This will be my last “Message from the Chair,” as I will be stepping down as chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and retiring from the university on May 31, 2006.

The current academic year has been particularly busy with an internal search for a new chair as well as searches for three new faculty members. We have been successful in all four searches. Professor Jon Carnahan will assume the duties of chair beginning June 1, 2006. We wish him a successful tenure and know that he will provide strong leadership as the department moves forward.

Three new assistant professors will join the department in August. Dmitry Kadnikov will join the organic chemistry division, replacing Professor Robert Cunico, who retired in August 2005. Dmitry is currently a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the University of California, San Francisco, and his research interests are in the synthesis of novel small molecules to explore cellular processes with the ultimate goal of developing new therapeutic agents. James Horn, currently a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Chicago, will replace me in the biochemistry division. James’s research interests are in the use of physical chemical tools to explore the nature of protein/protein and protein/small molecule interactions. Tao Xu, a post-doctoral fellow in the Materials Science Division at Argonne National Laboratory, will be the first to hold a new faculty position in nanotechnology. Tao’s research interests are in the area of interfacial charge transport in nanomaterials with applications in the area of hydrogen sensors and other devices.

The research strengths of the department continue to improve. Fourteen of the current 16 faculty members (88%) published at least one refereed research article in 2005. To support the research programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, faculty members received more than $1 million in external research funding during 2005. External funding of the departmental research programs is essential for maintaining a strong graduate program, since state support has remained flat throughout my tenure as chair, over the last eight years. The undergraduate research program has been very successful, with 28 undergraduate chemistry majors participating in research projects during 2005. The department instituted a research requirement in the two ACS-certified programs during the academic year 1998–99. This may have contributed to the substantial increase in chemistry majors over the last six years, from a low of 87 majors in the fall of 2000 to 143 majors in the fall of 2005. With the addition of three new faculty members, with fresh ideas and enthusiasm for research, the prospects of even more substantial gains in the research area should be expected.

Northern Illinois University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status, national origin, disability, status as a disabled or Vietnam era veteran. Further, the Constitution and Bylaws of Northern Illinois University provide for equal treatment regardless of political views or affiliation, and sexual orientation.

We continue to depend upon our alumni for support. We utilize alumni donations primarily for two purposes, scholarships for deserving students and to support student travel. This year, we have used $4,500 in alumni contributions to send nine students to national and international scientific conferences, with each of the students presenting papers on the research they have done at NIU. This year, an anonymous donor has provided funding for a “Joe Vaughn Teaching Award,” to be given to an outstanding graduate teaching assistant. The donor indicated that Professor Vaughn, who retired in 1998, was an inspiration as an excellent teacher and wanted to commemorate Joe’s achievements.
After a postdoctoral research stint in the Research Triangle of North Carolina, Olujide “Jide” Akinbo (Ph.D., ’97) joined the faculty in the Department of Chemistry at Butler University in Indianapolis, Ind., where he has just been promoted to associate professor and granted tenure.

Calvin J. Chany II (B.S., ’77; M.S., ’80) wrote us in January to say that he had left his former position with Rush University Medical Center in August 2004 to accept a position as a senior chemist with Barnstead International in Dubuque, Iowa, a division of Fischer Scientific responsible for manufacturing laboratory equipment for Fischer. He works in the water group, which designs new point-of-use water-purification units. Cal says that “Dubuque is a wonderful place to live, much like DeKalb but with hills!”

Before moving to Barnstead, Cal was working on contraceptive-antimicrobial polymers. This was a collaborative project between Rush, Polydex Pharmaceuticals, and CONRAD. Major funding for the project came through CONRAD from the Gates Foundation.

He credits the education he received at NIU “as the main key” to his success. The influence of Joe Vaughn and the late Rosalie Reynolds stands out in his memory, along with that of several of the teaching assistants: Harlan Bogie (M.S., ’74), the late Mike McHalskey, Guy Washing (M.S., ’78), and Raymond Lohr (B.S., ’70; Ph.D., ’77). He also singled out Roy Mason and the late Marion Miller for videotaping prelab lectures for their freshman students in the 1970s. Cal concluded, “Yes, NIU prepared me well. Just wish I had worked as hard as my Profs did.”

Lisa Ervin (Ph.D., ’02) is working in the biochemistry laboratories of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in Charleston, S.C.

Glenn L. Green (B.S.Ed., ’56) writes that he is married to Nancy Brown. The couple has two sons and three grandchildren. After completing his bachelor’s at NIU, Glenn went on to receive a master’s degree in science education from Oregon State University in 1964. Now retired from teaching high school science, he says he and his wife enjoy foreign and domestic travel, working in their yards and gardens. They spend part of each winter in Florida, and Glen sails with a friend in the summers. He and Nancy volunteer for a local forest preserve, and are interested in astronomy and environmental issues.

