

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

CHEMISTRY

NEWSLETTER

Millersville University, Dept. of Chemistry ♦ <http://www.millersville.edu/chemistry/> ♦ Fall 2025

Greetings from the Chemistry Department! We are very excited to report that we had another busy and successful year! We would also like to share great news from faculty, students, and alumni activities and achievements! A picture of the current faculty and staff of the Chemistry Department is shown below as we gathered together to celebrate the end of the semester and this year's graduates with an Award Ceremony and our yearly Spring Picnic!



Back (left to right): Drs. Lyman Rickard & Daniel Albert, Mr. Stephen Nolte, Drs. Jeremiah Mbindyo & Kristen Baker

Front (left to right): Drs. Edward Rajaseelan & Michael Elioff, Mrs. Madison Nitroy, Drs. Maria Schiza, Melissa Mullen Davis, Steven Kennedy & Aimee Miller

Saying Goodbye to Dr. Gerald S. Weiss

It is with great sadness that the Chemistry Department had to say goodbye this year to one of their own, Dr. Gerald S. Weiss. Dr. Weiss passed away on January 4, 2025, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, surrounded by family. He was born in the summer of 1934, on the family farm near Boyertown in Berks County. He was the youngest of nine children of Alvin S. and Mary E. (nee Sheeler) Weiss. He played football at Boyertown High School and graduated in 1952, then attended Drexel University—raising and selling chicks to pay his first-year tuition—where he graduated with a baccalaureate degree in Chemistry in 1957. He subsequently taught at Drexel and went on to earn a Doctor of Philosophy degree in chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania in 1965. He was a proud alumnus of all three institutions and credited Drexel University's co-op program with providing access and opportunity to higher education and preparing him for a career in chemistry.

Dr. Weiss was an Army veteran, taught at Drexel University until 1967, and was a faculty member at Millersville University for thirty years. He retired as Professor Emeritus of Chemistry in 1997. During his career at Millersville, he served as chair of the chemistry department, chair of the faculty senate, and president of the faculty union, MU-APSCUF. Professionally, he served as the local section chair of the American Chemical Society. He co-authored two widely used textbooks, *Inorganic Chemistry* with G.C. Demetris, et al, and *Experiments in General Chemistry*, with his colleagues Drs. Thomas Greco and Lyman Rickard.

Dr. Weiss also established the yearly Gerald S. Weiss Chemistry Scholarship awarded to a chemistry major who has demonstrated financial need and superior academic achievement in CHEM 251: Inorganic Chemistry I, a required course in inorganic chemistry for majors in the ACS certified program leading to the B.S. in chemistry. Many students have received and benefited from this scholarship over the years. The Chemistry Department, chemistry students, and chemistry alumni express their deep gratitude for such a generous gift!



Dr. Gerald S. Weiss

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

A Chemistry Alumna received the MU-Young Alumni Achievement Award in 2024



*Congratulations
Dr. Jessica Smeltz!*

Dr. Jessica L. Smeltz (MU-2008), Ph.D., NC State University (2013). Dr. Smeltz is an Associate Professor and Interim Department Chair of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering at Florida Tech. Her expertise is in Organometallic Chemistry, Catalysis, Reaction Mechanisms, and Reaction Kinetics. **She was selected to receive the 2024 Young Alumni Achievement Award at Millersville University!** Dr. Jessica Smeltz, a first-generation college student, began her academic journey at Millersville University in 2004 as a Secondary Education major with a focus on Chemistry. Under the mentorship of Dr. Rajaseelan, she discovered her passion for research, participating in a prestigious Research Experience for Undergraduates program at the University of Arizona. This transformative experience led her to pursue a PhD in Chemistry, which she earned in 2013

from North Carolina State University, specializing in organometallic chemistry and catalysis.

