Greetings! As you can see from the logo above, we have a new name. We are now the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry! As you may recall, we began offering the B.S. in Biochemistry in the Fall 2006 semester so we currently offer the B.S. in Chemistry and the B.S. in Biochemistry. The added degree as well as increased efforts in recruiting and retaining majors has resulted in 130 chemistry and biochemistry majors as of the Fall 2012 semester.

Another change in the department is the graduate program is now a part of an interdisciplinary program entitled Masters of Science in Natural Science (MSNS). We have a specific chemistry emphasis in this program which requires 18 hours in chemistry and at least 6 hours in another discipline; the non-thesis option requires 18 hours of chemistry and 18 hours in another discipline. The Fall 2012 semester was the first semester of the new program, and we were pleased to recruit five graduate students.

Other changes and accomplishments in the department include:

- new faculty member, Dr. Darrell Fry
- requiring all undergraduate students to participate in research
- 17 students presenting conferences
- 9 faculty presentations
- 3 books published/1 in press
- several articles published
- appointment to accrediting commission
- leadership in summer camps for chemistry and sciences

Kefa Karimu Onchoke - tenure, promotion, new American citizen

Kefa Karimu Onchoke was born on a farm in Kenya, received a B.Sc. in chemistry (University of Nairobi), a MS (Analytical/Environmental Chemistry) from Hampton University) and a Ph.D. degree from The Ohio State University in Analytical Chemistry. Dr. Onchoke joined the faculty at SFA in 2006 as Assistant Professor, was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor in 2012, and recently became a naturalized United States citizen.

He has a passion for teaching and research as well as mentoring students. He believes his vocation as a teacher-scholar provides him the opportunity to give to the next generation as was given to him.

His research interests include various studies of nitrated polycyclic aromatic compounds from both the experimental and theoretical standpoints. This multifaceted research spans environmental, bio-analytical, computational and organic synthesis. Of particular interest are the carcinogenic effects of nitro-PAHs upon animals and humans. He uses computational chemistry in gaining insight into the relevant spectroscopic signatures that make them carcinogenic. In his spare time, he reads biographies for inspiration, writes poetry, jogs and enjoys nature walks.
Hello fellow Lumberjacks! I’m Darrell Fry, the newest addition to the chemistry faculty. Some of you may recognize me; I graduated in 1995 with a major in chemistry from SFA. I am attempting to replace Dr. Boring—who first made me laugh then went on to inspire a love of analytical chemistry. I’m from Pollok, Texas and graduated from Central ISD in 1990. I came to SFA because my parents thought I would make a good forester, but found I really enjoyed chemistry. I also found a close bond to the chemistry faculty. Nearly all of faculty who trained me have since retired (Moore and Langley are the last hold outs). With encouragement from Drs. Harris and Garrett, I attended graduate school at the University of Arkansas. There I worked with Donald Bobbitt on optical fiber sensors. After graduating in 2001, I graduated with my Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas, did a teaching post-doc at Mississippi State University, and then accepted a tenure track position at Northwestern State University (NSU) in Natchitoches, LA. I received tenure in 2008 and remained at NSU until 2010. Needing a change, I accepted a position at the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts (LSMSA). I was overjoyed to come back to SFA—for various reasons. Obviously, SFA is close to home for me. I am enjoying running into high school friends that live in East Texas. Secondly, I wanted to participate in a quality undergraduate education. I was appreciative of the education I received at SFA. After graduation, I discovered that SFA had prepared me well. Now I would like to give the next generation of SFA students the same advantage we had. As my life began to be more than just getting an education, I found that I drew upon the values the chemistry faculty at SFA displayed. Dr. Garrett’s integrity, Dr. Boring’s sense of humor, and Dr. Moore’s encouraging words all influenced me years after graduation. When I visited SFA, before seeking employment here, I found that the faculty still echoed my success as a student; I found strength in that echo. I hope to do the same as the newest faculty member.

The Chemistry of Chemistry

Wedding bells for two sets of alumni rang during the summer of 2011. Scott Morris and Jacqueline Greer both B.S 2010 biochemistry majors were married in Rogers, Arkansas. Scott and Jacqueline are both working on their doctorate at the University of Arkansas. As of the last update both had completed their cumulative exams and are making good progress in research.

Also during the summer of 2011, Denise Kellar, B.S. biochemistry 2007, and Randy Crossland, B.S. 2005, M.S. 2007 biology (and former organic TA), were married near San Antonio. Both Denise and Randy are in Ph.D. programs in the Houston area. They now have a 10 month old son, Hayden.