Brian Haggerty (B.S., ’81) recently wrote that he has taken a new position as regional sales manager for Reagan Equipment Co., Inc. He transferred from Wisconsin to south Florida in July 2005. He “survived Wilma” and “can now say I have stood in the eye of a hurricane.” He and his wife, Dawn, have been married 21 years. They have four daughters: Michelle, Lindsey, Emily, and Katelin. Brian received an M.B.A. degree from DePaul University in 1992.

Willa Harper (Ph.D., ’02) has accepted a tenure-track position in the Department of Physical Sciences at Olivet Nazarene University, in Bourbonnais, Ill.

After 32 years in the petroleum and pharmaceutical industries, Ronald P. Hennis (M.S., ’69; Ph.D., ’72) retired December 31, 2004. His eldest son, Peter, received his Pharm.D. degree in June 2005.

Lana Keller (B.S., ’02, M.S., ’03) is completing a one-year Howard Hughes Medical Institute fellowship with the National Institutes of Health. She will return to her medical studies at Rush Medical College in Chicago this summer.

Chris Mulligan (B.S., ’03) wrote to say that he’s working on his Ph.D. degree in analytical chemistry at Purdue University under R. Graham Cooks. Chris’s research involves the design and construction of miniature ion trap mass spectrometers. “These portable mass spectrometers have been applied to the trace analysis of chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial compounds,” he writes. Chris is also investigating the use of desorption electrospray ionization (DESI) in forensic analysis. He finds the area around Purdue “a pretty decent place to live,” and says there’s plenty to do there, given it’s not far to either Chicago or Indianapolis.

Lilia Rousseva (M.S., ’06) and Aneta Szczurowski (M.S., ’05) have both accepted positions with Abbott Laboratories.

We had an e-mail last August from Bob Sobel (B.S., ’97; Ph.D., ’04). He is now a senior technology and innovation scientist with Fona International, a flavor development and applied food sciences firm in Geneva, Ill.

Bruce Teipel (B.S., ’72) wrote to say he had pleasant memories of the chemistry department, where he served as treasurer of the chemistry club and took honors classes before going on to the University of Illinois for his D.D.S. degree in 1976. He says he got “very good summer jobs” through the department, one at Corn Products and another at Acme Resin.

Bruce particularly remembers Rosalie Reynolds, Laurine Graham, Joe Vaughn, and Jim Ermann, whose biochemistry course, he said, “gave me a big jump in dental school.”

Thomas Thompson (M.S., ’94) has been an assistant professor in the Department of Molecular Genetics at the University of Cincinnati since the fall of 2005. After completing his master’s degree with Professor Chong Zheng, Tom pursued doctoral studies at the University of Wisconsin, and a postdoctoral appointment at Northwestern University. His research interests are in the crystallographic, biophysical, and biochemical analyses of protein complexes involved in signal transduction and regulation of the TGF-beta signaling pathway.

Zhen Wang (Ph.D., ’05) and her husband welcomed a son, Michael, born March 5.
Associate Professor Elizabeth Gaillard is now an associate editor of Photochemistry and Photobiology. Her research on a confocal scanning laser ophthalmoscope, a new diagnostic tool for eye diseases, was featured in the January 9, 2006, edition of Northern Today.

Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus Dennis Kevill attended the 40th International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry Congress in Beijing last August and presented a poster. He also attended the 11th Kyushu International Symposium on Physical-Organic Chemistry in Fukuoka, Japan, last September, where he made an oral presentation. This is the 46th consecutive year (since the publication of his first paper in 1961) in which Dennis has published at least one refereed research article.

Associate Professor Douglas Klumpp and his wife, Macy, are the proud parents of William Nelson Klumpp, born March 6 and named for his grandfather, Nelson William Klumpp. William joins Sarah and Rachel at home.

Distinguished Teaching Professor and Presidential Research Professor Chhiu-Tsu “C.–T.” Lin gave his Presidential Teaching Professor seminar, “Real-Life Examples: Connecting Learning and Research in Practical Applications,” on February 21. The seminar typically caps a professor’s appointment as one of the Presidential Teaching Professors, which lasts for four years. After four years, recipients of the award are designated Distinguished Teaching Professors. C.–T. has two years remaining on his appointment as a Presidential Research Professor, which was granted in 2004.

Assistant Professor Victor Ryzhov has been named newsletter editor for the Analytical Division of the American Chemical Society.

Coordinator for Recruitment and Public Relations Michael Spires graduated from NIU this May with a master of arts degree in modern European history, and has been accepted into the Ph.D. program in history for the fall semester 2006. His M.A. thesis, “Des enfants français...fiers de l’être: Social Policy on Citizenship for Women and Illegitimate Children in the French Zone of Occupied Germany, 1945-1950,” has been accepted for presentation at the “Spaces of War: France and the Francophone World” conference at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities this October.

