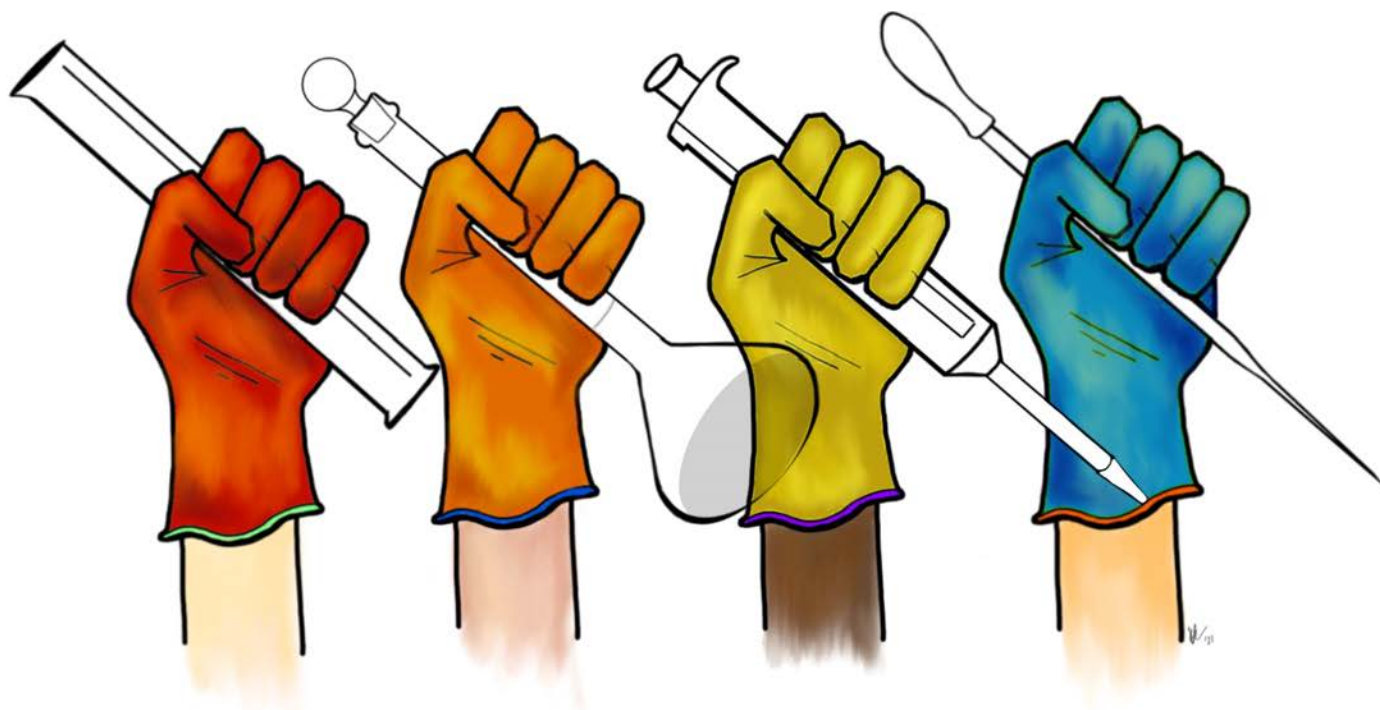


University of Pittsburgh Department of Chemistry Diversity Committee Newsletter

SUMMER 2021



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GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Hello from the Diversity Committee!

Welcome to the first official newsletter of the Chemistry Department Diversity Committee. As the current Chair of the Committee, I extend my greetings to each of you and hope that you are well in this challenging year. The Diversity Committee brings together faculty, graduate students, and staff with the goal of supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging amongst all chemistry department members. We work to support affinity groups, bring diversity-oriented programs and training to the Department, and craft new initiatives to support inclusivity.