Following a postdoctoral fellowship, Dr. Smeltz returned to Millersville as a visiting Assistant Professor in 2013, gaining valuable teaching and research experience. She later joined the Florida Institute of Technology in 2014, where her dedication to improving student success and retention earned her rapid promotions, including becoming the Chemistry Program Chair in 2020. In 2023, she was appointed Department Head of the newly formed Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, overseeing over 20 faculty members and more than 200 students.

Dr. Smeltz's leadership, innovative teaching, and commitment to mentoring students reflect her deep gratitude for the guidance she received as a student. Her journey from Millersville to becoming a prominent leader in higher education serves as an inspiration to first-generation college students and aspiring scientists alike.



Murley Summer Fellowship - 2025
Josh, Ms. Karen Murley, Lucia (left to right)

Patterson (MU chemistry major) and **Sophia Nightingale** (Penn Manor high school student) did research in **Dr. Kristen Baker's** lab. Their research was supported by Organic Syntheses Research Grant.

MU Chemistry Faculty Milestones & Achievements!

Congratulations to **Dr. Edward Rajaseelan & Dr. Daniel Albert:**

- Drs. Rajaseelan and Albert published a peer-reviewed article with Millersville student, Timothy Lerch, and Millersville chemistry alumnus, Dr. Michael Gau (University of Pennsylvania), in *IUCrData* titled: [\[\(1,2,5,6-η\)-Cycloocta-1,5-diene\]\(1-ethyl-4-isobutyl-1,2,4-triazol-5-ylidene\)\(triphenylphosphane\)iridium\(I\) tetrafluoroborate dichloromethane hemisolvate](#)

Murley Undergraduate Research Fellowship – Summer 2025

We are pleased to announce that this is the 7th consecutive year of the Murley Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships! In the summer of 2025, the Murley Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship was awarded to two top Millersville Chemistry applicants. **Lucia Consigliere Picco & Modebareoluwa Joshua (Josh) Obadofin** carried out intensive summer research with Millersville Chemistry Faculty thanks to the generous support of **Ms. Karen Murley**. Both students did their research with **Dr. Kristen Baker** on “Synthesis of Benzisothiazoles” & “Trifluoromethylation of Alkyl Radicals”, respectively.

In addition,
this summer,
John

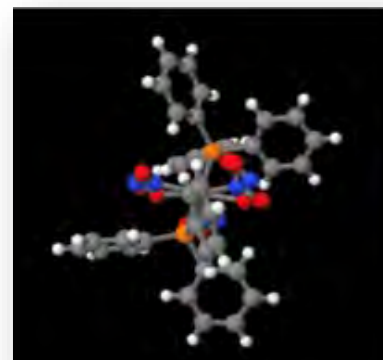


Summer 2025 - Research in Dr. Baker's Lab
John, Josh, Dr. Baker, Lucia, Sophia (left to right)

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

- Drs. Rajaseelan and Albert published a peer-reviewed article with Millersville chemistry alumnus, Dr. Michael Gau (University of Pennsylvania), in *IUCrData* titled: [“4-\(4-tert-Butylbenzyl\)-1-neopentyl-1,2,4-triazolium bromide”](#)
- Drs. Rajaseelan and Albert published a peer-reviewed with Millersville student, Timothy Lerch, and Millersville chemistry alumnus, Dr. Michael Gau (University of Pennsylvania), in *Acta Cryst. E* titled: [“Syntheses and crystal structures of 4-benzyl-1-ethyl-1,2,4-triazolium bromide and its corresponding NHC complexes of rhodium and iridium.”](#)
- Drs. Rajaseelan and Albert published a peer-reviewed article over the summer with Millersville chemistry alumnus, Dr. Michael Gau (University of Pennsylvania), in *IUCrData* titled: [\(Nitrito-κO\)\(nitro-κN\)\(nitrosyl-κN\)bis--\(tri-phenylphosphane-κP\)rhodium\(III\)](#) **that was chosen as the Cover Illustration for the Journal!**



(Nitrito-κO)(nitro-κN)(nitrosyl-κN)bis--(tri-phenylphosphane-κP)rhodium(III)

