



Student Wellness Coalition (SWC)

I Student
Wellness
Coalition
CHEMISTRY

SWC est. 2018

- Founded 2018 in response to issues with departmental climate
- Mainly comprised of graduate students in chemistry
- **Goals**
 - Help students unite across different student organizations
 - Serve as a liaison to faculty/department
 - Advocate for changes in departmental policy to benefit student wellness
- **Representatives**
 - 1 from each area (I/M/P/A/O/CB)
 - 1 from each student group
 - 1 from departmental Community Building Committee

Email: SWC@lists.illinois.edu

Website: <https://publish.illinois.edu/chemistryswc/>

Join mailing list : <https://lists.illinois.edu/lists/subscribe/swc>

SWC & DCGSAC PRESENTS
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY **WINTER 2025**
NEWSLETTER



DEC. 2024 TOWN HALL REVIEW

First. Prof. Sweedler along with members of SWC and DCGSAC are currently in the process of surveying all research groups within the chemistry department about their lab culture. Once complete, this information will be compiled by Prof. Sweedler and will be given to the department head for use in future decisions.

Second. Raylene Gomez Hernandez, the assistant director of DEI in the Chemical Sciences, will be now be performing exit interviews for students of the chemistry department. At the end of every semester all interviews will be anonymized and a summarized report will be given to the department head, in hopes to better inform and address departmental issues.

Third. the quantitative results of the LAS climate survey have become available to professors, and SWC is advocating to get those results released to the student body.

FIRST YEAR ROTATIONS POLL

This past fall, all first-year chemical biology students were given the opportunity to perform three 5 week rotations before joining a research group. The department is now considering implementing rotations across all areas. SWC wants your opinion! **Fill out this short poll about chemistry department rotations!** This data will be used by SWC to inform the department about the student body's viewpoint on rotations as a whole.



Additionally, SWC will be holding a meeting on January 27th at 5:00 PM in Noyes 161 discussing rotations and other student concerns.

GROUP EXPECTATIONS

Group expectations documents have finally been released and are accessible to anyone with a NetID. Please be sure to check your lab's document to ensure that no changes have been made without your knowledge.



CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING

If you witness any behavior that is inconsistent with our Community Values and Expectations, please notify the department by following this QR code, and clicking on the link "go.illinois.edu/CHEMREPORT"

Your submission is completely anonymous and will only be reviewed by Raylene Gomez Hernandez, the assistant director of DEI in the Chemical Sciences. After review, Raylene will decide on the appropriate action steps to identify and intervene in the aforementioned issue.



GET INVOLVED

SWC -- meets first Monday of month, 3 pm in CLSL-C 605, email lukupw2@illinois.edu



Recent successful initiatives

- Founded Departmental Townhalls
- Established 4th year meeting/form with committee to discuss graduation timeline/progress
- Required all groups to have expectation documents
- Got Student reps the ability to attend Faculty Meetings
- Got Students the ability to meet with Faculty candidates
- Wrote/distributed Climate Survey – 94% response rate from 250 grads
- Met with every research group for climate survey
- Published Departmental Newsletters
- Advocated for department-wide optional rotations (dept did it differently)
- Updated Departmental PTO policy
 - Doubled sick days and PTO days
 - Capped work requirements at 55hr/week
 - Clarified that teaching, prof. development, classes, etc. count as work hours
 - Clarified that weekends do not require PTO days to take off

SWC & DCGSAC PRESENTS
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY **SUMMER 2024**
NEWSLETTER



EXTERNAL REVIEW
An external review of the chemistry department was conducted this past fall by five esteemed faculty members from other institutions. They were given 1.5 days to meet with faculty and students, after which they submitted a report detailing their findings to the LAS Dean, Department Head, and faculty members. These are the key recommendations made by the committee.

1. Graduate student climate is the key issue facing the department.
2. Departmental governance is unclear and defining roles between the department head, advisory committees, and other departmental committees need to be created.
3. Faculty recruiting, specifically amongst the organic and analytical chemistry areas, needs to be prioritized.
4. TA budget for graduate students must increase, and less undergraduates must be used for TAing undergraduate laboratories.
5. College leadership should investigate faculty/graduate student relations.

The department submitted a formal response/action plan to the external committee this past April, including expanding the PTO policy, hosting more department town halls, surveying departmental climate, and attending a conference entitled "Transforming Challenged Units." Ongoing efforts include reorganization of departmental leadership, and other actions discussed below.

LAS CLIMATE SURVEY
The University of Illinois conducted a Climate Survey in spring 2023, with results released to the administration during late summer 2024. As in past years, these results will be publicly posted this fall. Compared to the rest of LAS, the Chemistry department performed below average in DEI, civility, and student happiness. Another climate survey will be given next year, and we urge people to respond due to a low 40% response rate in 2023.

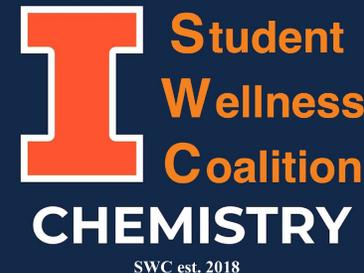
FACULTY HIRINGS
This upcoming fall, we will have 62 new graduate students in the department in addition to 3 new faculty hires.
Dr. Mayuko Isomura
Dr. Xiaotang Lu
Dr. Joomyung Vicky Jun

TOWN HALL SUMMARY
The May 2024 town hall was filled with discussions about changes to the department. Tepora Su'a left the university this summer, so we are currently hiring a new director of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Prof. Cathy Murphy will be returning as Department Chair in August. Additionally, the department is taking these steps outlined below to improve culture.
First, reiterate that graduate students are firstly members of the department and university, and therefore such institutional policies (PTO, leave, retaliation) supersede any group guidelines. Please contact department head or DGS about any violations.
Second, make it mandatory that each research group to have a manual/expectations document starting this August, with brand-new faculty being given 6 months to write one. Additionally, these lab expectation documents will be published on the chemistry department website where they will be accessible on Box to be anyone with a NetID.
Third, The active department head, Prof. John Sweedler, and additional student representatives will meet with each research group to discuss lab culture and if the department's policies are being followed. These meetings will be conducted this fall.

