



Seasons Greetings The St. Olaf Chemistry Department sends warm Holiday Greetings to all our alumni. Now that we have been in Regents Hall for a little over a year, we are beginning to reap the benefits of the new space. While at times we have felt distance between the fourth floor chemists and the “3rd east” chemists, we have enjoyed the interdepartmental camaraderie as well as an improved connection with colleagues from across campus as they tend to flock to the in-house coffee shop for their morning latte. It is not just the faculty that has flocked to Regents Hall. We are seeing record enrollment and retention in all of our courses. We have been fortunate this year in our grant writing, successful in hiring a new colleague and optimistic that we can add another tenure track member to our faculty for 2010. On behalf of the department and all of our current students, I wish you all peace and joy in the year to come.

Beth Abdella; I’m writing this quickly this year, as soon I’ll be hopping on a plane to San Diego, a trip that will be part work and part vacation. Such are the joys of sabbatical leaves. The work will entail presenting a poster (with colleague Kim Kandl, Biology) at the annual meeting of the American Society for Cell Biology. The poster describes some of our work on the integrated Chem-Bio course sequence that both Kim and I have taught for the previous two years. Earlier this year I gave an oral presentation on a similar topic at an American Chemical Society meeting in Washington, D.C. I’m thinking San Diego in December may be more pleasant than Washington, D.C. in August...*Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a fabulous 2010!*

Doug Beussman; I am currently on sabbatical for the 2009-2010 academic year, spending my time working at the FBI research labs in Virginia. I have only been here since late August, but have already seen and learned a lot, both scientific and otherwise. It has been a wonderful experience and I am looking forward to the next eight months here. The early part of the year I was still at St. Olaf teaching Bioanalytical Chemistry and Analytical Chemistry. I had an extremely active research group over both the semester and summer, at one point with seven students working on five different projects. In March I accompanied four students to Chicago where they presented two different research posters at PittCon and am now working on several manuscripts with students during my sabbatical. While I do miss interacting with students in the lab, I must admit that I am not yet missing shoveling snow.

Erik Epp; Thanks to everyone for the warm welcome to the department! I have greatly enjoyed my first semester teaching at St. Olaf. Regent’s Hall is great, the classroom technology (Symposium and clickers) in my lecture hall (RNS 150) help make lectures more interactive. Thanks to all of you whose gifts made that possible. I’ll miss the people here this spring as I return to Purdue to finish and defend my dissertation, but look forward to returning and beginning work with Paul and Bob on green chemistry education.

Peter Gittins; This past year I transitioned from teaching across the river at Carleton to teaching at St Olaf and after the a hectic double schedule of teaching Summer School organic and working with two research students, I settled in to teaching intro chemistry and have thoroughly enjoyed the past semester. As a native of the UK, I first heard of St Olaf from students studying at Lancaster University on the JYA program and was drawn to Minnesota from there. I met my wife (an Ole) while she was studying in the UK and have some great memories taking chemistry classes with Ole's in Lancaster. So this year it was great to finally get onto the 'other side' and get to experience St Olaf from within, as a part of the community. Fall semester has been great, and I'm looking forward to teaching again in the spring after a J-term break where I'll get the chance to go visit family in the UK.

Bob Hanson; Probably the most significant change for the Hanson/Hadas household is that Ira is off to college at Drake University, in Des Moines. He’s studying trumpet performance and computer science. (Probably no surprise there!) Seth is now a freshman in high school interested in physics and producing a weekly online video commentary on the weather for the Northfield News called “Clouds, Colleges, and Contentment.” Having a great time. Debbie is enjoying teaching ELL at Apple Valley High School. On the professional front, it seems my run with Jmol is hitting its stride, with the Java molecular visualization program being taken in all sorts of directions, from high school and college education to professional crystallographic and protein databases to pure mathematics. It’s a total joy to contribute to such a wide-spread community in this way. And this past summer I worked with Stephen Braun to develop an entirely new way to look at protein secondary structure pushing Jmol to the limits (and beyond!). I’ve fully enjoyed teaching organic chemistry these past few years, and especially with our new building I am having loads of fun. It’s so nice to be able to enjoy working in this fabulous building without all the stress of moving into it. The Norway Café is a major plus! No Jamaica for me this time around. See Greg Muth’s blurb for that. But my

January will still be fun. Looks like I'll get a visit to Florida – Jmol is scheduled to be incorporated in an interactive display on nanotechnology at the Epcot Center. (See my first YouTube video, hot off the press: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x8uDRQKIg0>). Happy holidays to all!

