

Orlando Section ACS Spring 2026 Newsletter

Chair's Report

Greetings ACS Orlando Section,

I wanted to send a brief newsletter with several updates and activities around our local section. The newsletter informs councilor report with updates on upcoming ACS National Election. You will also find details about the student travel awards and the Avogadro Award provided by our local section. This year we had generous donation from Dr. Darlene Slattery, the 2025 Gordon L. Nelson Award recipient, to boost the student travel awards. We will celebrate the 21st annual Central Florida Earth Day event at Lake Eola Park on April 25, 2026. Please attend the event, if you can. We are also planning a Summer Social event in June 2026. Please stay tuned for more details on the Summer Social.

Please share with us your ideas for programming that you would like to see in the Central Florida area – our contact information is below! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely
Toufiq Reza

Councilor Talking Points: Summary of Governance Issues and Actions

This report captures key actions and decisions from the ACS Council meeting on March 25 and the Board of Directors meetings held March 20–22, 2026, offering an overview of developments impacting the Orlando Section. Prepared by Laura Sessions and Nicole Lapeyrouse, Orlando Section Councilors.

Election Results

Council selected **Laura Sremaniak** and **Lisa McElwee-White** as candidates for 2027 President-Elect. They will appear on the ballot in the fall 2026 national election, along with any petition candidates.

Four candidates were announced for Director-at-Large (2027–2029): Mick Hurrey, Beth Lorsbach, William Provine, and Carolyn Ribes. Two will be elected this fall.

Committee and governance updates

Council approved renaming and updating duties for the Committee on Budget and Finance to the **Committee on Fiscal Affairs**, reflecting the growing complexity of ACS finances.

The **committee preference form** is open to all members interested in serving on an ACS committee in 2026 through July 6:

<https://www.acs.org/about/governance/committees/committees/information/preferences.html>

Membership and global growth

Council approved creation of a new **International Chemical Sciences Chapter in Sri Lanka**.

The **2027 dues and benefits** were approved with **no changes** from 2026.

Financial health

ACS reported **strong financial performance in 2025**, with \$50.7 million in net revenue and continued long-term growth. Over the past 25 years, revenue has more than doubled, with a fourfold increase in unrestricted net assets. ACS receives 58% of revenue from outside of North America and is active in 56 different jurisdictions.

Meetings and programs

Spring 2026 programming emphasized collaboration, with strong focus areas (more than 300 sessions) in the four community programming tracks of Pharma, Data Science/AI, Sustainability, and Startup. As of March 24, there were 13,521 registrations (12,475 in-person and 1,046 online).

The ACS Fall 2026 meeting will be held in Chicago, IL, from August 23-27, 2026.

Actions of the Board of Directors Meeting

Board highlights

The ACS Board approved a new **Advocacy Strategy** to support science and scientists in a non-partisan way. Key areas of focus for 2026 are available at <https://www.acs.org/policy/memberadvocacy/issues.html>.

Student and trainee support

This spring, ACS launched **Catalyst Scholarships**, that will provide **\$10,000 per year to 200 undergraduates**.

A **\$1.4M graduate student success grant** supported **74 graduate students** who lost funding near degree completion last year.

Your Orlando Section Councilors are here to support ACS members across our seven-county region. Please feel free to contact us anytime with questions, concerns, or ideas - we'd love to hear from you.

With kind regards,

Laura and Nicole

Chemists Celebrate Earth Week 2026

Stop by to visit Orlando Section members at the 21st annual **Central Florida Earth Day** event at Lake Eola Park (east side), 512 E. Washington Street Orlando, FL on Saturday April 25th, 2026 from 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM.

If you are interested in volunteering, remember that you must register and complete a background check. Please contact the CCEW event coordinator with any questions (stephensmith@fit.edu).

Orlando Section students traveled to the Spring Meeting in Orlando

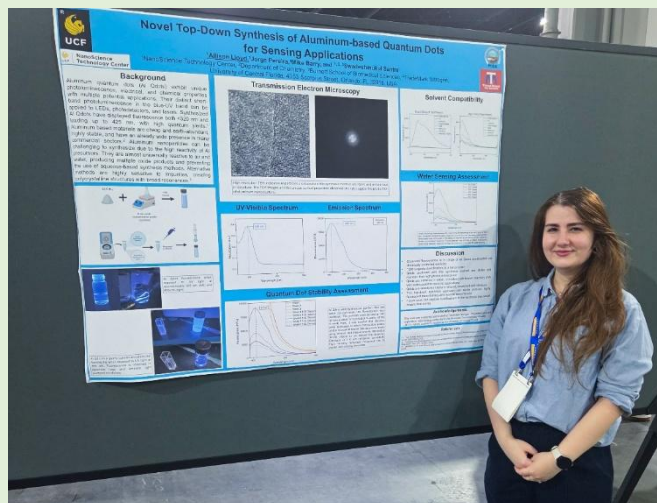
The Orlando Section of the ACS sponsored four students with **Student Travel Awards**, thanks in part to a generous donation from Dr. Darlene Slattery, retired long-time Orlando Section Councilor and the 2025 Gordon L. Nelson Award recipient.

Moses Mayonu (pictured right), PhD Candidate in Chemistry at the Florida Institute of Technology, stated that, ‘This experience provided me with extensive networking opportunities with researchers across the United States and the broader international scientific community. Engaging with distinguished professors offered valuable academic perspectives, while connections with students from both academic and industrial backgrounds have since contributed meaningfully to my ongoing research. A key highlight was the metabolomics data analysis bootcamp on March 25, 2026, which equipped me with critical analytical skills that will enhance my research approach and support my career development.’