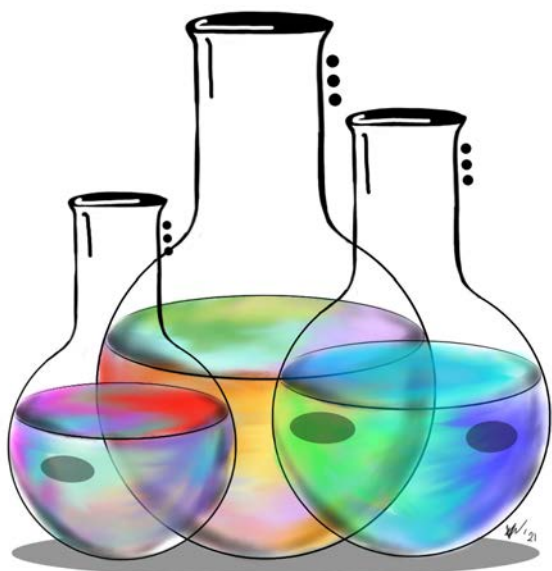
Some of our recent work and current projects include:

- Updating the website to include information about the Committee and our departmental commitment.
- Creating a form on our website for feedback to the committee (anonymous if desired).
- Creating Guidelines for Graduate Students on Reporting Discrimination, Bias, or Harassment.
- Sponsoring a facilitated discussion with graduate students.
- Sponsoring a training on Bystander Intervention.
- Working to create a policy on Ethical Standards for the graduate student handbook.
- Working on a diversity plan for the department.
- Organizing a speaker to kick-off a departmental discussion on inclusivity in the curriculum and classroom.

If you have any questions or feedback about the Diversity Committee Newsletter (including suggestions for future features) please contact me at ChemDiv@pitt.edu or submit your feedback in the form provided on the [website for the committee](#).

Tara Meyer

Tara Meyer
Chair of the Chemistry Diversity Committee



Save the Date!

The Diversity Committee will be sponsoring
a Departmental discussion

August 3, 2021

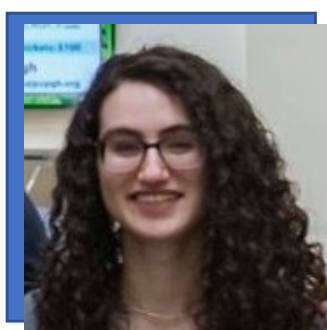
12:00 – 1:00 PM

“How to Help Students Succeed as
They Return to In-Person Learning”

