

the Catalyst



January 2025
Volume 110, No. 1



**Introducing Our New Chair
Dr. Wei Gao**

HIGHLIGHTS

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ADVANCE NOTICE

FEBRUARY MEETING

CACS East Chapter-ACS Philly Joint Lunar New Year Banquet

Pho Today

101 New World Way

South Plainfield, NJ 07080

Saturday, February 8, 5:00 – 9:30 PM

See the FEBRUARY issue of *the Catalyst* for details, and page 7 of this issue,
call the Section Office at (267) 485-1792 or email PhilaACS@gmail.com.

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INTRODUCING OUR NEW CHAIR —Dr. Wei Gao

Dr. Wei Gao is an R&D and TS&D Fellow at The Dow Chemical Company. She received her BS from Fudan University, ME from Tianjin University, and PhD from Peking University in 1997. She then worked as a postdoctoral fellow and an Associate Professor in the Institute of Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Employment followed at Polytechnic University (now NYU Tandon School of Engineering), and in 2005 she became a Research Assistant Professor. In 2006 Wei moved to the Philadelphia area and joined Rohm and Haas/Dow.

Wei's research interests are on separation-based polymer and particle characterization, synthesis–structure–property relationships of polymeric and colloidal systems, and sustainable polymers, natural polymers, biodegradation, and sustainability. Wei has published 50+ peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, 25+ patents and patent applications, co-edited 2 books, and co-organized 15+ symposia in ACS national meetings since 2014 and the 22nd International Conference on Field-and Flow-based Separations (FFF2022). Wei has presented at many conferences as keynote or invited speaker. In addition to Dow internal technical awards, Wei's research had been recognized externally with US EPA Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Awards (2003 and 2013), Industrial Chemistry Award from the ACS Philadelphia Local Section (2021), ACS POLY fellow (2021), Business Intelligence Group (BIG) Innovation (2022 and 2023) and Sustainability (2020 and 2022) awards, and R&D 100 award (2022 and 2024).

In addition to organizing symposia in ACS national meetings, Wei has been active in ACS technical divisions, served as alternate councilor for POLY division and in the POLY executive committee in 2021–2023, initiated the Natural Polymer Consortium roundtable with the ACS Green Chemistry Institute in 2023, was Chair-Elect for the Philadelphia Local Section in 2024, and now leads the ACS Convergent Chemistry Community on Transformative Natural Polymers. She is also passionate about talent development and has actively served as an ACS career consultant.

OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER

Younger Chemists Committee Program and Event Planning Volunteers: The Younger Chemists Committee (YCC) is a committee of the Philadelphia Local Section focusing on the needs of undergraduate, graduate, post doc, and early career chemists under 35 years old. The committee is looking for volunteers to help with program planning this year! This is an excellent opportunity for students and early career chemists to assume leadership roles and network with likeminded scientists within the ACS community. The estimated time commitment would be less than 1 hour per week.

All interested individuals can reach out to Isaac Choie at: yongsuk.isaac@temple.edu

Comments From the Chair



Happy New Year! As I step into the role of Chair for the Philadelphia Local Section of the American Chemical Society in 2025, I want to express my gratitude and enthusiasm for the opportunity to serve this distinguished community. It is with a deep appreciation for the exemplary leaders, board members, and officers who have come before me that I undertake this responsibility. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Matt Irwin, Graham Dobereiner, Ivona Sasimovich Macor, and Christie McInnis, whose contributions as past chairs have been a source of inspiration to me.

Reflecting on the past year, our Section has navigated several challenging years with resilience and dedication. The event programming in 2024 saw significant growth, building on the successes of 2023. Our calendar was filled with both historically established key events and new initiatives. We hosted the Teaching and Student Scholastic Achievement Awards event at the beautiful Grey Tower Castle of Acadia University and the Edgar Fahs Smith Lecture with University of Penn. The Younger Chemists Committee (YCC) Poster Session, the 50-, 60- and 70-year Appreciation event to recognize our senior members, the highly valued Philadelphia Section award honoring Professor Ron M. Levy, and the Ulliyot award event with the Science History Institute were all highlights of the year.

In addition to these traditional events, we introduced several new initiatives that enriched our community. The “Meet our Committees and Topical Groups” event at the beginning of the year provided a platform for members to engage with various committees and groups. The “Lunar New Year Banquet” joint event with CACS East Chapter, the “Quaker Houghton Site Tour” by YCC, and the “Science History Institute Museum Tour for Undergraduate Students” events followed by career discussions with our ACS career consultants were all well-received. Our special “125th Anniversary Gala” was a memorable celebration of our Section's longstanding history and achievements.

Looking ahead to 2025, my goal as chair is to continue creating opportunities to promote talent recognition and development through technical and professional forums and networking events for all members in the Philadelphia area. I believe that fostering a vibrant and engaged community is essential for our collective success.

I would like to extend a personal invitation to each of you to participate in our local events. Your participation in future events will help us contribute to our Section's mission. I am confident that by working together, we can make significant strides in fostering a dynamic and progressive community. Whether you attend events, volunteer, or share ideas, every contribution shapes our Section's future.

In 2025, we plan to enhance our programming with a variety of innovative events. We will expand our career development activities. We are also shaping up new technical seminars/webinars jointly with ACS Convergent Chemistry Community (CCC) on Transformative Natural Polymers for the 21st century materials, which will provide a platform for knowledge exchange,

professional growth, and community building. Additionally, we will introduce more social events to strengthen the bonds within our community and with our brother professional societies and organizations in the local area to create a supportive network for all members. A joint Lunar New Year celebration event has been scheduled with East Chapter of Chinese American Chemical Society.