Congratulations to Dr. Kristen Baker:

- Dr. Baker represented the chemistry department by leading demonstrations at the Lancaster Chamber, Discovering STEAM Pathways at Spooky Nook on October 22nd, 2024.
- Dr. Baker was awarded a 2025 [Research Grant for Faculty at Primarily Undergraduate Institutions from Organic Syntheses](#).
- Dr. Baker accompanied 13 chemistry department students as they presented research posters at the Spring 2025 National American Chemical Society Meeting in San Diego, CA.
- Dr. Baker presented at the Spring 2025 National American Chemical Society Meeting in San Diego, CA. Dr. Baker presented a poster titled: “Utilizing technology in the organic chemistry classroom” and gave a talk titled: “Organic chemistry with a flipped classroom approach.”
- Dr. Baker was awarded a PASSHE Faculty Professional Development Grant.

Congratulations to Dr. Michael Elioff:

- Dr. Elioff presented a contributed talk titled “How effective is the chemistry placement test?” at the 56th Annual Conference of the Middle Atlantic Association of Liberal Arts Chemistry Teachers at Thomas Jefferson University.
- Dr. Elioff, as first author, published a peer-reviewed article in the Journal of Photochemistry & Photobiology A, titled [“A molecule wire: Electron transfer in an acridinium-based triad in various media.”](#)

Congratulations to Dr. Jeremiah Mbindyo:

- Dr. Mbindyo presented a talk at the Spring 2025 National American Chemical Society Meeting in San Diego, CA titled: “Catalytic activity of mixed metal nanocatalysts in reduction of nitrophenols and nitroanilines with NaBH₄.”

Congratulations to Dr. Aimee Miller:

- Dr. Miller was a Program Chair for the Division of Chemical Education at the Fall 2025 National American Chemical Society Meeting in Washington, DC.

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

Congratulations to Dr. Edward Rajaseelan:

- Dr. Rajaseelan gave an Invited Chemistry Seminar at Temple University titled “N-heterocyclic Carbene Complexes of Rhodium and Iridium: Catalysts for Green Chemistry” on October 3rd, 2024.

Congratulations to Dr. Lyman Rickard:

- Dr. Rickard led a group of chemistry majors & the ACS Student Chapter in performing chemistry demonstrations at the Lancaster Science Factory on September 29th, 2024 and on March 30th, 2025.
- Dr. Rickard led chemical demonstrations and discussions with five of Rober Koenig’s (MU Alum) 7th grade classes (120 students) as an outreach event with Red Lion Area Junior High School.
- Dr. Rickard led demonstrations for more than 150 students during the North Museum Science Fair on March 13th, 2025.
- Drs. Rickard and Rajaseelan accompanied 12 students to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Section of the American Chemical Society Education Night, Spring 2025.

MU Student/Chemistry Majors News

In Fall 2025, the Chemistry Department welcomed 18 first-year students coming in as chemistry majors at Millersville and 4 transfer students joining us from other institutions – a total of **22 students**.

Chemistry faculty and students continue to actively engage in research, grant writing, and present their work at conferences as well as visiting local industries. This year, 8 chemistry majors accompanied by Drs. Daniel Albert and Jeremiah Mbindyo had the opportunity to visit the facilities of Glaxo Smith Klein (GSK). The tour was facilitated by one of our alums, Mr. Milkias Eshetu (MU’ 2018).