MEET THE 2020-2021 COMMITTEE



Peter Bell
Lecturer



Rotem Benharush
Undergraduate Student



Raúl Hernandez Sanchez
Assistant Professor



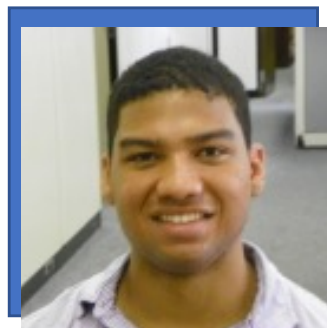
Kazunori Koide
Professor



Victoria Kong
Graduate Student



Jennifer Laaser
Assistant Professor



Jean-Marc Lawrence
Graduate Student



Haitao Liu
Professor



Lingfeng (Kitty) Liu
Lab Instructor



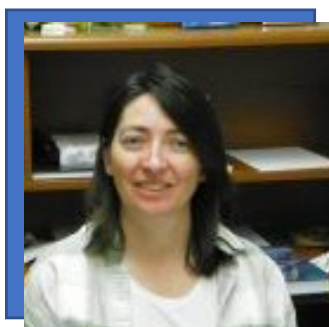
Peng Liu
Associate Professor



Tara Meyer
Professor



Michelle Morgan
Lab Instructor



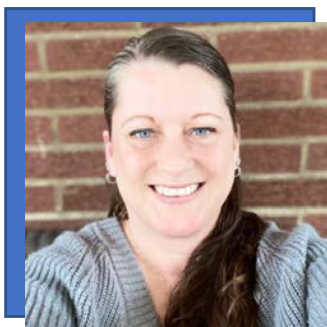
Hannah Morris
Lecturer



Ariana Park
Undergraduate Student



Anthony Taylor
Undergraduate Student



Michelle Ward
Lecturer II

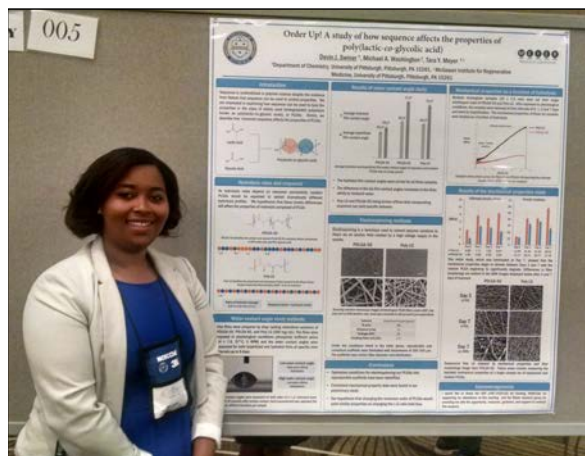
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: DEVIN SWINER

Devin Swiner received her B.S. in Chemistry in 2016

Like any chemist in their final year of graduate school, I have many things on my mind. I am constantly thinking about finishing my research projects, writing my dissertation, applying for jobs, training other students in my lab. However, as a Black chemist, there is something else that weighs on my mind: the kind of legacy I am leaving behind.

When I started my undergraduate degree at the University of Pittsburgh, I was one of just three Black chemistry majors. There was only one Black, tenure-track faculty member in my department, who was also a woman. Sadly, this is the case for a lot of Black chemistry students. Black students are already an under-represented minority at some of these universities, and our numbers in chemistry are even smaller, making it hard to foster a sense of community with people that look like us. I love and cherish the non-Black chemistry friends I made at Pitt, but I longed to have more Black chemist friends to share my experiences with.

I wish I could say things were different when I started my PhD at Ohio State University. Yet when I arrived in Columbus in the fall of 2016, I found that I was the only Black person in my cohort. However, I was at least better prepared to act, and so STEM advocacy became an integral part of my PhD journey.



Being Black in chemistry means you do not have the luxury of just being a student; the workload goes way beyond your organic and physical chemistry classes. As an undergraduate, I had to foster a community outside of the one I was the most comfortable with, find allies that would defend me when I was not in the room, and advocate for myself when there were no allies to be found. That is a lot for an undergraduate, and it's even harder to manage when you do not have anyone to show you the ropes.

So, it was important for me to bridge that gap for others. Now, I mentor students, I serve as chapter president of Ohio

State's chapter of the National Organization of the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE), and I advocate for Black and non-Black chemistry students of colour as boldly as I can. I am always talking to somebody about how to improve the lives of Black chemistry students. From recruitment practices to creating thoughtful programming through our NOBCChE chapter to keeping an 'open door policy' for students in my research group's office, I want to support the graduate and undergraduate students I come across.

I have had great mentors and a vision for my career, but that is not always the case for Black students. We still need guidance, a safe space to talk candidly about our experiences, a place where we can feel supported. In 2017, a few Black women in STEM friends and I started a blog, called #MacScientist, to do just that. We use it as a space to talk about our journeys, offer mentorship and foster community with other Black women in STEM fields. And this work will not stop when I graduate in May and get my first 'big girl' job-my goal in my career is to pour out to other have poured into me, and to create the spaces that I did not have. Because being Black in chemistry means you do not have the luxury of just being a chemist. #BlackInChem week is a way to continue my advocacy and to leave a mark in my field. I am thankful for everyone being

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: DEVIN SWINER (continued from previous page)

receptive to the week's content and for wanting to learn more about the work and experiences of Black chemists. I cannot put into words how happy I have been talking to people from different backgrounds and seeing that there are people outside of the organizers that are excited as well.