Michelle Howe; Michelle Howe; Merry Christmas to everyone! Well we are all moved in to Regents Hall and things are still crazy. I keep thinking things will settle down but there is always another project to get accomplished, another lab to prep and always clean ups to accomplish. As for my family and I ... the biggest news is that our youngest is now driving. Soon he too will be out of the house and on his own. We are looking forward to a trip to Michigan again this coming February to spend a week on our snowmobiles enjoying the wonderful winter weather. Hope all is well with you and your families and I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. *May God Bless you in 2010.*

Paul T. Jackson; Best wishes to all from the Hill! This past year has been another filled with adventures of different kinds. During the summer I started to host a group of citizens interested in understanding the watersheds adjacent to campus (Heath Creek and Rice Creek). Since many of us have other things that occupy our days, we meet every Friday morning at 7:30 am in Regents Hall. It is amazing to see anywhere from 15-25 people attend these coffee conversations each week. Every time we have brought in experts or officials of local government, they have all marveled at how our meeting place overlooks the very subject of our conversation. The group continues to work to find ways to balance the economic needs of the present with a long term ecological view that values the cold water and warm water streams right outside our "front door", and to do this by collecting meaningful scientific data. We have developed a report with recommendations for local governmental units. I have really enjoyed this truly interdisciplinary team. Throughout this past year I have been fortunate to travel and link up with Oles and other friends of the college in learning seminars held in Seattle, Minneapolis, and Denver. In each case, I was thrilled to discover the interest folks have in the college and the broad support for educating students as solid liberal artists. These learning seminars also challenged me as an educator to step back and ask how I would get folks excited about what science can tell us about how we live in a complex, interdependent system. Lots of fun! Lastly, it was just a delight to see the college be recognized for its actions to improve the spaces for teaching and learning here on the Hill. The college received word the US Green Building Council has given Regents Hall of Natural Sciences a LEED Platinum rating - the highest level possible and impressive for a building of this complexity and size. What a great culmination to the efforts of a lot of folks and it brought a huge smile to my face. *I hope your year is filled with things that give you meaning and purpose and smiles!*

Laura Listenberger; Season's greetings everyone! I'm the newest member of the Chemistry Department, hired as a joint appointment with Biology. I have been occupied this semester with the biochemistry students, both in the classroom and laboratory. They are an impressive group! I have also greatly enjoyed other aspects of life at St. Olaf College, including the impromptu choral concerts in the central stairway of Regents hall and numerous athletic events involving our multi-talented students. Having moved to Minnesota from a postdoc in San Diego, I was excited (!) for the first snow fall in October and look forward to the changing seasons. I'd welcome the opportunity to meet any of you and learn about your experiences with chemistry at St. Olaf.

Gary Miessler; continues to teach advanced inorganic chemistry, organometallic chemistry, and both semesters of first year chemistry. This fall saw the completion of the second edition of the text *Organometallic Chemistry*, published by Oxford University Press, on which Gary served as coauthor with Gary Spessard. Gary (M.) is looking forward to working with Gary (S.) on future editions of this book. Gary (M.) is also in the proofreading stages of the fourth edition of the text *Inorganic Chemistry*, which is scheduled to be published in February. (He will not undertake any major new writing projects in 2010.) In addition, he continues his research on dithiolene complexes, with his students most recently using cyclopentadienylmolybdenum dithiolates as the core around which to build heterometallic clusters. A reminder of how rapidly time passes is that daughters Rachel and Naomi are now in college, Rachel at Luther and Naomi at St. Olaf. After visiting the girls in Germany (Rachel) and Lithuania (Naomi) early last summer, Becky and Gary are now serving as the girls' support system from home, so life continues to be quite busy. Gary, Becky, Naomi, and Rachel want to wish you the very best during the holidays and many blessings in 2010.

Greg Muth; Season's greetings everyone. It has been an extremely good year here on campus. After what seemed like an excruciatingly long process, the Board approved my tenure and promotion to associate professor. Perhaps now I can finally answer the question, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" I extend my deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to this process and pledge that I will continue to serve the College with the same enthusiasm now that I am tenured. I chose to postpone my sabbatical until next year at which time I will work on a new research project involving alternative fuels made from renewable resources and travel to Costa Rica for a six-month odyssey furthering the global mission of the college. Yes, the family will be joining me! *I extend my warmest wishes for a prosperous year.*

Wes Pearson; Greetings from the hill! My activities during the past year have been much like those of the preceding year – teaching organic during the school year and the summer as my prime activity. I've also been a member of the governance committee, the health professions committee, and continue to be the timer at football and men's basketball games. However, I am no longer the college's faculty athletics representative. I wish you all a joyous and meaningful Christmas and a good new year.

