Illinois State University senior Jacob Grabowski of Crete, Illinois, has been selected by the American Chemical Society to receive the prestigious Division of Organic Chemistry Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF).

The competitive fellowships are awarded on the merits of students’ research proposals, academic records, faculty recommendations, and a student’s passion for laboratory science. The $5,000 fellowship is designated for research to be carried out in the summer of 2018. Other SURF fellowships were awarded this year to students at Yale University, University of Michigan, and Case Western Reserve University.

Grabowski’s research focuses on the development of new reactions that are either inspired by or directed toward natural products. “Jacob’s hard work is helping to further understand a reaction used to synthesize biologically active organic molecules, some of which show promise against cancer and other diseases,” said Associate Professor of Chemistry Andy Mitchell, in whose lab Grabowski conducts research.

Mitchell explained that for millennia, human beings have mined the natural world for remedies and cures—think of aspirin, quinine, and penicillin. It is only in the last two centuries that chemists have stepped away from being dependent on natural products directly from the environment. “Jacob is looking at an organic synthesis that is inspired by natural products.”
Lawton wins Fisher Thesis Award

Zachary E. Lawton recently returned to ISU for a ceremony honoring his receipt of the 2017 Fisher Thesis Award. Zach was honored for his M.S. thesis entitled “Analytical Validation of a Portable Mass Spectrometer System for High Throughput Forensic Screening” done under the supervision of Dr. Chris Mulligan. The Department of Chemistry has a long tradition of research-based M.S. theses, even predating our establishment as a unique department; Zach is our fifth University winner (sidebar). First awarded in 1996, the Fisher Thesis Award honors ISU’s graduate thesis tradition.

According to the program for the event: The Fisher Thesis Award is named to honor James L. Fisher, an outstanding graduate of Illinois State University. Fisher has deep ties to this institution—first as an alumnus and later as a professor, administrator, and vice-president. His master’s thesis, “The Niles Register and Western Reactions to Jacksonian Policies” (1957), was directed by this University’s first distinguished professor, historian Helen Cavanaugh. The author of 10 books on higher education and leadership, Fisher has been awarded 11 honorary degrees, including an honorary doctorate at Illinois State University.

Mr. Lawton now works for Perkin Elmer in Connecticut. He was joined at the April 9, 2018 event by his family and thesis committee. Congratulations, Zach!

Chemistry’s University Fisher Thesis Winners
Zachary Lawton (Mulligan) 2017
George Van Den Driessche (Standard) 2015
Jessica Durham (Szczepura) 2012
Sharon Engel (Ferrence) 2007
Daniel T. Richter (Lash) 1999

Known University Runners-up
James P. Brault (Friesen) 2016
Ruoshi Li (Lash) 2013

Condolences
We are sad to report that Prof. Joseph Tsang died in April at age 81. He taught at ISU beginning in 1968 until the early 1980s, when he began teaching in Hong Kong. Condolences to his family and friends.
ISU invades NOLA for ACS meeting

The Spring 2018 National American Chemical Society meeting had a huge ISU presence, with over twenty graduate and undergraduate students on hand along with six faculty and many alumni. Many informal reunion gatherings were held in the convention center and surrounding venues. Soon-to-be alumni gathered with alumni, faculty, and friends for an organized event on Monday, March 19. A few photos:
Students gathered in the Circus Room on May 4, 2018 to celebrate another successful year. Graduating students and several disciplinary award winners were honored at the banquet.
Hannah Milner received the James “Ben” Sedgwick Memorial Scholarship at the Senior Banquet and Awards Ceremony. Hannah is shown with (L to R) Trilby Sedgwick, Cathy Stone, and Dr. Isabel Green.

Clockwise from left: Mollie Metallo with Hope Fine; Guadalupe Ruiz with Dr. Jeremy Driskell; Prof. Emeritus Ted Ichniowski shared tales of Chemistry past; Rachel Tomlovich with Dr. Andy Mitchell; Mark Will with his new CRC Handbook and Dr. Michael Webb.
Patrick J. Huffman (M.S. ’73, House) is now in Michigan and has retired after a long and distinguished career in the candy industry. He offered the following career advice: Enjoying what we do for a living is a critical component of happiness. I retired from my last position as President and CEO of a medium sized family company in Pennsylvania in 2015. We specialized in contract manufacturing for large and much more well-known retail brands. My beginnings, however, were as a technician at Beich Candy, where I worked until Nestlé wanted me to move to Fulton, NY. I just did not have a shovel big enough. Now, I sit on the board of a large international chocolate manufacturer with plants in CA, PA, IL, Canada and China. They were a very important supplier to Beich and I have known the family for three generations. It is just enough to keep my hand in the business world.

Joshua Jarodsky (M.S. ’16, Jones) recently published a paper in *Journal of Molecular Biology* that featured his cover design. Josh is currently at Washington University in St. Louis as a researcher and will begin his Ph.D. studies in the fall at Portland State University.

