



2020 ISSUE

The University of Texas at **TYLER** *Chemistry & Biochemistry*

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Inaugural Master's Class 2019-2020

The first year of the new Master's Program was a success. The program attracted students from the area and even two students from faculty and staff. It included 10 students (pictured below) and six graduate classes. The classes ranged from Organic Synthesis to Molecular Spectroscopy. Each graduate student has started research with six research advisors in organic, biochemistry, physical chemistry, inorganic chemistry, and the newly added fermentation science. Many of the graduate students took on the roll of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). They taught labs including Intro Chemistry, Gen. Chem I, Gen. Chem. II and Organic Chemistry. After one year in, the students have made great strides in completing their Degree in the coming year. We are excited to see where the second year takes us and the new faces we will bring to the UT Tyler Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

Pictured (left to right): Weston Manuel, Meghan Vogt, Jerome Lewis, Adrian Adan, Melvin Anthony, Viktor Alvarado, Jason Distefano, Tyler Vine, Nathan Smith, Jonathan Belew (not-pictured)
Photo Credit: Dr. Sean Butler



University Changes that have the Department Excited!

UT Health Science Center Merges with UT Tyler

In Fall 2019, it was announced that the UT Health Science Center in Tyler will merge with UT Tyler. Designed as an opportunity to better suit the community and the students by creating “a clear path for service to East Texas.” This comes with \$95 million for new educational and clinical facilities. The Department is gearing up for an exciting new opportunity to collaborate with the ongoing research at the Health Science Center. The Department is also excited for the opportunity to work with the increased number of students expected to traverse this new path. Read more here: <https://www.uttyler.edu/stronger-together/>



Medical School at UT Tyler



During the Spring 2020 term the UT System Board of Regents announced that UT Tyler will be getting a Medical School. We are very excited about not only the prospect of new students eager to attend the UT Tyler but how they will be transformed by the University’s Pre-Med Academy. If you recall from the 2019 newsletter, this initiative is housed in the Department and led by Dr. Rachel Mason. The medical school will also be a driving factor for high quality education in the area. A leading Texas economic research and analysis firm states that “the new medical school would produce an additional \$1.9 billion annually and 18, 145 new jobs.” [Click here to Read More](#)

Coronavirus 2020

It has been a year! You have now officially lived through a pandemic! As you can imagine this spring semester was stressful for our students, faculty, and staff and we are proud and thankful for how well they were able to transition mid-semester. It was a time of technological advances in how we teach. In the Chemistry Department, many faculty continued to teach during their normal hours via Zoom in order to maintain a presence with the students. For labs, virtual reality labs and simulations were implemented to maintain the rigor expected.

This year the Department continued to celebrate the accomplishments of the students with a virtual awards ceremony. Videos were recorded for each award by the respective faculty member and presented during a Zoom session. We also celebrated our graduating seniors with a virtual “Senior Dinner” where we hosted small rotating breakout sessions in Zoom. We continue to celebrate them with a full page spread in the newsletter (pg.3).

2020 Graduating Seniors!



Allen Byrd



Asha Gonzales



Brittany Parks



Jacob Putt



Sam Fraley



Grace Bertles



Whitney Romero



Aaron Scoggins



Joseph Lively



Josue Lemus



Kendrick Crawford



Ha Eun Lee



Aaron Roach



Kyle Hjorth



Michael King



John Wright

Congratulations to Grace Bertles who was accepted to Duke University and Ha Eun Lee was accepted to University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry!

[To watch the virtual awards ceremony and read more about our graduating seniors, click here!](#)

Where are they now - 10 years later

Leigh Anselmo



After graduating from UT Tyler, Leigh Anselmo started pharmacy school at Texas Tech. During her time at Tech she did a lot of learning, made many new friends, and was involved in student government. And after four years of hard work, and many tears, Leigh earned a Doctorate of Pharmacy. She had the option of pursuing a residency or going straight to retail, and she chose to start working. When that first paycheck came, she felt like a millionaire!

In the years after pharmacy school, Leigh has worked for several chain pharmacies and finally ended up as Pharmacy Manager at a pharmacy in a grocery store. She absolutely loves it. Leigh loves her customers and their stories. And it's nice to have customers that genuinely care about her.

