

VOL. 3 JULY 2026

DALHOUSIE CHEMISTRY

Department of Chemistry Newsletter



Congratulations to the Class of 2026

On June 9, Chemistry graduates, their families, friends, faculty, and staff gathered outside the Chemistry Building to celebrate this important milestone. The reception featured a class photo, student awards, and opportunities for graduates to share their achievements with loved ones and fellow classmates. Graduates also added their signatures to the Alumni Wall, leaving their mark on the department and becoming part of its lasting legacy.

Photo by Jay Tang, PhD candidate,
Chemistry Department



Discover the Art and Science of Glassblowing

Have you ever wondered how custom laboratory glassware is made?

Join our Scientific Glassblowing Master Class and get a behind-the-scenes look at one of the most fascinating skills in chemistry. Participants will learn the principles of glassblowing, observe live demonstrations, and gain insight into how specialized glassware and glass art are designed, repaired, and crafted.

Whether you are a student, researcher, or simply curious about the intersection of science and craftsmanship, this masterclass offers a unique opportunity to explore a rare, highly specialized trade that continues to play an essential role in modern chemistry.

Please email our glassblower, Ihor Krasilia, at ih642377@dal.ca if you are interested.





2026 Chute Lecture

The Walter J. Chute Lecture Series brings eminent researchers to the Department to present annual lectures. The Chute Lecturers are often Nobel Laureates and, in many cases, the Department has anticipated future winners of Chemistry's top prizes.

This year, we were honoured to welcome Dr. Stephen Leffler Buchwald, Professor of Chemistry at MIT, as the distinguished speaker for the 2026 Chute Lecture. Widely recognized as one of the most influential chemists of his generation, Dr. Buchwald shared insights from his pioneering research and engaged with students, faculty, and researchers. The lecture highlighted the department's commitment to fostering connections with leading scientists worldwide and promoting the exchange of ideas across the broader scientific community.

We also wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Chute family for their continued support of the Chute Lecture and the Department of Chemistry.





Doucette Group Successfully Hosts the 68th ICASS

Alan Doucette's group was proud to host the 68th International Conference on Atomic Spectroscopy (ICASS) from June 17 to June 19, 2026. Bringing together researchers, students, and industry partners from around the world, the conference featured nearly 200 scientific presentations across 10 technical sessions, award lectures, poster presentations, and networking events that showcased the latest developments in atomic spectroscopy and trace analysis.

Special congratulations go to Professor Alan Doucette, who served as Chair of the 68th ICASS Organizing Committee. Together with members of the Doucette Research Group, who devoted many hours of planning and coordination to organizing the conference. From developing the scientific program and coordinating speakers and sponsors to overseeing the countless logistical details that make an international conference successful, their dedication and hard work were instrumental in delivering a memorable event for attendees.

The conference not only highlighted cutting-edge research but also took participants to the iconic Peggy's Cove, giving visitors a chance to enjoy the scenery, hospitality, and coastal traditions that make Atlantic Canada unique.





A Memorial Gathering for Dr. Axel Becke

Earlier this year, members of the Department of Chemistry, including faculty, staff, emeriti colleagues, and friends, gathered to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Axel Becke, Professor Emeritus and one of the most distinguished scientists in Dalhousie University's history.

Dr. Becke was internationally renowned for his pioneering contributions to theoretical and computational chemistry, particularly in the development of density functional theory (DFT), work that transformed the way chemists study molecules and materials. His scientific achievements earned him numerous prestigious honours throughout his career, including the NSERC Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal for Science and Engineering and the Canada Council Killam Prize in the Natural Sciences. His research continues to influence scientists around the world and remains foundational to modern computational chemistry.

The gathering provided an opportunity for colleagues, former students, and friends to share memories of Axel as a scholar, mentor, teacher, and friend. Stories reflected not only his extraordinary intellect and scientific accomplishments, but also his kindness, humility, and lasting impact on the people around him. Together, attendees reflected on his many years of service to the department and celebrated a legacy that will continue to inspire future generations of chemists.