Glaxo Smith Klein (GSK) Visit

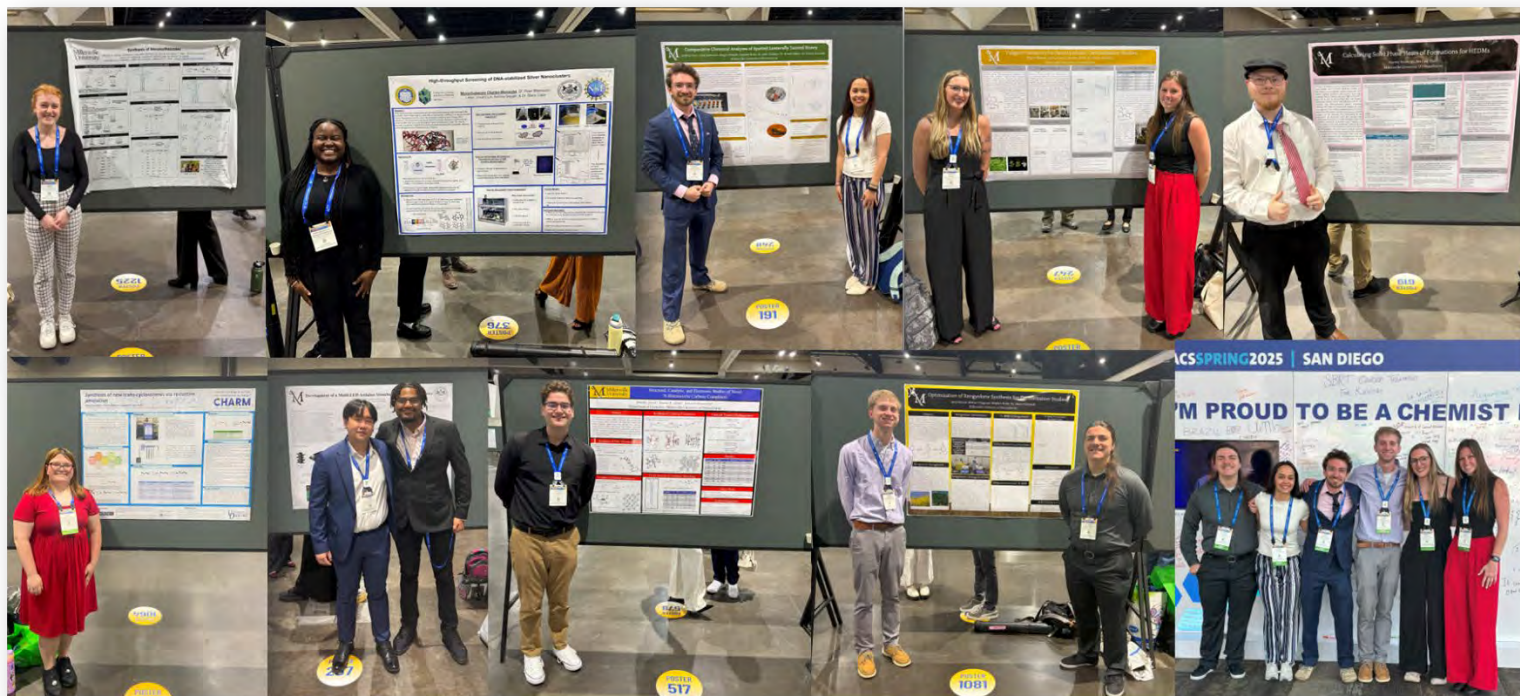
Back (left to right): 3 GSK scientists (Chemistry Alumni Milkias Eshetu - middle), Jesse Hash, Khanh Vo, Drs. Daniel Albert and Jeremiah Mbindyo, Keira Welch

Front (left to right): Andrea Forry, Munachukwuso Charles-Monwuba, Emma Killmeyer, Amy Ho, Sam Bauer

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

Numerous students received funding from Noonan, Niemeyer-Hodgson, and SGRCA research grants as well as the Southeastern Pennsylvania Section of the American Chemical Society and the College of Science and Technology Student Travel Fund. In March, thirteen (13) students traveled in person with **Dr. Kristen Baker** and **Dr. Jeremiah Mbindyo** to the 2025 National ACS Conference in San Diego, CA to present their research posters.