GET INVOLVED
SWC -- meets first Friday of month, 4 pm
in CLSL-C 605, email lukepw2@illinois.edu
DCGSAC --meets first Thurs of month, 11 am
in Noyes 356, email dloving@illinois.edu



Current projects / Working groups



FACULTY/STUDENT RELATIONS (Get faculty support for student-led initiatives).

- Meet with new and established faculty to discuss their and our ideas to improve Dept climate
- Organize Wellness Lecture Series (from pre-COVID) with SACNAS

DEPT TRANSPARENCY (Increase transparency & communication to the student body).

- Write departmental newsletters, attend faculty meetings, & organize Townhalls
- Establish inclusive emailing lists for all chemistry-affiliated grads and post-docs
- Host student-only “*Suggest and Digest*” socials with DCGSAC

DEPT INITIATIVES (Identify issues and work with department to improve culture).

- Recommend better guidelines and expectations for Rotations
- Create a way to protect students who switch groups (authorship & involvement)
- Add 5th year check-in form with committees
- Remove area divisions for recruitment, orientation, and group joining
- Make faculty/student recruiting volunteer-based

Student Wellness Coalition (SWC) Presents
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY SUMMER 2025
NEWSLETTER



DEPARTMENT NEWS
 New Students and Faculty
 The department is welcoming ~90 first-year chemistry graduate students this fall (15 Inorganic, 8 Materials, 14 Physical, 10 Analytical, 21 Organic, 21 ChemBio). The class is ~52% women and ~33% international. This is an above average class size. We are also welcoming Prof. Michael Strauss who officially begins as an assistant professor (Organic) this July. Orientation begins the week of August 13th, and classes start on August 25th.

Lab Rotations for all First-Years
 Starting this fall, all first-year chemistry students may perform three 4-week rotations, in addition to TAing, if applicable. The deadline to opt-out is Aug 18. If the student opt-in, they must complete two rotations, with the third being optional. Group joining has been shifted for all first-years to November 21st.

CHEMISTRY CLIMATE SURVEY
 During 2024-25 academic year, Prof. Sweedler and SWC worked together to gauge the department's climate through both a survey and in-person meetings with every research group in chemistry. The survey had a high response rate of 94% and the preliminary results have been disseminated to students. The Department and SWC are working on plans to best address the concerns raised, so as to have a lasting impact on our department's culture.

RESULTS HERE


Some overall trends:

- New post-ORP meetings to discuss graduation were well received by students.
- 93% of students report that the new PTO policy is being followed by their group.
- 78% of students report their group is always safe for people of all backgrounds.
- Students report a lack of professional development and mentorship during PhD.
- Students report a lack of communication and transparency from PIs, especially regarding funding.
- Many trends correlate with research area, a PI's tenure status, and group size.
- Some research groups were outliers vs the department averages.

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 Your submission is completely anonymous and will only be reviewed by Raylene Gomez Hernandez, the assistant director for Student Wellness and Advocacy in the Chemical Sciences. After review, Raylene will decide on the appropriate action steps to identify and intervene in the aforementioned issue.

GROUP EXPECTATIONS
 Expectations documents are now required for every group in chemistry, and are now accessible to anyone with a NetID.
 First years should review these prior to group joining. Current students should confirm that no changes were made without their knowledge, and that everything is consistent with University/Dept policy.

GET INVOLVED
 Student Wellness Coalition 1st Mondays of month, 3 pm, CLS-C 605
 Questions? lukapw2@illinois.edu

CHEMISTRY



Get involved!

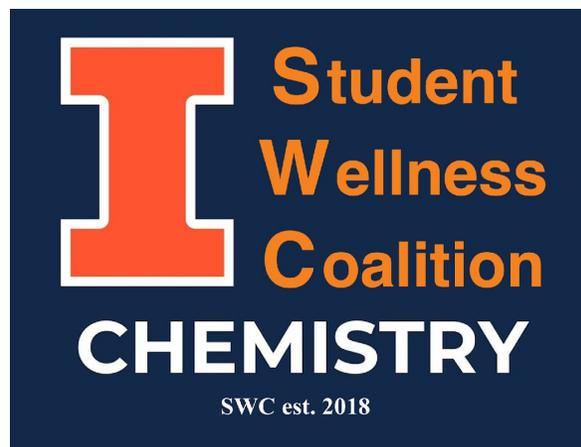
All meetings are open – all chemistry grads invited!

1st Monday of month, 3pm, CLSL-C605

Contact: lukep2@illinois.edu

We always want more ideas!

Bring your ideas and help improve the department!



Email: SWC@lists.illinois.edu

Website: <https://publish.illinois.edu/chemistryswc/>

Join mailing list : <https://lists.illinois.edu/lists/subscribe/swc>

 Student
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CHEMISTRY

You are invited to join the

STUDENT WELLNESS COALITION



Get involved!
Just submit your name & email

We meet Monthly

All meetings are open and anyone can attend

What have we done / do?

- Helped write/implement new PTO policy
- Founded & organize Dept. Townhalls
- Attend faculty meetings & publish Newsletters
- Made group expectation documents required
- Made graduation discussions required in the 4th year
- Meet with all research groups with Prof Sweedler

Questions? Contact lukep2@illinois.edu

