



Dear Friends,

What I thought would be an annual newsletter has so far turned into a biennial newsletter – I’m a really good procrastinator! Life here at Alma College has been... active, and I can’t wait to share what’s been going on! Where to begin?



I had the pleasure of speaking with 91 year old Rhea Currie '38. In honor of her husband Dr. Chester Currie '39 and the role that Chemistry at Alma College had on their lives, she donated \$70,000 to the department. We are now proud owners of a state-of-the-art Agilent 1200 HPLC that our faculty and students will enjoy for many years to come!



Since making that gift, Rhea passed away in March of this year, and we are thankful to have met. To bring this story full circle, one of our own alumni, Zack Manning '16 works for Agilent and did our HPLC installation and on-site training!

Shortly following the last newsletter, I received contact from Jim Helbig '69. Jim expressed his interest in writing a short piece about Alma Chemistry in the late 60s and how its global reach affected his personal life in 1969–70. It is a surprising story that involves Dr. Howard Potter and his good friend Dr. Barker Brown, both Alma Chemistry graduates in the '30s, and includes many very interesting historical references. Here is his article, titled [“Chemical Bonds: Isang paglalayag ng pagkatuklas at pagmamahal \(translated from the Austronesian language of the Tagalog, “a journey of discovery and love”\)](#).



Another big investment in the future of our students and faculty came in 2016 (I can’t believe I didn’t mention it the last e-newsletter) - we have replaced our roughly 22 year old Bruker 300 MHz NMR spectrometer with a new Bruker 400 MHz NMR. Although the increase in field strength is modest, the increase in technology is awesome! About the only thing this NMR can’t do is make dinner! Thanks to Alma College and Science Initiative Funding for enabling this purchase!

Funded in part by generous donations from alumni, we initiated “The Department of Chemistry Book Scholarship”, just last year. The purpose of this scholarship is to provide partial book support for juniors pursuing a degree in chemistry. This one-time award is given as a reimbursement up to \$150 for the purchase of chemistry books. You may agree - these books can get pricey!

With special focus on Alma College’s large student population who are interested in pursuing pre-health careers after graduating, the faculty created a newly minted committee named the “Pre-Health Professions Committee.” With two chemistry faculty on board, the committee is responsible, in part, for keeping a watchful eye on this group of students and providing resources to help lead them in the direction of their passions. Areas the committee focuses on include pre-medicine (MD/DO), veterinary medicine, occupational and physical therapy, dental, optometry, and physician assistant.



Many of you know Dr. Scott Hill, professor of chemistry (organic). Scott retired last year after donating 32 years of his life to this department, and he will be dearly missed. Dr. Melissa Strait, professor of chemistry (analytical) is retiring at the end of this current



academic year after 36 years of service. They were both integral in shaping the current department. We all send best wishes to them and their families as they move on to the next chapter of their lives!

I'm grateful to be able to write this newsletter from my office in the Kapp Science Center, because so many college faculty around the globe have lost their jobs as the financial consequences of COVID-19 ripple through our lives. Thanks to Alma College's leadership and our strong alumni base, we are able to meet our students right here on campus and in-person. In consideration of significant financial strain and shrinking departments and programs, your gifts to the department matter more than ever! We truly appreciate that many of you choose to designate all or part of your annual gift to our program. Your gifts enhance our budget and help us continue to provide the best learning experience for our students that we can. We are all very grateful!

Oh - and if you noted from the last e-newsletter, Dr. Jim Mazzuca (Physical Chemistry) was on his way toward tenure. Jim is now tenured and together we look forward to strengthening our department.

Sincerely,

Jeff Turk, Ph.D.
Department Chair

Current Student Spotlight:



Maggie Hanna '22, is a Chemistry/English double major – Pre-Med. She is involved in Chem Club, Pre-Med Club, research, and the Presidential Honors Program. “I’ve participated in research with Dr. Mazzuca every semester, which has allowed me to present at the ACS conference in the spring. I’ve also received the President’s Cup my freshman year, and am on the Dean’s list. A smaller college lets you interact personally with your professors which will help you succeed, both academically and personally. Also, there are so many different ways in which Alma wants to help you travel.”

Alumni Spotlight:

Abby Scharboneau '18, was a Chemistry/Biology double major – Pre-Vet. “Since graduating from Alma, I now currently live in Okemos, MI with my fiancé and fellow Alma chemistry grad Spenser Congram '19. I am in my third year of veterinary school and am preparing to start the clinical phase of my education in the spring. I survived second year and can see the light at the end of the tunnel! My Alma education prepared me for the rigors of a professional program! The time, energy, and quality of work expected by my Alma college professors has been a huge proponent of my success at MSU CVM (especially those sig figs, thanks Dr. Nancy Dopke!).





Olivia Crandell '15, graduated with a Chemistry major and a Math minor. “I graduated with my PhD in Chemistry Education from Michigan State University in Spring 2020. In June, I started my post-doc at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. So far I have worked on a few projects: student use of language in their reasoning in organic chemistry, studying how students learn and integrate molecular orbital theory into their problem solving in inorganic chemistry, and have started investigating student understanding of symmetry at all levels of undergraduate chemistry. My undergraduate research experience with Dr. Joel Dopke was key to my acceptance to

graduate school. As an undergraduate researcher, I traveled to my first national meeting of the American Chemical Society and presented talks and posters at Honors day. I was also prepared to step into the classroom as a graduate TA because of my experience as a TA at Alma.”