At the 2025 ACS National Meeting Poster Session:

Top (left to right): Amber Nickey, Munachukwuso Charles-Monwuba, Chaz Eavenson, Andrea Forry, Jessica Rarick, Megan Malecki, Hunter Rowe

Bottom (left to right): Kelly Sprenkel, Khanh Vo, Keyvin Martinez, Timothy Lerch, Jared Martin, Nathan Ferguson

Spring 2025 National American Chemical Society Meeting



Back (left to right): Dr. Jeremiah Mbindyo, Hunter Rowe, Khanh Vo, Jared Martin, Timothy Lerch, Keyvin Martinez, Nathan Ferguson, Dr. Kristen Baker

Front (left to right): Megan Malecki, Jessica Rarick, Kelly Sprenkel, Chaz Eavenson, Munachukwuso Charles-Monwuba, Amber Nickey, Andrea Forry

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s



Congratulations to the ACS Student Chapter! (President Kelly Sprenkel receiving the Commendable ACS Student Communities Award for the 2023-2024 academic year!)

Spring 2025 SEPSACS Education Night

Twelve (12) of our students also presented at the 2025 SEPSACS Education Night.



This year, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Section of the American Chemical Society selected Timothy Lerch to receive the Dr. Judith S. Bond Scholarship Award! This award is given to the top Junior Chemistry Major based on academic merit and engagement in chemistry research and outreach. Tim is the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships for his academic achievements, and he is the first author in six (6) peer reviewed publications.

Summer 2025 Summer Research Placements

Five (5) Millersville Chemistry majors were selected to participate in summer research programs – (REU, Organic Syntheses Research Grant, Murley Summer Research) across the country.

Congratulations Timothy Lerch!

<u>Student</u>	<u>REU</u>	<u>Institution</u>
Emma Killmeyer	REU	University of Pittsburgh
Timothy Lerch	REU	SUNY-Binghamton
John Patterson	Organic Research Grant	Millersville University
Lucia Consigliere Picco	Murley Summer Research	Millersville University
Joshua (Josh) Obadofin	Murley Summer Research	Millersville University

Company Internships During 2024-2025

Six (6) Millersville Chemistry majors engaged in internship or chemistry-related work experiences with regional companies.

<u>Student</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Location</u>
Maddux Drager	Fontana Candle Company	Lancaster, PA
Chaz Eavenson	Eurofins/ Villanova University	Leola, PA
Amy Ho	Schott Pharmaceuticals	Lebanon, PA
Keyvin Martinez	Fontana Candle Company	Lancaster, PA
Zachary Nikolaus	Fontana Candle Company	Lancaster, PA
Jessica Rarick	Hayward Laboratory	East Stroudsburg, PA

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

Congratulations to Millersville Chemistry Students – Spring 2025

At the end of the Spring 2025 semester, the Chemistry Department celebrated our graduating seniors and chemistry majors with an awards' ceremony and a picnic at the Caputo/Roddy courtyard.



2025 Chemistry Department Awards

This year's student recipients of Chemistry Department Awards were:

- Excellence in Introductory Chemistry Award – **Titus Nguyen**
- Cecil M. Upton Organic Chemistry Award – **Timothy Lerch**
- Murley Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship – **Lucia Consigliere Picco & Modebareoluwa (Joshua) Obadofin**
- Organic Syntheses Summer Research Fellowship – **John Patterson**
- American Institute of Chemists Award – **Megan Malecki & Jared Martin**
- MU ACS Student Chapter Award – **Kelly Sprenkel**

American Chemical Society Division Undergraduate Awards in:

- Analytical Chemistry – **Timothy Lerch**
- Inorganic Chemistry – **Kelly Sprenkel**
- Organic Chemistry – **Jared Martin & Kelly Sprenkel**
- Physical Chemistry – **Kelly Sprenkel**
- Environmental Chemistry – **Zachary Nikolaus**
- Biochemistry – **Munachukwuso Charles-Monwuba**
- Chemical Safety and Ethics – **Megan Malecki**

ACS Southeastern PA Section (SEPSACS) Award:

