



Message from the editor (Pranshu Puri, Secretary | FL-ACS): This issue celebrates a landmark year for chemistry in Florida—from FAME’s centennial milestones to two decades of Molecular Mania and a vibrant National Chemistry Week. Together, these events showcase the power of community, innovation, and outreach. Thank you to all who continue to advance and inspire the chemical sciences across our state.

FAME 2025: A Historic Centennial Celebration of Chemistry in Florida

This year marked a significant milestone for the Florida Annual Meeting and Exposition (FAME) as we celebrated its 100th year—an extraordinary century of advancing chemistry, cultivating

community, and inspiring scientific innovation across the state and beyond. The centennial festivities opened with a powerful plenary lecture delivered by **Dr. Wayne E. Jones Jr.**, Chair of the ACS Board of Directors and ACS Director-at-Large. His address set an energizing tone for the event, highlighting the evolving landscape of chemical sciences and the role of collaboration in shaping the future.

The opening evening continued with a lively poster session, where attendees enjoyed refreshments while exchanging ideas across a wide spectrum of chemistry disciplines. Notably, this year welcomed **high school participants for the first time**, expanding the reach of FAME and encouraging young scientists to engage with the broader research community. With more than fifty posters presented, participants engaged in thoughtful discussions, constructive evaluations, and knowledge-sharing. After careful judging, the **top poster awards** were presented to: Alexander Diodati (*Post doc*); Zaafer Dulloo, Soumili Pal, Parag Das (*Graduate students*); and Abraham Daoud, Trang Le, Lauren Gledhill (*Undergraduate students*); each



FAME-2025 Highlights

receiving certificates and gift vouchers in recognition of their outstanding work.

The following day featured an inspiring lineup of technical sessions spanning **organic, inorganic, physical, chemical education, biochemistry, polymer, and analytical/environmental chemistry**. Each session fostered meaningful dialogue, collaborative thinking, and deep scientific insights—continuing FAME’s legacy of being a platform for impactful academic and professional exchange.

A highlight of the weekend was the presentation of the prestigious **Florida Award**, bestowed by the Florida Award Selection Committee. This year, the committee proudly honored **Dr. Hans-Conrad zur Loye**, David W. Robinson Palmetto Professor and Carolina Distinguished Professor at the University of South Carolina, for his exceptional contributions to inorganic materials chemistry and his profound influence as a teacher, mentor, and leader in the chemical sciences. The meeting concluded with a spirited mixer session and a delightful banquet dinner, offering a warm and celebratory close to this landmark event.

As always, FAME’s success was made possible by the incredible dedication of our **volunteers and executive committee**, whose commitment ensured a seamless experience for students, faculty, industry professionals, and our esteemed ACS members—including those celebrating over 50 years with the Society. Their efforts helped make the centennial celebration at Innisbrook Resort in Palm Harbor, FL, truly unforgettable.



*Congratulations to the
Award Winners*

Molecular Mania 2025: Two Decades of Hands-On Discovery



The UF Chemistry Department marked the 20th anniversary of **Molecular Mania** at The Oaks Mall, celebrating a beloved Gainesville tradition that brings science directly to families. What began in 2005 with just six experiments and a handful of volunteers has grown into a large-scale community science festival featuring **29**

interactive stations and nearly **180 volunteers**. This

year’s event drew hundreds of children and parents, all eager to explore chemistry through touch, movement, and play. Crowd-favorites included the dramatic “bleeding iron” reaction, dry-ice

bubble experiments, magnetic demonstrations, colorful “rainbows in bottles,” and a new AI-powered molecular-modeling station that invited families to construct molecules in real time.

The article highlights the long-lasting impact of Molecular Mania: some children have attended for years, while others who once visited now return as volunteers. Organizers estimate the program has reached more than **15,000 families** over its two-decade history. Through the enthusiasm of student volunteers and the curiosity of young learners, Molecular Mania continues to spark scientific excitement across generations—building a vibrant bridge between UF and the Gainesville community.