I want to be a voice for those that may not know how to navigate white spaces and to uplift and celebrate Black students. I want to be part of the new generation of chemists that does not forget about the ones coming after her. I want to cultivate a strong sense of community based on support and celebration. I want to amplify Black chemists everywhere, always, so that Black students can one day have the luxury of just being students.

Note: Since the writing of this article, Devin has successfully defended her Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry at the Ohio State University and has started a senior position with Merck.



STOP ASIAN HATE

~ Lingfeng 'Kitty' Liu

The Atlanta shooting in March raised an alarm for Asians and for allies who recognized the incident as part of a larger pattern of targeting people who are identified as "other" for blame and hate. People across the US have gathered and protested the hate directed at the Asian community. After a long silent journey, racism against Asians has finally been brought into the national spotlight.

During the pandemic, the number of anti-Asian incidents has escalated dramatically. According to the Center for Study of Hate and Extremism, anti-Asian hate crimes increased by nearly 150% in the last year. It is worth noting that these incidents are disproportionately directed towards Asian women and elders.

Did anti-Asian sentiment start with the pandemic? Many Asians in the US would disagree. They would say it goes way back. Tragic incidents involving Asians have left their marks on US history: the 1871 massacre of 20 Chinese Americans in LA, the 1982 murder of Vincent Chin by autoworkers who blamed him (despite the fact that he was of Chinese descent) for the success of the Japanese car industry (they were given a \$3000 fine and no jail time), and the post 9/11 violence and discrimination directed at Muslim and Indian Americans. Little notice was taken of these incidents, however, because Asians have long been identified as the hardworking but quiet minority.

We are a nation that thrives on multicultural diversity. We embrace and celebrate our diversity every single day. Diversity promotes creativity- it is the driving force behind the science, medicine, and technology that will bring this pandemic to an end. Diversity strengthens and enriches our community. People of different colors and races are all equally human. Everyone in our community deserves dignity and respect. No one should suffer discrimination because of their nationality or ancestry.

We, as the Pitt Chemistry Department Diversity Committee, stand together with our students, faculty, staff, and the larger community to work against Asian and Asian-American hate. We encourage members in our community to be involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions and activities. United together, we will make a better community, and a better nation for our children, and our future.

FACULTY RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

~ Tara Meyer



Congratulations to **Dr. Kay Brummond**, Professor of Chemistry and Associate Dean for Faculty, for receiving the **2021 ACS Award for Encouraging Women into Careers in Chemical Science**.

Sponsored by the Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation, Inc. the purpose of the award is to recognize significant accomplishments by individuals who have stimulated or fostered the interest of women in chemistry by promoting their professional developments as chemists or chemical engineers. A symposium in Dr. Brummond's honor was given at the ACS 2021 Spring National Meeting on April 7th. Speakers included former Pitt faculty member Prof. Renā Robinson who is currently the Dorothy J. Wingfield Phillips Chancellor's Faculty Fellow at Vanderbilt University and former Pitt graduate student Dr. Jamie McCabe who is the Director of Discovery Process Chemistry at Merck & Co.

Kay's scholarly excellence and service to the chemical community have been previously recognized with the 2018 Chancellor's Distinguished Public Service Award; a 2018 Provost's Spotlight on Women Leaders Series; the 2016 Harold Kohn Endowed Alumni Lectureship–Penn State; the 2016 Oxide Diversity Catalyst Lecturer; the 2015 American Chemical Society (ACS) Pittsburgh Award (pictured right); a 2010 ACS Fellow; the 2007 ACS Akron Section Award, the 2007 Carnegie Science Center Emerging Female Scientist Award; a 2005 Johnson & Johnson Focused Giving Award; and a 2003 Chancellor's Distinguished Research Award.

As a mentor to graduate students, as Chair of the Department of Chemistry, as a member of ACS, and in her current role as Associate Dean for Faculty, Kay has worked to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some of her many initiatives and accomplishments include starting the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) PITT for women and other underrepresented groups majoring in chemistry; mentoring female graduate students who have gone on to assume positions of leadership in academia, industry and national labs; and working to make the promotion process more transparent for both appointment and tenure stream faculty.