Upcoming Events/Opportunities

**Award Dinner:** The faculty, staff, and students of the department invite all alumni and friends to our annual award dinner. The award dinner will be held in room 123 of the Math building on Saturday, April 27, at 6:00 pm. The menu is hamburgers and all the fixin’s with Dr. John Moore serving as grill master.

**Focus Group:** In addition to the dinner at 6:00, the department invites any former student to a Focus Group at 3:00 pm in room 106 of the Chemistry Building. We want to learn from you about your area of work/expertise and how we can better prepare students.

A scholarship has been endowed in honor of Dr. James Garrett. The scholarship was endowed by Dr. Sara Michie, who is a Professor of Pathology at Stanford Medical School. Anyone interested in contributing may contact the alumni association.
A Special Thanks

We can never thank donors enough for their contribution to the department. The department is fortunate to have alumni who contribute both financially and with their time. The following have made monetary contributions to the department: James Brake, Rhonda Buchanan, Nancy L. (Harmatuk) Cain-Connor, Charles Caldwell, Donn & Trish DeGeorge, Kevin & Jacquelyn Dodds, Kimberly (Stewart) Forthofer, Richard & Carla Jo (Bradshaw) Foshee, David Hair, Cynthia Hamilton, Gregg & Linda Mars, Toni Lynn (Gill) McCall, Jeff McCauley, Christina Mereness, Homer Mercal, John & Robin Moore, Louis & Barbara (Bates) Neff, Paul Procella, James Ruby, Ligy (John) Sebastian, Von Christopher & Jody Wells, William Wilson, Susan Annette Winchell, and Kenneth Washburn.

We also want to thank eight alumni who came to SFA in the Fall 2011 to provide advice to current students in a “speed-dating” format.

We appreciate Jennifer Chilek, Crystal Cornelius, Denise (Kellar) Crossland, James Dickerson, Kevin Dodds, Doug Frantz, Paul Houser, and Jason Perrin taking time to interact with current students.

Reade Dawson, SFA alumnus and chemistry minor working in the gas industry spoke to the seminar class about employment opportunities. Doug Frantz came to SFA for STEM Day and was the keynote speaker.

Dr. Bennie Walker

Dr. Bennie Walker passed away in February 2012 after complications to pneumonia. He is survived by his brother and sister-in-law. Many of you had Dr. Walker in freshman and/or physical chemistry. He came to SFA in 1968. He was a car enthusiast and enjoyed fishing. Dr. Walker retired in 1998. Before his passing he endowed a scholarship at his alma mater, the University of Texas. The scholarship was specifically for physical chemists.

Staff Changes

Charlotte Blacksher has been the administrative assistant in the department since 1997. She worked in various capacities around campus prior to joining the Chemistry Department. We wish her a long, happy retirement with lots of opportunities to enjoy her kids and grandkids.

We welcome Carrie Stover as the new administrative assistant.
James obtained a law degree from South Texas College of Law, after attending night law school, while working at Dow in the daytime. After passing the Texas Bar, he obtained a license to practice before the United States Patent Office. James worked for Dow for the next twenty-six years in Dow's Intellectual Property Department, serving in Freeport, TX; Midland, MI; Walnut Creek, CA; and Zurich, Switzerland. He was involved in integrating the Intellectual Property group into Dow from the former East German State chemical company, after Germany was reunified. In addition, he was involved in integrating the intellectual property owned by Union Carbide, when it merged with Dow.

James is a 1968 graduate of SFA. As a Chemistry major, he studied under Drs. Seaton, Garrett, Machel, and Abbott. James worked for The Dow Chemical Company as a research Chemist from 1968-1979 and authored a U.S. Patent for a new and novel way to make container glass. In 1979, James obtained a law degree from South Texas College of Law, after attending night law school, while working at Dow in the daytime. After passing the Texas Bar, he obtained a license to practice before the United States Patent Office. James worked for Dow for the next twenty-six years in Dow's Intellectual Property Department, serving in Freeport, TX; Midland, MI; Walnut Creek, CA; and Zurich, Switzerland. He was involved in integrating the Intellectual Property group into Dow from the former East German State chemical company, after Germany was reunified. In addition, he was involved in integrating the intellectual property owned by Union Carbide, when it merged with Dow.

James said, "SFA provided me with an education that allowed me to work for one of the world's largest chemical companies and to have a very successful and fulfilling career. It allowed me to see the world, have a wonderful marriage and rear two outstanding sons. I shall forever be grateful to SFA!"

After retiring from Dow in 2004 and moving to New Braunfels, TX, Governor Perry appointed James to the SFA Board of Regents. His term expired in January of 2013. In addition to serving SFA as a regent, James has been involved in several activities in the department and interacting with current students. The department is grateful for his time and willingness to share his expertise.