Dr. Veinot) passed his PhD defense November 10, 2011

**Zhenyu Yang** (Dr. Veinot) passed his PhD candidacy exam November 14, 2011

**Houston Brown** (Dr. Stryker) passed his PhD candidacy exam November 14, 2011

**Keyur Pandya** (Dr. Vederas) passed his PhD candidacy exam November 16, 2011

**Jing Li** (Dr. Vederas) passed her PhD candidacy exam November 23, 2011

**Brianna Slater** (Dr. Mar) passed her PhD candidacy exam November 23, 2011

**Chrissy Knapp** (Dr. Jaeger) passed her PhD candidacy exam November 29, 2011

Congratulations to **Katie Mitran** from the Gibbs-Davis group who won the Faculty of Science Award for Excellence in Chemistry Research at the inaugural Undergraduate Research Initiative Poster Session.

Congratulations to **Michel (Mike) R. Gagné**: (B.Sc. Honours [Chemistry] 1987), Professor of Chemistry at the University of North Carolina, who is the recipient of a 2011 University of Alberta Alumni Recognition Award. This Alumni Honour Award is to "recognize the significant contributions made by UAlberta alumni into their local communities and

beyond." It was given to Prof. Gagné' specifically for his dedication to chemistry and his students, his ground-breaking research, and his international leadership in the field of catalysis.

Congratulations to **Dr. Dennis Hall** who has licensed a chemical process to the GreenCentre Canada. The process, developed by Dr. Hall, uses a novel, heavy-metal-free catalyst that can be used at room temperature without creating toxic by-products. The catalyst is used to create amide bonds, one of the most common chemical components used in the preparation of pharmaceutical compounds. Existing methods often require high temperatures and involve multiple steps and the addition of solvents or other toxic chemicals. The GreenCentre will work with Dr. Hall to scale up the catalyst and use it to make molecules of interest to the pharmaceutical industry, as well as to the agricultural and plastics industries.



## WELCOME TO...

**Ed Fu** joined the Department's Analytical and Instrumentation Lab as the Analysis and Purification Technician on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Ed received his Masters degree in Analytical Chemistry from the University of Alberta in 2003 and was working with a company called Sinoveda Canada Inc. before joining the Department. In addition to his MSc, Ed has about 15 years of chemical research experience in both public and private industry.

**Marc-Andre Hoyle** has also joined the Department's Analytical and Instrumentation Lab as an Instrumentation Technologist on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Marc is replacing the position that was vacated by Craig Turk. Marc moved all the way from Vancouver, BC, leaving behind all of his family and friends, to take this position. Marc received his BSc with Distinction in Chemistry from the University of Victoria in 2010 but has been working in a research lab since 2009.

*Healthy Workplace Tips  
Will Return*

## Contributions Welcome

This newsletter belongs to the department of Chemistry. So submissions of interest to our department are welcome.

Submissions can be up to 1000 words and are subject to editing. Send your submissions to:  
newsletter@chem.ualberta.ca

Please send submissions by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to ensure they can be featured in the next month's newsletter.

Do You Have an Idea...

...for a cost-saving measure or revenue-generating plan? Our suggestion box is at:  
Email: suggestions@chem.ualberta.ca

approached us to consider, if they were able to continue with a refurbishment in Chemistry West, what floors would we consider next? After much deliberation, it was agreed we would proceed with CW 3/4/5 South. Even though there may only be funds to refurbish one, or perhaps two floors at most, the department is cognizant of the need to decant the occupants in the floor below, which is why we propose the third floor. It is important to reiterate that this request does not necessarily mean there is money for the renovations, but our experience with the past renovations suggest that we will not have been asked to do this unless there is a very real possibility of moving forwards in the next year or two.



1. Researchers who reside on these floors have been asked by Jed to give their input on the design work done. If you wish to be involved, you can do the following:  
Download or find the pdf file on the Chem West master plan. It is still accessible from the front page of the department website, with the password *fixerupper*.
2. Look at the labs on the fifth floor Chem West North as examples of synthetic labs and on the fourth floor Chem West North as examples of instrumentation labs.
3. Note that I will be asking for some redesign of the office space layout in the master plan for the south end, to get some on the west wall.

Your plans have to fit within the footprints and general layouts of these renovated spaces. You need to think about power, voltage, current, cooling, number of hoods in each lab, location of those hoods, data trays, and number of benches and their locations. As well, the designers need to sort out the fume hood balance, and the number and location of synthetic versus instrumentation labs.

E&I have asked that we submit our vision to them in late January and so if you want a chance to comment, you will need to submit something to the Chair's Office in that time.