So please join us in celebrating Kay's dedication and accomplishments.

Congratulations Kay!

An ACS interview with Kay regarding the award can be viewed [here](#).

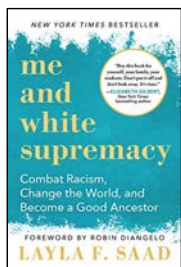
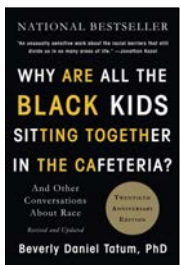
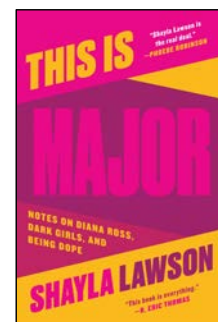


"Kay has also worked to be an agent of change. Not content to keep her head down, she has tried at every stage to leverage her position to make the chemical field a more welcoming place for women."

~ Nomination letter for the 2021 National ACS Award for Encouraging Women into Careers in Chemical Science

READING CORNER

This is Major is a collection of mostly autobiographical essays written by Shayla Lawson that focus on aspects of her experiences growing up as a black girl and on the influence that black girls and women have on mainstream culture. Lawson brings the reader into the experiences with great story telling, a wicked wit, and a powerful view of black girl culture. Another author, R. Eric Thomas, summarized the book with the following quote: "Shayla Lawson writes like you're having a conversation with your smartest, wisest, funniest friend and you don't want it to end." I could not have said it better. I both enjoyed reading the book and learned a lot. ~ Tara Meyer



I highly recommend three books that are useful to read in series, even though they were written by completely different authors. To understand why we are still dealing with racism today, a good first step is a historical perspective. **Stamped: From the Beginning** written by Ibram X. Kendi focuses on historical figures and the impact their racism has played in shaping our country. Kendi argues "if we have any hope of grappling with this stark reality, we must first understand how racist ideas were developed, disseminated, and enshrined in American society." **Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria (20th Anniversary Edition)** by Beverly Daniel Tatum takes a jargon-free look at more recent societal experiences of people of color and the training in racial identity development. Tatum intertwines recounts of news stories with a psychological perspective of how one comes to develop their racial identity and the importance of race, ethnicity, and culture. Since the history classes I experienced were white-centric, some very frank facts and discussion of implications was necessary for me to start building my foundation towards practicing allyship. Finally, I highly recommend **Me and White Supremacy** by Layla F. Saad. This book walks the reader through exercises designed to be completed in a month - although it took me quite a bit longer than this the first time through. The journaling prompts helped me to really take inventory of my own experiences, actions, and viewpoints sometimes with what one may call productive discomfort. I found it a great place to start planning action based on recent education. ~ Michelle Ward

DEFINING COMMON TERMINOLOGY

~ Peter Bell

Diversity - differences in identities of the members of a group including (but not limited to) gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or race; any part of an individual's background and experiences that contributes to the different perspectives, strengths, and values that they have.

Equity - the policies of a group that ensures all the members will have equitable access. An understanding of the diversity of people in your group, or that you want to join your group is necessary to identify what steps will be needed to address the difference backgrounds and address any imbalances to provide a space with equitable access.

Inclusion - the culture of a group that creates a welcoming environment for the diverse membership. Every individual is provided opportunities and knows they are an important part of the group.

Belonging - As diversity, equity, and inclusion are internalized, members will feel welcomed and respected; they will openly participate in the group because they will feel support and encouragement from other members.

The **Alliance for Diversity in Science & Engineering (ADSE)** is an inclusive network whose mission is to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in academia, industry, and government. ADSE supports, organizes, and oversees local, graduate student-run organizations that reach out to students and scientists of all ages and backgrounds.

