

I'm pleased to report that 2006 finds the Department active and very excited about the future. I hope that the New Year has arrived for you laden with similar promise. It certainly has arrived for our students, faculty, and staff as we begin the year with the largest graduate student population (now 48) and highest levels of external research support (~\$3.1M) in decades. In addition, the construction of the new (>70,000ft²) teaching lab building has progressed apace towards occupancy in the fall. This building will replace the McCracken Hall facilities.

The Department has received a Department of Education equipment grant that will allow us to modernize the laboratory curriculum, enhance the student experience and familiarize them with "green chemical" experiment designs. The new lab building and attendant curriculum improvements should open up increasing student "co-op" and internship opportunities since their skill-sets will be significantly updated. Views of the building construction and our current facilities as well as other news can be found at our website. (www.wmich.edu/chemistry)

Last fall we welcomed new chemical education faculty member Dr. Herbert Fynewever to WMU from California State Polytechnical University at Pomona. He has a joint appointment with the Mallinson Institute for Science Education and has been busy working on inquiry-based learning approaches in Chemistry. Herb received his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison specializing in the application of computational methods to explore phase stability and transition thermodynamics. He has also published extensively on emerging issues in chemical education.

In the past year, Curtis Deer now a senior chemistry major, received a prestigious Merck United Negro College Fund (UNCF) undergraduate fellowship of \$25,000. He enjoyed an internship in advanced organometallic synthesis at Merck's Rahway, N.J. research facility this past summer and will have the opportunity for an internship next summer after graduation. Curtis has also submitted his senior honors thesis on metal sulfide quantum dot synthesis and characterization. The fellowship qualifies him for a future Merck-UNCF award for graduate study and he plans to pursue nanochemistry research.

Along with the Merck-UNCF award came an additional \$10,000 to the department to support student scholarships. This award has been placed in the new "ELEMENTAL CHEMISTRY FUND" established with the WMU Foundation to provide scholarships and financial assistance to needy students. It is supported through the "sale" of elements on the periodic chart at levels ranging for \$500 to \$10,000 per element based loosely on their biochemical essentiality. To date, Co, Fe and He have been purchased and support has been extended to assist one of our international graduate students to attend to matters associated with a death in his family in Africa. (See Scholarships link on the website) Donors will be recognized on a ceramic tile Periodic Chart tableau in the new teaching lab building.

Current undergraduate students continue to undertake internships with a number of local employers including: Pfizer, MPI Research and Perrigo. These experiences have been found to be quite valuable to students' academic progress and future employment opportunities. If you or your employer have an interest to extend an internship or recruit current students please contact the Department (or me directly) and we will help identify interested students.

The results of our recent Alumni Survey will be quite useful in our future program planning. More than 70 responses from graduates between 1935 and 2002 indicate overwhelmingly positive feelings about their WMU experience and many offered constructive advice on areas of future emphasis. Sixty two percent of our graduates went on for advanced degrees in a number of professional careers paths. Overall, our graduates have been involved in careers in: Industry (60%), Academics (19%), Medicine (13%), and Law (3%). We very much appreciate your time and effort in filling out the survey. We are also very much interested in your ideas and thoughts about how we can improve our programs.

In closing, the students, faculty, and staff of the department are very excited about Chemistry at WMU and invite your visit or expressions of interest in enjoining us in future initiatives.

Please accept my best wishes for you and your family in the New Year.

Sincerely,

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