A Letter to the University of Washington Chemistry Community

Submitted by Diana Knight on September 29, 2020 - 7:13pm

Dear Chemistry Faculty, Staff and Students,

Welcome to a new academic year. I hope this message finds you well. My deepest condolences go out to those of you who have lost family and friends over the last few months. The last seven months have been traumatic for us all and the future appears uncertain. The events of the past months have also laid bare the racial injustices and inequalities that exist in the realms of health care, law enforcement, and education. The students, staff, postdoctoral scholars and faculty in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Washington are committed to inclusive excellence in learning, teaching, research and community service with the highest standards of safety.

The study of chemistry is central to new discoveries in the fields of health, energy and materials, and essential to our global quest for clean energy, food security and new quantum-enabled technologies. If we are to find sustainable and equitable solutions to these global challenges, we must work with a diverse group of students, staff and faculty. UW Chemistry researchers engage in curiosity-driven research applied to leading edge interdisciplinary investigations and have access to world class centers and institutes. While the pandemic has imposed six feet of distance between us, our outstanding students, postdoctoral scholars and faculty continue to work collaboratively to create new chemical knowledge. We in the Department of Chemistry at the UW are committed to educating the next generation of leaders in science, engineering, medicine, education, and policy.

A warm welcome to new undergraduate and graduate students joining our community, including the inaugural cohort of students enrolled in the M.S. in Applied Chemical Science and Technology program. While our interactions with each other might be over Zoom, our expectations of creating a respectful, inclusive and equitable learning space remain the same. Our instructors and staff are hard at work to deliver lectures and laboratory experiences remotely, without compromising on academic excellence and student learning. I encourage you to take the time to introduce yourself to your instructors and TAs and never hesitate to ask for help. While chemistry is a quantitative science, new pedagogical advancements and discoveries are made by people. I am immensely proud of the creativity, tenacity and resilience of our Chemistry community and thrilled that you and new staff and postdoctoral scholars will be joining us this academic year.

As we start this academic year, let's listen to each other and be kind to one another. Let's challenge ourselves to imagine a Chemistry space where every individual can thrive and then let's work together to make that space a reality. It won't be easy, and it won't be quick. However, as chemists, we are used to interactions occurring on multiple length and timescales and thinking deeply about how microscopic interactions result in macroscopic changes.
Best wishes for a healthy and productive academic year.

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