In memoriam F. Marion Miller

It is with deep regret that we announce the death, at age 80, of former faculty member and department chair Francis Marion Miller at his home in Maryland on February 20, 2006. Miller was born December 28, 1925, in Central City, Kentucky, the son of David Green Miller and Mary (Griffin) Miller. He was a graduate of Central City High School, Western Kentucky University, and received his Ph.D. degree from Northwestern University.

After a year of postdoctoral research at Harvard University, Miller joined the faculty of the University of Maryland in Baltimore in 1949, where he remained for 20 years, reaching the rank of professor and chair of medicinal chemistry. In 1968, Miller joined the faculty at Northern Illinois University as professor and chair of the then-Department of Chemistry. He continued as department chair until 1977, and retired from NIU in 1991. In his last five years at Northern, Miller served as director of the University Honors Program.

Miller’s research interests were in the field of organic heterocyclic chemistry, medicinal chemistry, and naturally occurring organic compounds. He spent a year as a guest researcher at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität in Heidelberg, Germany; a semester as visiting professor at the University of Baghdad, Iraq; and a semester as a visiting scholar at the University of Virginia. For several years, Miller was a consultant for the Army Chemical Research Laboratories at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, and for the Ohio Pharmaceutical Corporation. In his career, he directed 25 graduate students and was the author of 25 research articles, two books, and one patent.

At both the University of Maryland and at NIU, Miller was active in efforts to improve instruction at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels. These efforts were pursued through service on many councils and committees at both institutions, and were recognized in both places by awards for excellence in teaching. Miller was one of three recipients of the Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award, NIU’s oldest academic honor, in 1981.

Miller is survived by his wife, Clara Whang Miller; two sons, Daniel Gordon Miller and John Griffin Miller; and nine grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a daughter, Jennifer Miller Frantz Lewis.
Carnahan named new chair

The acting dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Joseph E. Grush, has announced the appointment of Professor Jon Carnahan as chair of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Northern Illinois University. Carnahan replaces the current chair, James Erman, who is retiring at the end of this academic year. The five-year appointment begins June 1, 2006.

Professor Carnahan said that he looks forward to serving the department and that it was an honor to be chosen. “Outlines, directions, and new initiatives for the next few years will be made in close consultation with students, staff, faculty, and alumni,” he added. (See related story, below.)

Calling all alumni!

Our alumni are our most valuable resource, and we want to develop (and encourage) closer ties between alumni and the department—and NIU as a whole. The last time we got together with our alumni on more than an individual basis was during the 2001 Fall Meeting of the American Chemical Society in Chicago: and that was quite a while ago.

Chair-Designee Jon Carnahan is looking into the possibility of hosting an “Alumni Day” some time next spring (probably late in April or possibly early in May). The department’s facilities will be open for tours, and faculty members will make brief presentations about their current research interests and recent accomplishments.

We are also considering asking representatives from the NIU Alumni Association and the NIU Foundation to be present to answer any questions you may have. If the schedule permits, we might also be able to arrange for interested alumni to attend a Huskie sporting event such as a basketball or baseball game, or possibly the football team’s spring scrimmage.

As a means of gauging interest in and potential attendance at such an event, we have put together an online survey. You can find it at the following URL: www.chembio.niu.edu/chembio/alumni-survey.html.

We hope to see as many of you at the event as possible!

Continued from page 1

Message from the Chair

Professor Vaughn won the Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award at NIU in 1971.

As always, we welcome you to return to NIU and visit the department. If you are in the Chicago area, please do pay us a visit. We would be happy to show you around and talk about new developments in the department. The chair-designee, Jon Carnahan, is thinking about having an annual Alumni Day, in which alumni would be invited back to campus to find out what is happening in chemistry and biochemistry at NIU. This would probably involve tours of the department, together with presentations by faculty and students. If you have not been on campus since Faraday West was completed, our new facilities are quite impressive. Jon is also planning to institute an Alumni Advisory Board and welcomes contact with alumni who might like to serve on the board. Although I will be an official ‘retiree’ on June 1 of this year, I will be an active participant in the department for a number of years to come and I would certainly like to visit with former students and friends. Please do stop by.

The future looks bright for the department with many new and exciting projects on the horizon. You can keep current with these developments by visiting the department website (www.chembio.niu.edu).

Sincerely,

James Erman
Professor and Chair
Meet Kui Shen

Kui Shen joined the faculty at NIU in August 2005 as an assistant professor at the interface of chemistry and biology. Kui received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in polymer science from Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics in China. He received his Ph.D. degree in 2001 from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University in New York, and did postdoctoral research at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Md. Currently he lives in Sycamore with his wife, Lixin, and their two daughters, Grace and Rachel.