Dr. Becke's contributions to science and to the Dalhousie Chemistry community will not be forgotten, and he remains deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing and working with him.





Story from Julia Schmitt

This spring, I had the opportunity to complete a two-and-a-half-month research placement at the Fraunhofer Institute for Surface Engineering and Thin Films (IST) in Braunschweig, Germany.

Working alongside leading researchers in thin film materials and surface engineering, I contributed to an internationally recognized research environment while gaining hands-on experience with advanced thin film deposition techniques and representing Dalhousie University abroad. The placement was an invaluable experience that complemented my PhD research, while strengthening my technical skills, broadening my perspective, and increasing my confidence as a researcher.

During my placement, I investigated atomic layer deposition (ALD) of palladium thin films for hydrogen sensing applications. Working in a new research environment challenged me to quickly adapt to different instrumentation, laboratory practices, and workflows while collaborating with scientists from diverse backgrounds. The knowledge and experience I gained will directly benefit my doctoral research and future career in materials chemistry.

Beyond the laboratory, living in Germany allowed me to immerse myself in a new culture, explore historic cities, and build lasting personal and professional connections. I was also able to travel throughout the country, including visits to Berlin and southern Germany, where I met relatives for the first time, making the experience especially meaningful.

I am sincerely grateful for the support that made this placement possible, particularly the Dr. Jean Cooley Travel Award. This award enabled me to pursue an exceptional international research opportunity that will have a lasting impact on my development as a scientist, both professionally and personally.

Photo provided by Julia

SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US

Please contact Christine.Cao@dal.ca

Jean Cooley Travel Award Highlight





Chemistry Achievements

- Congratulations to Professor Mark Stradiotto, the Arthur B. McDonald Research Chair in the Department of Chemistry, who was among three Dalhousie faculty members inducted into the Royal Society of Canada (RSC), the nation's highest academic honour!
- Congratulations to Professor Mita Dasog, who became the new Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Advanced Design for Water-Energy Sustainability, a joint position with Dalhousie's Faculty of Engineering.
- Congratulations to Dr. Blaine Fiss, a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow in the Dasog Research Lab at Dalhousie University, who has been selected for two prestigious global leadership programs for young scientists.
- Congratulations to Tyler Hannah from the Chitnis group, who won the Inorganic Division's Award for Graduate Work in Inorganic Chemistry (AGWIC).
- Congratulations to Joe Nazak from the Chitnis group, who won the "People's Choice Best Talk" award (out of ~50 talks) in the Main Group Chemistry symposium during the 2026 CSC.
- Congratulations to Will Howlett from the Chitnis group, who won the "People's Choice Best Poster" award (out of ~10 posters) in the Main Group Chemistry symposium during the 2026 CSC.
- Congratulations to Cathy Ryan and Alex Nicol in Chem Stores. The Chemical Storage Facility has been certified as a Gold Sustainable Lab—an incredible achievement!
- Congratulations to Ihor Krasilia for his outstanding work in facilitating the effort to get the glassblowing lab certified as a Silver Sustainable Lab!
- Congratulations to Ulli Werner-Zwanziger on being featured in the "Briefs on Women in MR" series, which highlights the achievements and contributions of women in Magnetic Resonance. A well-deserved recognition!
- Congratulations to Lea Gawne on receiving the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her outstanding and long-standing service to students, graduate programs, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies community.





Upcoming events

- Dr. Ireshika De Silva, Professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, will be our visiting speaker on July 24, 2026. She will present a seminar titled Building a Career as a Chemist through Research, Collaboration, and Leadership: Reflections on My Journey from Sri Lanka to Dalhousie University. The seminar will be held in Room 226, Chemistry building, from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- Dr. Robert Godin, Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of British Columbia, will be our visiting seminar speaker on August 11, 2026. He will present a seminar titled Heterogeneous Photocatalyst Materials – Making Sense of All the Points in Room 226, Chemistry building, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm.

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