As we embark on this exciting journey, I encourage you to share your suggestions, event ideas, or questions about getting involved. Your input is invaluable in shaping the direction of our Section. I eagerly anticipate meeting many of you at our upcoming events and collaborating towards a fruitful 2025. Please check out our website often and follow our LinkedIn posts for details about our coming events.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate my gratitude for the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Philadelphia Local Section of the American Chemical Society. I am deeply committed to advancing our mission and supporting our members. Together, we can achieve great things and make a lasting impact on the field of chemistry.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our Section. I look forward to a successful and inspiring year ahead.

Sincerely,

Wei Gao

Chair, Philadelphia Local Section

American Chemical Society

NEWS ATOMS—*Alan Warren*

Zahra Fakhraai, professor of chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, was elected a 2024 fellow of the American Physical Society. She specializes in physical chemistry, materials chemistry, and nanoscale science and engineering.

Daniel Mindiola, professor of chemistry at Penn, was elected a fellow of the Organometallic Chemistry Group of the Spanish Royal Society of Chemistry (GEQO). His research involves the design and assembly of reactive metal complexes and novel catalytic processes.

DEATHS

Benjamin “Bud” Blank, medicinal chemist and consultant, March 2, 2024 at 92. After more than 20 years with Smith Kline & French Laboratories he moved into business development and licensing for Smith Kline Beckman, retiring from the firm after 31 years. He continued his business and licensing activities with Eastman Pharmaceutical/Sterling Drugs before moving into technology acquisition and assessment for Campbell Soup.

Blank then joined Stanford Research Institute as a marketing and technical representative for laboratory and consulting services, followed by a similar position with Panlabs (now MDS Pharmaceuticals). He then consulted for two small companies before retiring completely in 2001. He was a 70-year member of ACS.

Michael Richard Topp, emeritus professor of chemistry, June 18th at 79. Born and educated in England, he taught at Oxford University for two years and then moved to the University of Pennsylvania in 1973. His research focused on physical chemistry and more specifically conformational relaxation in isolated molecular clusters, hydrogen-bonded molecular dimers, and ultrafast electronic relaxation of hydrogen-bonded molecules. He earned two University Research Foundation grants and retired from Penn in 2017.

Robert James Nash, Jr., retired chemist, July 14th at 84. He worked in the paint laboratory of Armstrong Cork as a chemist and then joined West Company as manager of quality assurance in 1968, retiring after more than 20 years. He then consulted for many companies and served as adjunct professor of chemistry and science at West Chester University.

Henry Oscar Peterson, III, retired chemistry and physics teacher, October 16th at 79. He taught at public schools in North Carolina and Oregon before moving into the area where he taught at Rosemont and Lower Merion schools. He retired in 2008 after a 41-year teaching career.

George Peter Lindabery, retired chemical engineer, November 7th at 85. He was a polyvinyl chloride division executive with Occidental Chemical Corp.

ACS CAREER CONSULTANTS

Would you like to speak to a local ACS Career Consultant? The Philadelphia Section career consultants can provide one-on-one career advice, resume reviews, or mock interviews. Please send an email request to acsphillycareerservices@gmail.com to set up an appointment.



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FEB 8th, Saturday, 2025
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In Memoriam



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University of Kansas



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MARM 2025

The 53rd Middle Atlantic Regional ACS Meeting
Will be held on May 28-31, 2025
at Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ.

Further details at <https://marm2025.com>

CHEMICAL CONSULTANTS NETWORK MEETING

FEBRUARY 12, 2025

SOFT SKILLS FOR CONSULTANTS

DATE & TIME: Wednesday, February 12, 2025, 6:30 PM

[Click here to register](#)

Location: Online via Zoom! (Registration required)

Abstract: Creativity is a blend of being able to think scientifically at a very high level and being able to articulate those ideas clearly to others. This blend of skill types is common. The proportions depend on many factors, including the type of work task, the number and types of people involved, being able to speak clearly, being able to listen with an open mind and with focus, and being able to plan and schedule the sequence of tasks in a way that has smooth transition from one task to another and being able to prioritize and adapt as timing, cost, and other factors modify the timing and priorities needed.

Although many clients hire a consultant for his/her high expertise in a specific scientific area that the client knows, often a client has little or no knowledge in the area. A consultant must be a teacher, tutor, and trainer in a way that quickly passes on the knowledge needed. This is especially true for a consultant if the work involves being an expert witness. That work is translating scientific knowledge into opinions in writing and verbally. Attorneys are very different than scientists in how they see and values things.

This presentation will focus on the soft skills of listening, focusing, setting schedules and deadlines, making effective to-do lists, time management and tricks to make it easier, and how to run effective meetings.

Biography: John C. Fetzer has written over fifty published articles on career development for scientists, including many on people and communications skills. He was the editor for the column "Building a Professional Career" that was published in the Springer Verlag journal *Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry*. He is the author of the book *Career Management for Chemists*.

[Click here to register to attend the event.](#) This session is **FREE**.

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Being a part of one of our teams can help you develop organizational and meeting skills as well as help you to network with people from the largest area companies. Public Relations, such as sending out meeting notices and press releases, can help you to develop a network and help you get noticed!

All committees are looking for new members and several are looking for "take charge" chairs. Some, like the Teller's Committee, involve minimal work—one night per year and pizza provided. Others, like positions on Communications or Social Committees, involve one or two hours per month.

Committee details can be found at:

www.membership.acs.org/p/philadelphia

or by calling the Philadelphia Section Office (215) 382-1589.

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