- Outstanding Senior Chemistry Major - **Kelly Sprenkel**
- Dr. **Judith S. Bond** Scholarship – **Timothy Lerch**

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

2025 Chemistry Department Scholarships

- Richard Sasin Endowed Scholarship in Chemistry – **Marcus Gable & Olivia Terrazas**
- Gerald S. Weiss Scholarship - **Modebareoluwa (Joshua) Obadofin**
- Sandra A. Yeager, Ph.D. Chemistry Scholarship – **Rachel Bonner**
- Dr. R. Edward Rajaseelan Excellence in Chemistry Scholarship – **Jessica Rarick**
- Barbara Rogers '63 Scholarship for Excellence in Chemistry Endowment – **Amber Nickey**



Top (left to right): Khanh Vo, Brooke Taylor, Dylan Tull, Hunter Rowe, Zachary Nikolaus

Middle (left to right): Nicholas Allen, Jared Martin, Edward Thievon, Keyvin Martinez, Logan Weaver

Bottom (left to right): Bethany Dravk, Munachukwuso Charles-Monwuba, Megan Malecki, Kelly Sprenkel

Spring 2025 Chemistry Graduates

Back (left to right): Khanh Vo, Brooke Taylor^a, Zachary Nikolaus, Hunter Rowe^c, Logan Weaver^c, Jared Martin^c, Edward Thievon^a

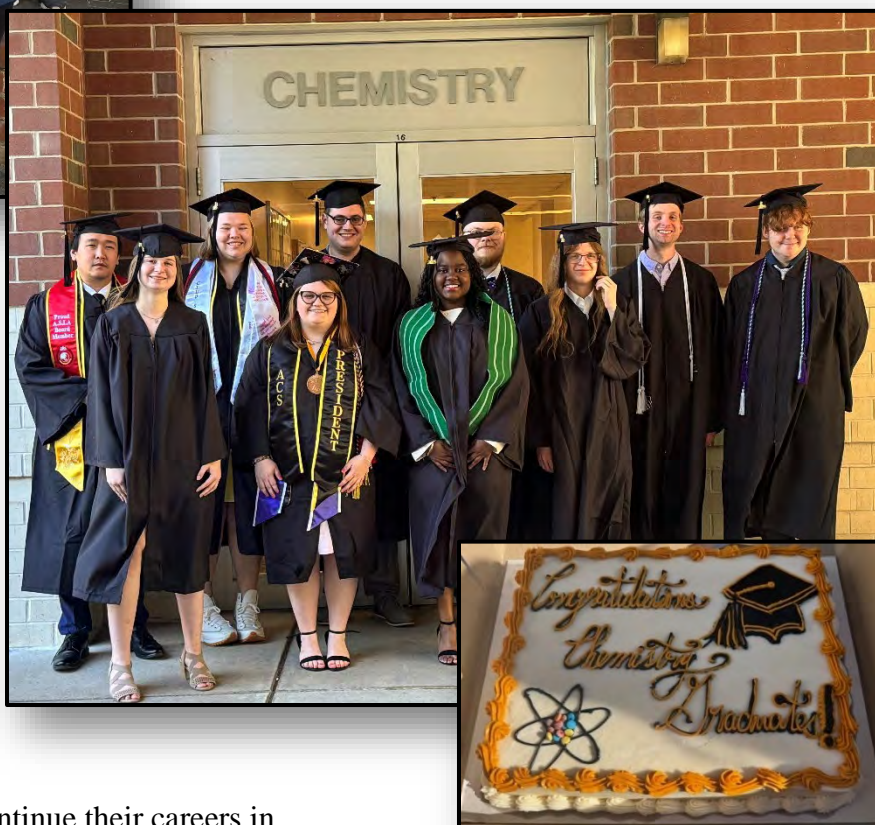
Front (left to right): Bethany Dravk, Kelly Sprenkel^{a,c}, Munachukwuso Charles-Monwuba^{b,c}

Not Shown: Nicholas Allen, Megan Malecki, Keyvin Martinez, Dylan Tull

a - Completed a Departmental and University Honors Thesis

b - Completed a Departmental Honors Thesis

c - ACS Certified Degree



This year, 14 additional chemistry majors joined the ranks of our alumni.