Celebrating Chemistry in the Sunshine State: “Hidden Life of Spices”



Week (NCW) — a collaboration between University, Florida Southern College and year’s theme, “**The Hidden Life of Spices**”, explore the chemistry behind the flavors, everyday spices — and to connect that to the role of chemistry in our daily lives.



On October 19–25 2025, chemists, students, educators and community members gathered at Bonnet Springs Park in Lakeland, Florida to mark the annual National Chemistry Florida Polytechnic the FL-ACS. This invited participants to aromas and colors of

Faculty and students from Florida Polytechnic University and Florida Southern College served as volunteers and facilitators, explaining concepts like natural product chemistry, chromophores in plant compounds, the influence of pH on color and the role of volatile molecules in aroma. With the beautiful outdoor setting of Bonnet Springs Park, the event successfully turned a public gathering into an immersive science-fest.



Welcome Our Newly Elected Councilor: Melanie Veige



We are delighted to announce that **Melanie Veige** has been elected as a Counselor for the Florida Local Section of the American Chemical Society. Melanie brings an exceptional record of leadership, innovation, and dedication to chemical education. As the **Instructional Professor and Director of General Chemistry and General Chemistry Laboratories at the University of Florida**, she has shaped the learning experience of thousands of students while mentoring and empowering the next generation of chemistry educators. With academic roots at **McGill University (B.Sc., 1997)** and the **University of British Columbia (M.Sc., 2001)**, Melanie began her career in the pharmaceutical industry before transitioning to academia—first at Santa Fe College and later at UF, where she has flourished. Her commitment to hands-on

learning is evident in one of her signature achievements: establishing UF's **General Chemistry Lab Bootcamps**, which bring online students to campus each summer for an intensive, immersive lab experience.

In her new role as Councilor, Malenie looks forward to expanding community engagement, supporting educators at all stages, and strengthening connections within the Florida ACS Section. She is passionate about fostering meaningful laboratory experiences, elevating graduate student instructors, and broadening access to high-quality chemical education. We congratulate Malenie on this well-deserved achievement and warmly welcome her to the FL-ACS leadership team. Her vision, experience, and enthusiasm will be invaluable as we continue advancing the mission of our section.

Welcome Our Newly Elected Treasurer: Dr. Ashlyn Hale



The Florida Local Section of the American Chemical Society (FL-ACS) is pleased to welcome **Dr. Ashlyn Hale** as our new **Treasurer**. Dr. Hale brings a proven record of leadership, outreach, and service within the UF Chemistry Department and the broader Florida chemistry community. Dr. Hale is an Assistant Instructional Professor at the University of Florida, where she serves as **Faculty Outreach Advisor** for the Student Chapter of ACS, guiding the group to consecutive **Outstanding Chapter** and **Green Chemistry** Awards. She chairs the **Community Outreach Committee**, directs **Chemathon**, and co-organizes **Molecular Mania**—a major annual event that draws more than 1,000 attendees and over 170 volunteers. She earned her B.S. in Chemistry from UCF (2015) and Ph.D. in Inorganic Chemistry from UF (2021), followed by a postdoctoral role with the DOE-funded **M2QM Energy Frontier Research Center**. Her

research focuses on molecular materials modeling important metal oxides for magnetic and catalytic applications.

Dr. Hale has significantly expanded UF's outreach footprint, doubling Chemathon's participation to 24 schools and mentoring ACS student leaders as they presented at national ACS and FAME meetings. As Treasurer, Dr. Hale aims to:

- Strengthen FL-ACS's financial health and transparency.
- Expand impactful, inclusive outreach across the state.
- Support student and early-career chemists through resources, travel opportunities, and events.
- Foster stronger connections among Florida's academic, industry, and community partners.

FL-ACS is excited for the energy and dedication Dr. Hale brings to our leadership team as we continue building a vibrant, collaborative chemistry community in the Sunshine State.



FAME 2025 attendees celebrating a century of chemistry, collaboration, and community at Innisbrook Golf Resort, Palm Harbor, Florida.

Connect with us at....!

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