### **Celebration of Chemistry Support Staff Awards**

*Jill Bagwe*

(excerpts from Oct 11 Awards Speech)

The department of chemistry held its third annual "Celebration of Chemistry" at the Faculty Club on October 11, 2011. This event was created to promote the successes of our faculty and department to our external stakeholders and features the recipients of our homegrown staff awards. Below is a summation of the support staff award winners featured at this year's event:

### **2011 Chemistry Booster Award - Mr. Andrew Yeung:**

This award is created to recognize those individuals who contribute to a positive culture within the department, bring the "best" of themselves to work on a regular basis throughout the year in performing his/her regular job duties and are a good ambassador of the Chemistry department. This individual will provide exceptional service to clients, are innovative and have an enthusiastic approach to work and contribute to a healthy work environment.

Andrew was hired as a storeman in our department in April 1999 and exhibited such a strong degree of leadership, competency and initiative in this position that in July 2006, he was appointed as Stores Supervisor. In this role, Andrew has grown and developed his team and in doing so, fostered a phenomenal team environment with his staff, which has been instrumental in improving morale across the department. Andrew is known to pursue the best and most economical sources for our chemical supplies, glassware and laboratory manuals and is always mindful of meeting the tight turnaround times required to prepare and support the undergraduate teaching laboratories. More than that, Andrew takes an intelligent approach to all tasks that fall to him and his team. Andrew has exceptional problem-solving abilities and adopts a no-nonsense approach solving issues that come his way. This approach is seen when he independently assesses the technical aspects of the undergraduate laboratory program and then will initiate a new and innovative approach towards streamlining the methodology of the experiments.

Aside from his competency and leadership, it is for his infallible willingness to help out all of those colleagues with whom he interacts and always in a welcoming, friendly and relaxed fashion that made him the recipient of this award. In his nomination package, his colleagues stated the following:

*In the years that I worked with him, I have never seen him turn down a request for help, no matter how difficult or even if it falls outside of his responsibility. For example, when he observed one of his colleagues re-arranging their office by themselves and without even being asked, he went and grabbed a cart and helped them to move their effects without complaint.*

In a department in which most people put their best efforts every day, Andrew is a true gem. He invariably exceeds the scope of his duties and he does it all with unfailing friendliness and good humour. He raises the positive energy of the department every day he is here. Andrew is highly deserving of the 2011 Chemistry Booster Award for his diligence and dedication in creating a positive workplace for our department.

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**2011 Outstanding Administrative Support - Mrs. Anita Weiler:** This award is intended to recognize staff who consistently provide outstanding administrative service to the Department of Chemistry. Important factors include: providing outstanding service, fostering innovation, and creating a positive influence

After 13 years in Human Resource Services, one of which was on secondment to Biological Sciences to cover a maternity leave in their Graduate Student Services Office, Mrs. Weiler was hired by the Department of Chemistry in December 2008 as our Graduate Services Assistant. It was due to her extensive payroll experience and familiarity with the Science graduate student program that within the year, Anita readily assumed all of the responsibilities of her position and quickly established herself to be a valuable asset in the Department.

Once students are admitted into our graduate studies program, Anita then steers them throughout their program from start to finish. She guides them skillfully through the ever-changing and complex process of being a graduate student. Anita quickly learns the names of all incoming and current students – all 250 + of them – and develops a friendly, relaxed but professional rapport with them. She is able to work at a high level of independence and exhibits enhanced leadership and organizational skills. As with Wayne, this ability could, in part, be due to her professional background as a naval signalman with the Canadian Forces for three years before being hired on at the University of Alberta.

In her nomination package, Anita's colleagues listed a plethora of qualities that earned her this award today. These include the promptness and thoroughness by which she responds to emails and phone inquiries and the gentle reminders she sends out for award applications, candidacy examinations and defenses. She was critical in streamlining our orientation week and exhibited flexibility in assuming additional duties such as the department's room bookings and coordination of the 502 seminars. Cited in her nomination package was the following passage that handily sums up

Anita's strengths: "We marvel at Anita's efficiency and effectiveness; the role as Associate Chair would be unbearably difficult without Anita's steady-handed competent management of the graduate student program and, moreover, the constant initiative she has shown in improving the graduate student experience in the Department is greatly appreciated."

**2011 Outstanding Teaching/Research or Technical Services Support - Mr. Wayne Moffat:**

This award is intended to recognize staff who consistently make a positive contribution to the teaching or research success of the Department of Chemistry. Attributes include providing outstanding service, fostering innovation, creating a positive influence in the workplace, and demonstrating leadership qualities.

Wayne started with the department in May 2003 as the Specialist Technician in what was then known as the Spectral Services Laboratory and the Microanalytical Laboratory, in addition to supervising the High Pressure Hydrogenation Lab and Graduate Student Instrument Lab. However, Wayne's first association with the University of Alberta goes back even further. Wayne received a BSc in Chemistry Specialization from the U of A in 1983. In 1982 and 1983, he held an NSERC student summership in the Takats' lab. Upon receipt of his degree, George Kotovych hired him in his lab in August of 1983 until Wayne accepted a position at Raylo in May of 1984 where he worked as an analytical chemist. From 1992 to 1998, Wayne worked as a manager of one of the quality control units in Biomera and then moved on to AT Plastics for a six-year period, again as an analytical chemist. By the time the Department of Chemistry hired Wayne in 2003, he brought 19 years of analytical chemistry experience at the industry level. One of the reasons that Wayne is recipient of this award today can be attributed to his extensive experience and expertise.