The Chemistry Department is very proud of our Spring 2025 graduates! Our graduates continue their careers in chemistry-related field or are attending graduate and professional school programs after graduation. Some are listed here:

- **Muna Charles-Monwuba** – Ph.D. in Chemistry at University of Arizona
- **Bethany Dravk** – MS in Forensics at Arcadia University
- **Megan Malecki** – Small Batch Products Chemist at RDC Coatings
- **Jared Martin** – Ph.D. in Chemistry at University of Colorado-Boulder
- **Kelly Sprenkel** – Ph.D. in Chemistry at University of Notre Dame
- **Brooke Taylor** – Chemistry Teacher at Bensalem High School
- **Dylan Tull** – Chemistry Teacher at Conestoga Valley High School
- **Logan Weaver** – MS in Chemistry at Villanova University

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

Spring 2025 Graduation



Left (left to right): Khanh Vo & Dr. Daniel Albert



Middle (left to right): Hunter Rowe, Edward Thievon, Jared Martin & Khanh Vo



Right (left to right): Kelly Sprenkel & Brooke Taylor (can you say bedazzled hat - Taylor Swift? 😊)



Walking up the graduation stage with a smile! The Chemistry Department was represented by our chemistry graduates and the faculty!



Having fun at the Spring 2025 Graduation Ceremony with Colleagues and our Chemistry Graduates!

(left to right)

Back: Drs. Steven Kennedy, Daniel Albert, Jeremiah Mbindyo

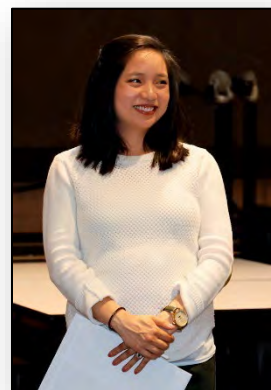
Front: Drs. Kristen Baker, Melissa Mullen Davis, Aimee Miller

CHEMISTRY

H i g h l i g h t s

Notable Alumni Achievements/Updates

1. **Dr. Lisa Nguyen** (MU-2014), Congratulations for earning the Provost's Award for Distinguished Teaching by a Lecturer at the Ohio State University.
2. **Dr. Troy Smith** (MU-2020), Congratulations on earning his Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Arizona.
3. **Joshua Rushlow** (MU-2023) Chemistry Ph.D. candidate at Texas A & M, was the recipient of the **Eastman Upper Level Teaching Assistant Award** at Texas A & M this year. He taught an advanced inorganic chemistry lab for undergrads and helped develop material for a new experiment and also ran the wet lab portion. He was nominated by his professor for the award. Congratulations Josh!



*Congratulations
Dr. Lisa Nguyen!*

Fall 2025 – Seminar Series

The Fall 2025 Seminar Series, hosted this year by **Dr. Melissa Mullen Davis**, includes speakers from Bulk Chemicals, Inc., UMBC, Drexel University, Penn State University, Villanova University, Millersville University, as well as this year's Murley student presenters. Seminars take place on Mondays from 4-5 pm, in Roddy 149. The complete list of seminars can be found here: <https://www.millersville.edu/chemistry/curriculum/seminars.php>

We are very proud of the successes of all our graduates over the years. Our alumni reflect our efforts, dedication, and quality of teaching. ***You are Millersville Chemistry, and we celebrate you this and every year. Thank you!*** We are always delighted to hear from you. Please stop by and visit us when you are in the area or send us an update.

Alums! We LOVE to hear from you!

Update your contact information online at: <http://www.millersville.edu/chemistry/alumni/index.php>

Click on the **"Updates Form"** button
to update your information for us.

Millersville University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution. A member of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education.