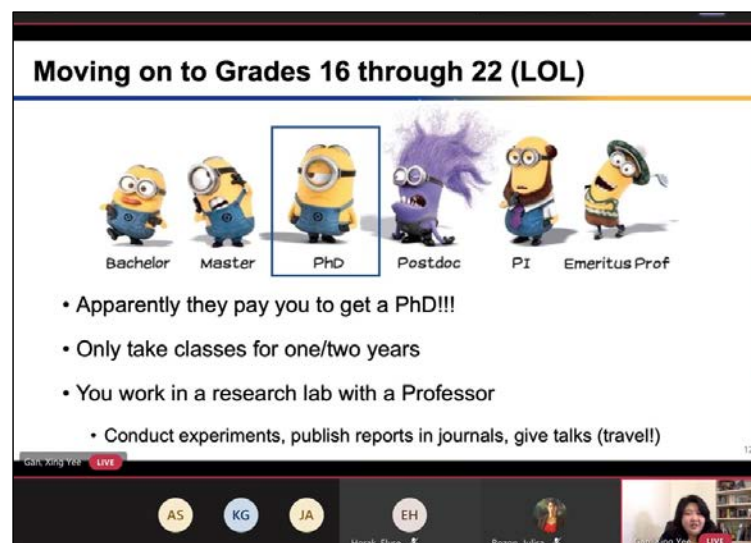
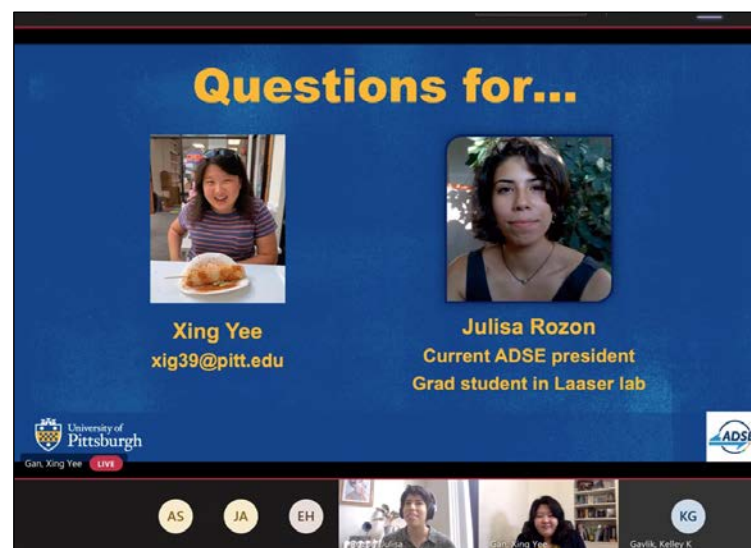
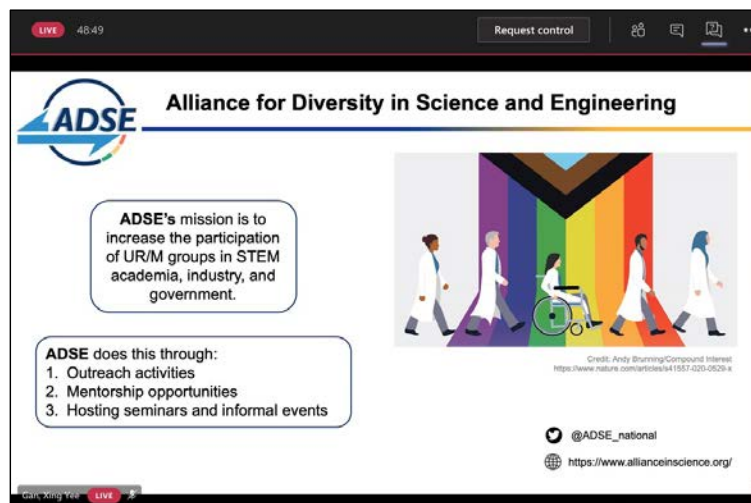
On February 3rd, Xing Yee Gan (then PhD candidate in Dr. Jill Millstone's research group) gave a virtual Seminar at High Schools (SAHS) talk titled "LIGHTS + NANOPARTICLES = CHEMICAL REACTION! Using Light to Drive Chemical Reactions on Nanoparticles Surface" to Brashear High School in Pittsburgh.