Another one of Wayne's admirable qualities is his ability to adapt to new challenges and run an

extremely smooth and effective operation as Manager of the Analytical and Instrumentation Laboratory. This ability could, in part, be due to a little known fact that Wayne served as an RCMP constable for five years before changing career streams and entering the chemistry field in 1980. And going into chemistry not only influenced Wayne's career, but his personal life as well. It was in Anna Jordan's CHEM 371 laboratory where he met his future wife, Ingrid.

In his nomination package, Wayne was noted as being always willing to support research labs and is open to tackling new programs. He keeps himself and his team current by learning new and modern techniques. Wayne constantly strives to expand the number of analyses the lab can do by facilitating and overseeing the installation of multiple instruments over the years (13 instruments alone in 2010). He displays a fantastic interest in analytical spectroscopy that frequently goes beyond what one might expect from someone in his position. Wayne truly cares about the projects and researchers he supports. His colleagues and students know that if they need answers pertaining to questions regarding specific spectroscopic methods, Wayne possesses a wealth of knowledge. He is routinely sought out for answers to queries – even if they occasionally fall outside his area of expertise. Wayne is known to seek out those colleagues to discuss his findings and that level of service is something they truly appreciate.

The application goes on to say that Wayne is always polite and friendly, reliable, cooperative, possesses excellent management skills and along with his team, they process a tremendous number of samples every year.



**Celebration of Chemistry  
held on  
October 11, 2011  
at the  
Faculty Club**







Profile: Anita Weiler, 2011  
Chemistry Outstanding  
Administrative Support  
Award Winner

Bonnie Gover

If you ask Anita Weiler to name five things she can't live without, be prepared to laugh. At the top of the 2011 Chemistry Award Winner's list is – of all things – cottage cheese. "If a human being could live on a diet of cottage cheese alone, I think I could accomplish that," she chuckles. In case you're wondering, it doesn't matter what brand it is – 1%, 2% – it's all good. She likes to mix it with oatmeal: " $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of oatmeal and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of cottage cheese all mixed together," she says giddily. "It's the perfect balance of carbs and protein." You can't argue with that. Or the rest of her list, which includes her family, friends and motorcycle.

Anita's award, the 2011 Chemistry Outstanding Administrative Support Award, honours staff who provide exceptional service to the Department. Factoring into Anita's prize were her top organizational skills, leadership abilities and ability to work with considerable independence. As the Graduate Services Coordinator, Anita guides students through their programs,

remarkably remembering the names of all 250 along the way. How does she do it? Anita laughs and says "I kind of like to get to know [students] on a personal level. . . at some point in their program, they're gonna have to talk to me and deal with me about things." Anita says she has always had a keen memory, frequently recalling stacks of payroll codes and account numbers in her 13 years in HR before she joined the Chemistry Department. In the year between HR and Chemistry, Anita enjoyed a secondment in Biological Sciences. It was there where she saw the Chemistry posting. And the rest is history.

The coolest part of Anita's job is, as she says, "meeting people who come from countries all over the world – places I would like to travel to and visit." Demands of her job include ensuring that the administrative part of student exams runs as efficiently as possible. "You're dealing with external examiners and members from other departments and that makes it a little bit challenging at times," she adds.

Outside of work, Anita's challenges are of a different sort. This year, she completed the Canadian Death Race in Grand Cache – her

second time competing in the event. It's an extreme race, with a web site that says, "We designed the Canadian Death Race to ask one question and one question alone, "Are you tough enough?" (!) The grueling event takes place on the August long weekend and consists of five legs of a race run in 24 hours. A total of 125K is covered by solo participants or relay teams. Each leg is mapped out with different challenges for each runner. Both this year and last, Anita joined a relay team to run Leg 5 – about 23K. Each leg of the race involves running alone, in the mountains, on a predominantly single track. But because it's the last one, Leg 5 is normally run in the dark. That's what makes it risky – but popular.

"Everybody wants that shift," says Anita. Although runners are afforded a headlamp, they must navigate not only rocks and trees but potential animal encounters. "I made it through ok although I was terrified the entire time. I loved it; it was great," she says. Year one was her best year, with her team finishing in a very respectable 17 hours, 24 minutes and 53 seconds. Well run. And well done.

And well done on your award! Congratulations from all of us, Anita!

**Photo, courtesy A. Weiler. Location: Loch Ness, Scotland, October 2011. (Smile and say cottage cheese...)**