Kui’s research group will primarily work in the areas of synthetic organic chemistry, synthetic protein chemistry and protein posttranslational modifications including reversible protein phosphorylation and tyrosyl protein sulfation. Proteins of interest will be generated by combining biosynthesis and organic synthesis, and can therefore incorporate desirable unnatural moieties that are synthetically available. These unnatural moieties are very useful in the study of protein posttranslational modifications using biochemical, biophysical and cell biological tools.

Novel methodological developments in synthetic organic chemistry, in the service of synthetic protein chemistry, will be a component of Kui’s work. He is also interested in the study of protein-ligand/inhibitor interactions by rational design and/or library approaches, especially in the context of protein posttranslational modifications.

Kui says his research projects could be tailored to fit into interests of individual students and provide training ranging from instrumental analysis, organic synthesis, protein chemistry, biochemistry, to molecular and cellular biology. He hopes to attract both undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in organic chemistry or biochemistry.

ACS honors Ouderkirk

Andrew J. Ouderkirk (B.S., ’77), a corporate scientist in the Optical Systems Division at 3M in St. Paul, Minn., has won the 2006 Minnesota Award in Chemistry from the ACS Minnesota section. According to an article in the April 17, 2006 issue of Chemical and Engineering News announcing the award, Ouderkirk “proposed the concept of birefringent polymeric mirrors and formed and led the team developing 3M’s multilayer optical film (MOF) technology platform.” MOF products have multiple applications such as light-polarizing products, ultra-high-efficiency light reflectors, and wavelength-selective products.

Courtesy of Cal Chany II (B.S., ’77; M.S., ’80), we were able to reach into the Wayback Machine for these photographs of Andrew before he stepped out into the research world. According to Cal, they were taken during a “chemical magic show” at a school in McHenry, Ill., in the spring of 1976 or 1977. At left is Andrew working some of that old-time chemical magic. In the photo above right, Andrew is joined by his fellow members of the Class of 1977 Tom Erbach (at left) and Cal Chany (at right in the wizard outfit).
Michael Faraday Society ($1,000 & above)

Steven W. Anderson (Ph.D., ‘85); Anonymous; Gary & Isabelle (B.S., ’80; M.S.Ed., ’87) Kovarik.

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We make every effort to acknowledge the generosity of our alumni and friends, but at times the paperwork does not arrive before press time for our annual issue. If you made a donation this year and are not listed, please be assured that your gift is appreciated and will be acknowledged in next year’s Northern Chemist. If for any reason you wish to remain anonymous, please tell us on your contribution form, or when the volunteer from the Huskie Telefund contacts you.
Please update information about yourself. We hope you will also consider making a contribution to the department.

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**DEGREES RECEIVED:**

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Yes! I would like to help the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry achieve its goals by making a contribution. **Please use my gift of $_______ for:**

- Van Acker–Duminy–Kovarik Scholarship Fund
- Rosalie Reynolds Memorial Teaching Scholarship
- Chemistry Alumni Undergraduate Scholarship (CAUS)
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Please mail checks to: Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2862. We can also accept contributions on Visa, MasterCard, or Discover:

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We had a pleasant surprise in store for us when we opened the September 26, 2005 issue of Chemical and Engineering News. The American Chemical Society named the top 25 producers of certified bachelor’s degrees in chemistry for the academic year 2003–2004, and there we were, in a four-way tie for 24th place with 21 graduates. Sharing our rank were Boston University, the University of Southern California, and Texas A&M University. The only other Illinois school to make the list was the University of Illinois at Chicago, which came in for eighth place, with 39 graduates.

The ACS recognition is a nice feather in the department’s cap, especially since it comes at the end of the better part of a decade of increasing recruitment efforts by the faculty and staff. At the start of the academic year 2000–2001, there were 88 undergraduate chemistry majors in the department. That number had nearly doubled, to 143, by the start of the academic year just ended (2005–2006).

Alumni can help keep those numbers going—and growing. We will continue our public relations and recruitment efforts, but the best advertising is via word-of-mouth. So when you know someone is interested in chemistry, encourage them to check us out. Talk to your friends and coworkers with college-age children. And, of course, continue your history of generous financial support, especially of our scholarship funds.

When Professor Jon Carnahan accepted the position of department chair, it meant he would have to give up being director of graduate studies, a position he has held for the last 11 years. A number of faculty members expressed an interest in the DGS position, and after careful consideration the faculty voted in May to offer the job to Associate Professor Lee Sunderlin. His appointment as director of graduate studies will begin June 1.

Lee will take over a graduate program in very good shape. Enrollment in the chemistry graduate programs has been undergoing a slow but steady shift over the last six years. We have seen fewer master’s students and more Ph.D. students each year, reaching a high point of 34 Ph.D. students and 18 M.S. students last fall. Nine students took the Ph.D. qualifying exam this spring, the largest number in departmental history.