

Megan Catherine Murphy, Winner of The Undergraduate Awards in Excellence in Chemistry

By Reiko Simmons, Director of Student Awards

The Undergraduate Award for Excellence in Chemistry is given to a senior woman chemistry student in an accredited college or university that grants a four year degree in Chemistry. The 2023 winner of this award is Megan Catherine Murphy of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Megan was nominated by Professor Emeritus of Chemistry Jeffery S. Moore PhD of University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Megan states that she is from “a household where science was valued”. With a father, a Physical Chemist who likes to say, “Everything is Chemistry” and a sister as a third year PhD candidate, she touts having family discussions as the catalyst for her love of Chemistry!

Megan’s undergraduate research experience is extensive and impressive. Beginning from the freshman year, Megan continued to work on Synthesis of Cyclic Allenes for Ring-opening Allene Metathesis Polymerization (ROAIMP). According to her nominator, Professor Jeffrey Moore, in addition to collecting “a beautiful set of data on the kinetics of the 1,2-cyclononadienes with various substituents in the 4-position”, Megan and her postdoc/supervisor demonstrated that their “hunch” about the regioselectivity regarding the rate of the polymerization with substituent size was correct. During the summer of 2022, Megan worked as an intern at HRL Laboratories in Malibu, CA to expand her research experience.

Professor Joaquin Rodriguez Lopez enthusiastically wrote Megan’s leadership skills and her activities in the American Chemical Society, Student Chapter. Megan as a secretary and the president was prominent in navigating the chapter through the difficult period of pandemic resulting in receiving Outstanding Chapter designation and a Green Chemistry Award for 2021-2022.

Megan intends to join one of the several polymeric materials chemistry PhD programs for which she is already accepted. Also, her plan it to initiate a mentorship program for high school and college students.