688 high school students attended! After Xing Yee's presentation, the Q&A session lasted almost an hour. This was an invitation of ADSE@Pitt, with special recognition given to Julisa Rozon (current ADSE President and Ph.D. candidate in Dr. Jennifer Laaser's research group) for organization of the event.

SEMINARS AT HIGH SCHOOL (SAHS)

There is a recognized need to show students their prospects when pursuing non-traditional STEM paths. SAHS was created to alleviate this information vacuum by exposing high school students to young professionals in STEM from all backgrounds. Because not every student has access to serious guidance and mentoring, we believe showcasing the career path of a URM young STEM professional in their own words, in the form of a seminar, provides young scientists an opportunity to see themselves and their prospects when pursuing a career in STEM.

The format of SAHS consists of an event of 30-45 min, where the speaker shares their science, their research for the general audience, and their path to their current position. Ample time is provided after the seminar for questions from students. At this point the event turns into a panel, where the students can ask questions, raise concerns, and even ask for advice. With these events we aim to help demystify STEM careers.



WCC PITT SA FORMED

~ Michelle Ward



The **Women Chemists Committee (WCC) Student Affiliates** is a group dedicated to discussing issues facing women in chemistry and other STEM fields and empowering the members of our organization. The WCC hosts meetings that give women space to talk about the problems they are facing and show them that they have other people who will support them as they complete their degree. The WCC also hosts meetings that promote the general wellbeing of their members, from talks about mental health and self-care to social events that allow them to connect with other scientists.



Ariana Park



Ebru Lider



Rotem Benharush

This organization is both a University Club and the first Student Affiliates division of the Greater Pittsburgh Area Women Chemists Committee. Department of Chemistry juniors Ariana Park (President), Ebru Lider (Vice President), and Rotem Benharush (Operations Officer) were recently featured in a publication of the ACS Pittsburgh Section newsletter and were interviewed by the editor. Information available on the Section's [website](#).

The Greater Pittsburgh Area Women Chemists Committee (WCC) and University of Pittsburgh WCC Student Affiliates cosponsored a virtual Careers in Chemistry Symposium on Sunday, April 11th with 35 registrants ranging from high school through graduate students. A panel of chemists from a variety of fields – and all Pitt Chemistry alumni – shared information and advice about pursuing careers in chemistry outside of academia.

Panelists at this inaugural event included: Jessica Botzan (Food Scientist at General Mills), Cecilia Frketic (Quality Engineer at Northrop Grumman Corporation), Natalie Grauel (CMF Program Manager at Rivian), Michelle Hu (Development Chemist at Johnson Controls Inc.), Dr. Kristi Kauffman (Senior Technical Manager at PPG Architectural Coatings), Dr. Christina D. King (Staff Scientist at Buck Institute for Research on Aging), Samantha Mike (Chemist at FLIR Systems), Michelle Montgomery (R&D Scientist at Covestro LLC), Jenna Nordstrom (Chemist-Development at L-Oréal USA), Chelsea Perkins (GMP Process Analyst at Eurofins Scientific), and Dr. Amy Rupert (Patent Agent at Troutman Pepper).

You can follow the WCC PITT SA on an upcoming page on the Greater Pittsburgh Area Women Chemists Committee [website](#) for future events and more information.

PPEP UPDATE

~ Haitao Liu

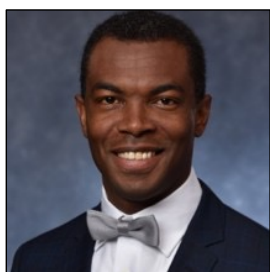
The Pitt Prison Education Project (PPEP) was founded in 2016 to offer college-level education opportunities to inmates around the Pittsburgh region. PPEP uses the Inside-Out model, in which courses such as Political Science, English, Music and Anthropology are offered inside a prison to both inmates and college students in the same classroom.

