SMS Connects- June 2020

SMS staff engaging in their weekly zoom meeting

Dear SMS Community,

2020 has undoubtedly been a difficult year, for SMS, for the University, for our country and globally. We are in the middle of a global pandemic and severe economic downturn, both of which have been exacerbated by political dysfunction. And now, we are faced with a painful reminder of the ever-present systemic injustices faced by the Black members of our community.

These are stressful times for our faculty, staff and students, and the pressure shows no sign of diminishing soon. This is a time for empathy and understanding. Within SMS, however, there are some positive developments to cheer. Enrollment in summer classes is significantly higher this year compared to last year, and fall enrollments look healthy, at least so far. ASU is slowly emerging from lockdown and the research labs are starting to reopen, with proper attention being paid to the safety of the students, technicians, and postdocs who work there.

Teaching this fall will be unusually demanding since both on-campus and remote learners will need to be served at the same time. However, negotiating the constraints of online teaching can also seed out-of-the-box thinking and new contexts for learning that can benefit all students. In the organic chemistry group, for example, we are having fun exploring the role of beta-dicarbonyl chemistry in the pH dependent color changes observed in turmeric extract.

Ramping up the research operation and preparing to teach in new and creative ways means a summer of hard work for our amazingly resourceful and committed students, faculty and staff, and for this, I thank every one of them. I am confident that through their efforts we will be fully prepared to tackle the new semester, albeit with a large dose of humility.

Ian Gould
SMS Interim Director

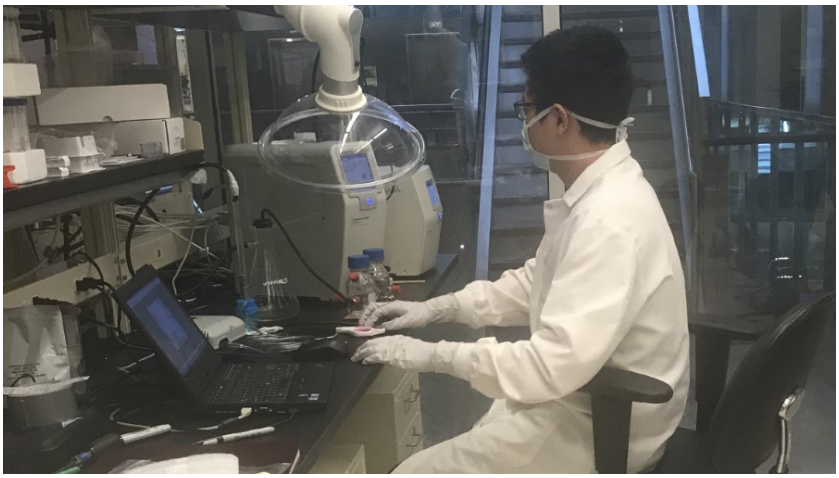
Featured Story: David Jacobson, BS Biochemistry

Online Biochemistry Student Credits SMS as He Starts Medical School

Achieving your dream takes discipline, perseverance and hard work. Working hard to reach a goal is something ASU Online student and Texas resident David Jacobson knows well. Jacobson's goal has been to attend the University of Houston College of Medicine and he was excited to learn recently that his application to their program has been successful. He will start in the program this summer. read full story

News and Research Highlights

ASU researcher tests face mask efficiency before and after sterilization



Protective masks are key to ASU and many other organizations reopening. SMS professor Pierre Herckes and his graduate student Zhaobo Zhang test the effects of sterilization on mask efficiency to trap aerosols and droplets, which can harbor coronavirus particles. Herckes is co-investigator with ASU engineering professor Paul Westerhoff on a recently funded National Science Foundation (NSF) grant "Disinfection and Reuse of Health-Care Worker Facial Masks to Prevent Infection coronavirus disease." read full story

ASU develops state's first saliva-based COVID-19 test

A significant bottleneck in COVID-19 testing is the time it takes to collect samples. ASU has now developed a saliva-based test that promises to overcome this obstacle. The research is led by Biodesign Institute Executive Director and SMS faculty member Josh LaBaer. read more

Abhishek Singharoy's Work Highlighted by Oak Ridge National Lab

Oak Ridge National Lab is the home of the IBM Summit supercomputer, one of the newest in the nation. Singharoy used Summit to simulate the structure of a possible drug target for Francisella tularensis, a bacterium known as one of the most hostile organisms on the planet. read more

Hao Yan, Yan Liu and Neal Woodbury's work Highlighted by DOE

The DOE Office of Science recently highlighted work by ASU scientists who built a new type of nanostructure using DNA self-assembly that serves as a bridge to move energy generated by light-absorbing molecules to light-emitting molecules. The work represents significant progress in optimizing systems that mimic the first stage of photosynthesis. read more

Teaching

ASU students benefit from teaching initiative grant

The School of Molecular Sciences was awarded a teaching initiative grant from The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The grant allows the general chemistry program to increase the number of in-person discussion sessions offered to students, and also provides funding for high-quality, online recordings with closed captioning and annotations to further increase accessibility. The grant was awarded to general chemistry program coordinator Ron Briggs and colleagues Agota Debreczeni, Shelly Hauck, Stacy Sendler and Rebeca Smith.

Our SMS Graduate Students

SMS Graduate Student Council

A new official student organization "SMS Graduate Student Council" (SMS-GSC) was recently formed by the School of Molecular Sciences graduate students. SMS-GSC provides a voice for graduate students within the School to promote success, holistic wellness and inclusion within the diverse graduate student community. The goal of the Council is to provide resources and guidance to the School's graduate students through professional development, advocacy and service opportunities.

Some of the projects the SMS-GSC is currently working on include organizing events to welcome new graduate students, designing social and professional development activities for the fall, and setting up a peer mentoring program. We encourage all SMS graduate students to get involved and join the SMS-GSC facebook group at https://www.facebook.com/groups/smsgsc/

Employment Opportunities

California State University, Long Beach: Professor of Chemistry (Organic Chemistry) 2624

AZ State: Environmental Science Specialist 2-3(Job Id 56421)

Loxo Oncology: Medicinal Chemist

Please follow us on the SMS LinkedIn page for more job opportunities. Please also check Chemistry Job Resource: Chemjobber for more chemistry jobs.

Please feel free to send email to ASUSMS@asu.edu at any time with questions, concerns, or suggestions. You can visit our website at sms.asu.edu or connect with us by liking our Facebook page!

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