Justin Morgenthaler (M.S. ’07, Jones) recently began the mental health counseling program at Northwestern University.

YiXin Ren (M.S. ’14, Szczepura) was among a number of alumni who stopped by our alumni and friends event in New Orleans during the ACS Meeting. He is currently a Ph.D. student at University of Texas-Dallas. He shared the picture at right of him with ACS President Peter Dorhout getting an award for "Excellence in Graduate Polymer Research". Congrats Ren!

Alex Swiontek (B.S. ’14, Mulligan) works as a web developer in Phoenix, AZ. He is accompanied by other developers with scientific backgrounds, who’s bosses say it gave them a great foundation to start their careers. The career pivot was not that bad, as the new job involves critical thinking, problem solving, and persistence, as did obtaining a degree in Biochemistry. He says he is doing his best to navigate the 100+ degree weather, but staying cool and hydrated, as well as improving his ping-pong skills.

Save the dates!

We always love to see our alumni and friends (witness page 3!). We hope you’ll join us at one (or more) of several upcoming events...

During **ACS Meeting in Boston, MA — Aug. 19-23**. Contact ccmlau@ilstu.edu if interested.

During **ACS Midwest Regional Meeting in Ames, IA — Sunday, Oct. 21**. After 7 pm. Contact ccmlau@ilstu.edu if interested.

**Homecoming — Saturday, Oct. 13**. Parade watching and tailgate.

Stay in Touch

Alumni of the Department of Chemistry are an important component to the continued success of our program. By going forth and "Spreading the Red" and making us proud, our alumni represent the Department well around the city, state, country, and world. We are always excited to hear what our alumni are up to now and to keep them involved in the happenings in and around the Department. Drop a line to Chemistry@IllinoisState.edu or alumni liaison Dr. Greg Ferrence (ferrence@ilstu.edu).
Mike Kurz Research Fellowship

Professor Emeritus Mike Kurz came to Illinois State University in 1968 as an assistant professor of chemistry and served as chair of the department from 1987 until his retirement in 2003. Since then, Kurz has taught as a visiting professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Hawaii. Though he now lives in San Antonio, Kurz has maintained a strong connection to the Department of Chemistry. “When I retired I set up a fund to provide some money for graduate students who didn’t have access to grant support,” Kurz said. “I felt it was an important thing I could do and I certainly was appreciative of my many years at ISU.”

The Mike Kurz Research Fellowship Award provides a base of financial support for master’s students who are willing to devote their summers to working on their thesis research projects. Supporting research is important to Kurz. “You get to see how chemistry has evolved by trying to develop a new reaction and share the hard work, the disappointments, and hopefully the thrills of success with the faculty member as you’re trying to accomplish the goals of your research project.”

Redbirds Rising: The Campaign for Illinois State presents an exciting opportunity for those who want to help Illinois State University rise to new heights of excellence. Join Mike Kurz in supporting research in the Department of Chemistry. Make a gift online at RedbirdsRising.IllinoisState.edu.

Krannich 2018 Ryder Lecturer

Illinois State University Department of Chemistry hosted Professor Emeritus of Chemistry Larry K. Krannich as its 2018 Bernard L. Ryder Distinguished Alumni Lecturer. Krannich presented to interested students, faculty, staff, and community members a talk titled “Retrospective Look and Going Forward.”

A Pekin native, Krannich earned his master’s degree in chemistry in 1965 from Illinois State and his doctorate in inorganic chemistry in 1968 from the University of Florida. He is a professor emeritus from the Department of Chemistry at University of Alabama-Birmingham, a department he helped to create from scratch in 1969. Before retiring, he served as chair there for 27 years of his 42-year career. When leading that department, he placed great emphasis on developing a quality undergraduate chemistry program and creating outreach programs for public school science teachers.

Krannich remains actively involved in the American Chemical Society (ACS) and served on the ACS Board of Directors from 2010 to 2013. He was named an ACS Fellow in 2014, the highest honor of the national organization, and has received several awards from the ACS, including the Ann E. Nalley Southeastern Volunteer Service Award. Krannich has also been previously honored by the Illinois State Chemistry Department as an Alumni Day guest.

The Ryder Distinguished Lecture series is named for Bernard L. Ryder, Ph.D. the first chair of the Department of Chemistry when it was formed in 1966. The series was established in 1988 and honors alumni who have distinguished themselves professionally. Ryder’s daughter, Mary Ryder, Ph.D., was on hand to present a certificate and honorarium check.
Name ____________________________

ISU Degree(s) ______________________ Year(s) ______________________ Advisor(s) ______________________

Mailing Address __________________________________________________________

City ____________________________ State ________ Zip ____________ Country ______

Home Phone ______________________ Mobile Phone ______________________

Occupation _____________________________________________________________

Employer ______________________________________________________________

Business Address _______________________________________________________

City ____________________________ State ________ Zip ____________

Preferred E-mail address __________________________

Preferred contact: [ ] Business Address [ ] Mailing Address [ ] E-mail

News and comments __________________________

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