Janice Pellino; It has been another wonderful year here at St. Olaf! This summer I had the opportunity to work with two terrific students and to present their work at the RNA Society Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin. I have continued this research into the school year with another two outstanding students. This year I am jointly appointed in both the Chemistry and Biology Departments, and I have been enjoying teaching Introductory Biology to many of my former General Chemistry students. As always, I am fortunate to have such a wonderful group of students to work with and to be surrounded by such amazing colleagues! *I wish everyone a very happy holiday and wonderful New Year!*

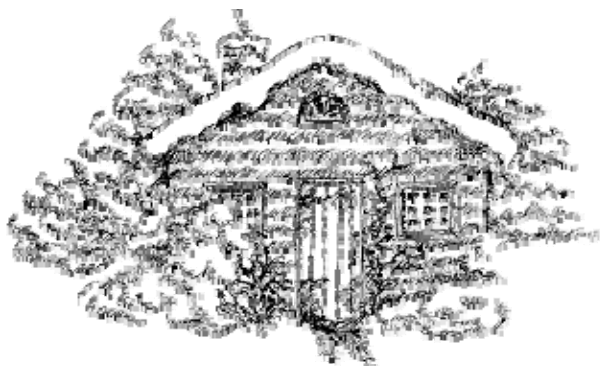
Karen Renneke; What a wonderful year this has been working for the Chemistry Department. This year we will have the largest class of Chemistry majors in the history of St. Olaf College, we should graduate 69 majors. We were able to get a couple Christmas trees this year for Regents Hall, and the students love having them up, and yes they have energy efficient LED lights. On a personal note, I am now the proud Grandma of 5 almost perfect, grandchildren, 4 girls and 1 boy. My youngest daughter Amanda '02 had her first baby last Jan. 3rd. Elloise is our newest addition to the Renneke family. I do love spending time with my children and grandchildren, and Christmas is so exciting with all the music, lights, and happy faces. Mark and I also celebrated our 35th Wedding Anniversary this year, December 7th. *Merry Christmas to all of you, and God Bless you in 2010.*

Bill Roberts; Hard to believe that it December is upon us once again. It seems like we were just packing and unpacking to move to the new building. In reality we have been in the new space for over a year. It is fun to see how the building continues to "bloom" with added art, furniture and displays. I have been teaching organic lecture and labs again this fall and have really enjoyed it. The lecture has really evolved and I look forward to more opportunities to improve my version of the course. My family and I have traveled some over the previous year, mainly to the "lake" but we did take in a ski trip to Utah. It is fun to see the wonder of Christmas on the faces of our boys, now 4 and 2. *Merry Christmas to you and yours.*

Nat Schaeffe; It's hard to believe that I am already writing another Christmas letter, as I feel that the last one was only just completed. However, as time seems to fly when I am being productive, I guess that is a good sign! I have been extremely busy this term, teaching general chemistry and Instrumental Analysis, along with physical chemistry lab sections. I am enjoying working with both the first year and senior students, realizing both how far the graduating Oles have come and how far the new Oles will go in a short four years on the Hill. Research is moving forward. I have one student working with me this semester, starting a new project that I have had sitting on a back burner for a while. Setting it up has been fun, and it is showing some promising initial results; hopefully we will get giving lots of good results over January when the experiments are ready to run. On the personal side of things, it has been a delightfully quiet year. My family is well, as I hope yours is too. Have a great holiday season!

Jeff Schweinfus; Where has the fall gone?! College football is almost over and Christmas is right around the corner. I promise to take time and enjoy the fall next year. Then again, I say that every year! The first half of 2009 was spent wrapping up my sabbatical. I worked at the University of Minnesota's Supercomputing Institute using molecular dynamics simulations to study small molecule interactions with nucleic acids. Molecular dynamics has become a mainstay of my research. In fact, I had one student last summer and two this semester doing nucleic acid simulations. This fall I have been teaching physical chemistry. We have a whopping 45 students enrolled in the course! It has been wonderful to teach in the new Regents Hall, especially in the physical chemistry lab. The north wall of the lab has windows that look out toward Holland Hall and let in glorious amounts of natural light. The view is magnificent. Students actually want to work their data up in lab, not somewhere else. My wife, Ruth, my daughter, Bryn, and my son, Matthew, are doing well. Both of my children are eagerly awaiting the arrival of Christmas and Santa Claus. And I am too. *Happy holidays and have a happy new year!*

Mary Walczak; gave up the role of Department Chair after serving in that capacity for 8 of the last 10 years. The transition has been easier than she expected, and she is delighted to be focusing more on teaching activities. This fall Mary taught Analytical Chemistry and implemented some of the Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) in-class activities that she has been developing as part of a NSF grant. It is especially exciting to listen to students discussing, sometimes even arguing in a friendly way, about chemistry concepts!



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