Aside from school and work, Leigh moved to Austin, married her best friend, and in her spare time she fosters kittens for the local animal shelter.

Troy Dawley

Troy Dawley graduated from UT Tyler in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry. Since then, Troy has completed his Doctorate of Osteopathic Medicine from UNT Health Science Center, Fort Worth, TX in 2014 and is currently the Chief Neurosurgery Resident at Michigan State University, College of Human



Medicine/Ascension Providence Hospitals. In 2018, he completed a fellowship in Neurosurgical Oncology at NorthShore University Hospital in New York.

By far the most rewarding part of his career is helping his patients during their most vulnerable times of dealing with a brain or spine tumor, a traumatic pathology or an unforeseen benign and curable problem. "I thoroughly enjoy helping others in need and seeing direct results from operating on a patient. There is no better feeling than that."

Troy also has a significant interest in international neurosurgery and philanthropy and is the Co-Founder, Vice President and Treasurer of the Board of Directors of the Neuroscience Foundation for Africa. "Our vision is to create a sustainable study abroad-humanitarian program throughout Africa to improve awareness about health care while providing medical care to communities in need." The inaugural trip has been delayed due to the current state of the pandemic but he plans to resume this work as soon as possible.

Troy has been happily married for 4 years to his wife, Lauren, who is also in medicine. She is a Physician Assistant in Orthopedics. They love to travel and spend as much time outdoors which typically involves hiking or biking. Troy and Lauren will be moving to Greensboro, North Carolina where he will be joining a private practice neurosurgery group upon his residency graduation in June 2021.

Lauren Johnson



Lauren Johnson graduated from UT Tyler in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry. After graduating she attended graduate school at Texas A&M University to study organic and main group chemistry. Her research consisted of studying cationic main group compounds as water compatible small anion receptors. She graduated with a Master of Science in Chemistry in the spring of 2013. After graduate school, Lauren went to teach for one year at Kilgore College before joining the faculty at UT Tyler in the fall 2014. During her time at UT Tyler Lauren has taught many lecture and laboratory courses in introductory, general and organic chemistry. In 2018, she was awarded the Donald McLaugherty Award for Excellence in Teaching and in 2019 she was awarded the Regent's Outstanding Teaching Award by the University of Texas Board of Regents. Outside of teaching, Lauren enjoys being outside and traveling to other countries. She is married to her husband of 6 years Zechariah, who she met while attending UT Tyler.

Where are they now - 10 years later

Justin McCaslin



After growing up in Jacksonville, Texas, Justin graduated from UT Tyler with a degree in Chemistry in 2010. After college, Justin attended UT Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, followed by 6 years of training at Baylor University Medical Center, also in Dallas. This includes a 1 year Internal Medicine internship, a 4-year Diagnostic Radiology residency, and most recently a 1 year fellowship in Interventional Radiology.

Justin has joined Tyler Radiology Associates in Tyler, TX. He and his wife Meridith been happily married for 11 years. They welcomed their first child, Quinn, in 2019.

Recent Accomplishments

Congratulations to 2014 Caleb Bunton (top right) and 2016 Brian Western (lower right), UT Tyler Chemistry Alumni. Dr. Caleb Bunton graduated with his PhD in Chemistry from Southern Methodist University in May 2020. His research, under the direction of Dr. David Son, focused on tunable organosilicon and thiolene materials. Dr. Bunton will be pursuing a Post-Doc position. Dr. Brian Western recently (2020) graduated from Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine as Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO). Brian will start his ER residency at the Louisiana State University School of Medicine Hospital in Baton Rouge in August. Please reach out to the department, we love hearing your accomplishments!



UT Tyler Science Academy

Outside the normal demo shows performed by the Department at area schools and organizations, Dr. Shtoyko created a year-long UT Tyler Science Academy. With the help of Dr. Randy Back, the academy offers lectures and demonstrations on Chemistry and Physics. The academy is designed for ages 11 - 13 and meets on Friday afternoons. This first year had 15 students and we only hope to grow from there.

The UT Tyler Science Academy is on the long list of community outreach the department holds to engage interested students in Chemistry and Physics. Watch next summer for the new Chemistry Camp and the returning successful Pre-Med Academy Camp. (Both cancelled this summer due to COVID.)

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