The program is interested in broadening the course offering, especially in natural sciences, math, and engineering topics. You can get involved by developing a course, giving seminars/guest lectures, or serving as a TA/tutor. Additional information can be found at [the PPEP webpage](#) or by contacting Prof. Haitao Liu (hliu@pitt.edu). Volunteers are needed!!

NOBCChE UPDATE

~ Tara Meyer

This is a great year for the **National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE)** Regional Chapter! Partnering with CMU, we were able to reactivate our chapter. In addition to regular meetings, we sponsored a game night on April 15th and met with Professor Thomas Epps, a prominent polymer chemist when he visited CMU on April 23rd. We also added a new co-faculty advisor, Professor Tajbo Niepa, to the leadership. Dr. Niepa is an Assistant Professor in Chemical and Petroleum Engineering at the University of Pittsburgh. On May 20th the chapter participated in the annual meeting of the NOBCChE Collaborative, which brings together 6 universities with a purpose to develop a pipeline of academic career opportunities for NOBCChE undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral members that helps to achieve NOBCChE's overall mission and seeks to improve the representation of people of color in academia.



Dr. Tajbo Niepa

To be added to the NOBCChE
Regional Chapter email list
contact Chapter President
Jami Gaitor
(jgaitor@andrew.cmu.edu)

**Mark your calendars now for the virtual conference,
NOBCChE 2021, to be held September 16th through 18th**

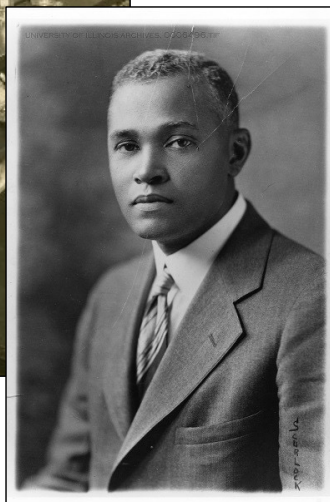


From the [National NOBCChE site](#): "The mission of the National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers (NOBCChE) is to build an eminent cadre of successful diverse global leaders in STEM and advance their professional endeavors by adding value to their academic, development, leadership, and philanthropic endeavors throughout the life-cycle of their careers. To that end we have established educational partnerships with school districts, municipalities, businesses, universities, and other organizations in the public and private sectors to provide and support local, regional, national, and global programs that assist people of color in fully realizing their potential in academic, professional, and entrepreneurial pursuits in chemistry, chemical engineering, and allied fields."

HISTORY HIGHLIGHT



For more information see the [ACS feature here](#).



DID YOU KNOW

...St. Elmo Brady was the first African American chemist to receive a Ph.D.? He earned his doctorate in 1916 from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where he investigated the acidity of keto acids. After finishing his Ph.D., Brady led the development of undergraduate chemistry programs at Tuskegee, Howard, and Fisk Universities, and Tougaloo College. While at Howard University he also

founded the first graduate program in chemistry at an HBCU (historically black college or university). Through his work as an educator, he had an outsized impact on the next generations of African-American chemists, and he was honored by the ACS in 2019 by designation of a National Historic Chemical Landmark at UIUC.

His 1917 monograph, *Household Chemistry for Girls*, is available online and can be accessed [here](#).

SOME FAVORITE QUOTES OF THE COMMITTEE

In diversity there is beauty and there is strength.
~ Maya Angelou

... Do not think of yourself, think of others. Think of the future that awaits you, think about what you can do and do not fear anything.

~ Rita Levi-Montalcini

You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals.

~Marie Curie

Allyship is an active, consistent, and challenging practice of unlearning and reevaluating, in which a person of privilege seeks to work in solidarity with a marginalized group. Allyship is not an identity - it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups. Allyship is not self-defined - our work and our efforts must be recognized by the people we seek to ally ourselves with.

~ PeerNetBC