Macayla Marr Barnett, undergraduate researcher at UCF (pictured left with advisor Dr. Nicole Lapeyrouse), shared that ‘the award allowed me to present at the 2026 Spring ACS Conference and share me and my research team’s most recent updates on STEM Identity. I love sharing and learning more about chemistry research and am so privileged to be able to connect with others in the community.’

Allison Lloyd (pictured right), PhD candidate at UCF shared that, ‘This year was the 150th anniversary of the conference, which resulted in keynote speakers I’d never thought I’d get the opportunity to hear from. I attended the keynote given by Dr. Jennifer Doudna, Nobel Prize-winner and co-inventor of CRISPR technology, which was the kickoff keynote for the conference. From that point forward, I presented a poster during the evening general poster session and the Sci-Mix poster session, in which I was approached by other researchers working on quantum dots. It was great to explain to them my own work on quantum dots, to have my work challenged and questioned by them, and to receive advice regarding experts in the field I could consult to continue with my work. Later in the week, I attended another keynote given by the Nobel Prize winner Dr. Mounji Bawendi for his contributions to quantum dots – the same field I had been presenting research in!’





Preeti Maiti (pictured left), a doctoral student at UCF, shared that, ‘I was selected to present a poster in the Biomaterials and Biointerfaces session under the Division of Colloid and Surface Chemistry. Presenting my poster provided an excellent opportunity for scientific exchange, allowing me to engage with researchers and gain valuable new ideas and perspectives.

In addition, I was selected to deliver an oral presentation in the Division of Biochemical Technology under the Product Formulation session. This experience offered significant insights and served as a valuable platform to effectively communicate my research to a broader scientific audience.’

Avogadro Award

In 2001, the Orlando Section established **the Avogadro Award** to be presented to an outstanding senior project at the **State Science and Engineering Fair**. Other Sections in Florida were encouraged to support the award and it is presented yearly as a joint effort.

The 2006 award winner is **Nicholas R. Stan** (pictured right), a student at Alexander W. Dreyfoos School of the Arts in West Palm Beach. Nicholas’ project was entitled “Enhancing the Oncotoxic Effects of Mitochondrial-targeting D-(KLAKLAK)₂ Peptide by Improving Cell Membrane Permeability via Chemical Conjugation with Imidazopyridinium.” The judges in the senior chemistry section unanimously chose this project because of its strong chemistry content and the obvious knowledge of the student.



The Orlando Section extends its gratitude to Darlene Slattery and DK Weerasinghe for judging the fair and awarding the Avogadro Award along with thanks to the Pensacola Section and the South Florida Section of ACS for contributing to the monetary award for the prize.

Abstract

Prior research has indicated that the synthetic peptide D-(KLAKLAK)₂ and its analogues (D-KLAKLAK and D-KLAK) exhibit potent cancer toxicity (oncotoxicity) and pro-apoptotic activity when internalized in mammalian cancer cells. The limitations of these peptides as therapeutic agents, however, are cancer specificity and membrane permeability. Research on tumor-homing peptides to attach to these kinds of peptides has had relative success in conferring specificity, but remain inefficient in promoting membrane permeability. Therefore, the only remaining problem is membrane permeability. The study conducted investigates chemical grafting of IP⁺ (imidazopyridinium) on to D-(KLAKLAK)₂ and its analogues, and its effect on cellular permeability. IP⁺ is a heterocycle designed to facilitate the diffusion of large peptides across the cell membrane, and this study tested if grafting IP⁺ onto D-(KLAKLAK)₂ and its analogues would improve its ability to diffuse across the cell membrane, which could aid in the development of a cancer therapeutic based on this peptide or others. Experimental methods included preparing D-(KLAKLAK)₂ and its analogues, and grafting IP⁺ and a chloroalkane tag onto them. The effects of IP⁺ grafting were evaluated by running Chloroalkane Penetration Assays (CAQPA) on HEK293 cells in order to assess to what degree the peptides with or without IP⁺ could access the cytosol of the cells. Results indicated that IP⁺ significantly enhanced the intracellular localization of D-

(KLAKLAK)2 and D-KLAK compared to controls lacking IP+. These results support the hypothesis and suggest that combining D-(KLAKLAK)2, a tumor-targeting peptide, and IP+ may provide a promising approach for developing broad-spectrum cancer therapeutics in the future.

SERMACS 2025: A Success

The 76th Southeastern and 81st Southwest Joint Regional Meeting of the American Chemical Society (SERMACS/SWRM 2025) themed “Chemistry in the Sunshine” was held from October 26-29th, 2025 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Orlando at SeaWorld in Orlando, FL. **1710 attendees** represented a diverse range of institutions and sectors, including academic institutions, industrial organizations, state/government agencies, undergraduate/graduate students and post-doctoral scholars, as well as high school teachers and students. SERMACS/SWRM 2025 featured **49 distinct technical symposia**.



SERMACS/SWRM
2025
Chemistry in the Sunshine

Many thanks to the many, many Orlando Section members who volunteered their time and talents to make the meeting a success!



The Executive Committee would like to extend special gratitude to Chris Chouinard for his dedication in serving as General Chair. Chris is pictured above issuing a welcome to the meeting.

Invite to Attend Executive Committee Meetings

All members are welcome to attend the Orlando Section Executive Committee Meetings that take place on the third Saturday of each month on Zoom. Please contact the Chair ([Toufiq Reza](#)) to obtain access to the meeting.

Please don't forget to subscribe to our [LinkedIn](#), follow our [facebook page](#), and check out [our website](#) for updated news, and activities of our local section.