

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
Current & Prospective Chemistry Majors – Frequently Asked Questions *
Updated October 1, 2017

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Updated June 15, 2015

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BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT CHEMISTRY COURSES

What is the typical offering frequency for different undergraduate chemistry courses at UNL?

- Below is a list of different chemistry courses offered typically offered in the Fall semester and Spring semester.

Fall Semester: CHEM 101, 105, 106, 109, 110, 111, 113, 221, 251, 252, 253, 254, 261, 263, 399, 431, 433, 441, 443, 463, 471, 481

Spring Semester: CHEM 109, 105, 106, 110, 114, 221, 251, 252, 253, 254, 262, 264, 399, 431, 433, 421, 423, 463, 471, 482, 484

Note 1: This tentative course schedule may change from year to another year according to administrative needs. You can look up the most updated information via your MyRed account.

Note 2: CHEM 431 and 433 are cross-listed as BIOC 431 and 433 and BIOS 431 and 433.

What are the chemistry courses offered during summer at UNL?

- The list of summer chemistry courses varies from year to year, depending on the availability of resources and instructors and the demand from students. The list for each year is typically announced in March or two months before the start of the summer session. The summer courses offered in the past few years were: CHEM 105, 106, 109, 110, 221, 251, 252, 253 and 254. Students should check out the UNL summer session website for updated information.

How often are Chem 421 and 423 being offered at UNL?

- Chem 421 and 423 are offered every spring semester.

How often are Chem 441 and 443 being offered at UNL?

- Chem 441 and 443 are offered every fall semester.

How often are Chem 481, 482 and 484 being offered at UNL?

- Chem 481 is offered every fall semester. Chem 482 and 484 are offered every spring semester.

What is the process for enrolling in the chemistry undergraduate research courses (Chem 399 and Chem 463)?

- Undergraduate research is one of the key stones in the training of chemistry majors. It provides students not only the experience to practice their chemistry knowledge, but also the opportunities to publish their research in journal articles and gain research presentation experiences. All these benefits can improve the resumes of the students and make them more attractive in their applications for graduate schools and jobs.

A student planning to do undergraduate research under the course #s Chem 399 or Chem 463 are advised to contact the potential supervising professor at least one semester before the start of the courses. S/he should fill out the Undergraduate Research Contract Form with the assistance of her/his supervising professor(s) for the described undergraduate research and submit the filled form to Ms. Bergmeyer at the Chemistry Resource Center (Hamilton Hall 227). The student can find the contract form in the menu of the website for organization: ASC.CHEM.ADVISING:

Major: Chemistry in Blackboard (<http://my.unl.edu>). Here is another link to the form: <http://chemweb.unl.edu/undergrad/news/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Undergraduate-Research-Contract-Form.pdf>. This policy is to provide sufficient guidance to students regarding the grade assignments for these research courses. In case of conflicts and grade appeals, this contract will serve as the basis to ensure fair grades are assigned for these undergraduate research course credits.

Upon receiving a completed contract form, Ms. Bergmeyer will provide the student with a valid course registration code. This will allow the student to register for the Chem 399 or Chem 463 credits. To complete the registration process, the student should make and distribute three copies of the filled form: One to the Chief Chemistry Advisor, one to the supervising professor and one to the student.

WARNING: The course grades for Chem 399 and Chem 463 are typically recommended by the corresponding supervising professors. The Chief Chemistry Advisor will approve the recommended grades for these course credits **ONLY IF** the students submit the corresponding contract forms to the Advisor before the last date to add course credits in the corresponding semester.

I need to take Chem 463 because I need to switch from the Chemistry BA track to Chemistry BS track. How should I proceed with registering this course?

- Chem 463, Advanced Organic Preparations, is one of the several supplemental courses available for chemistry majors who started on the B.A. track but wish to complete a B.S. degree. Our chemistry BS degree program has 4 credit hours of organic laboratory training (Chem 263 and 264), but the BA degree program has only 2 credit hours of such training (Chem 253 and 254). Thus, students who have had taken the Chem 250s organic chemistry sequence and desire for this switch to the B.S. track are required to take 2 credit hours of Chem 463.

Chem 463 is offered through two pathways.

Pathway 1. The undergraduate organic chemistry laboratory coordinator will have the students perform a set of advanced organic chemistry laboratory experiments. Since the experiments performed in the 250s series are very different from the 260s series, sometimes, the coordinator may ask the students to join the labs for Chem 263 or 264. For this second case, students who have completed the 250s series must sign up Chem 463 instead of Chem 263 (or 264) because they may not get credits for both the 250s and the 260s labs.

Pathway 2. Students may complete their Chem 463 training by performing undergraduate organic chemistry research under the guidance of an organic chemistry faculty. In this case, students should inquire for the availability of research positions in the potential faculty mentor's group at least one semester before they take this course. Usually, such positions are filled up quickly.

IMPORTANT: Students are responsible for consulting the organic chemistry laboratory coordinator or an organic chemistry faculty for the availability of research positions at least 1 semester before they take this course. Unfortunately, in the past, many students signed up Chem 463 first and, in the beginning of the semester, they then started to find such positions. Such late-start searches often failed and these students were required to drop this course and change their academic plans. These incidents created frustrations and waste of time for all parties involved. So, if you plan to take Chem 463, start your planning early.

I am going to be retaking Chem 109 (or 110) in the next semester.

- a) **If I passed the lab component last time I took the class, do I need to retake the lab section again next semester? What is the passing grade I had to receive to not have to retake the lab section along with the lecture?**
- You can opt out of the lab section if you have earned at least 80% of the lab points in your last Chem 109 (110) course. You need to contact our undergraduate chemistry staff, Ms. Peg Bergmeyer, at the Chemistry Resource Center in Hamilton 227 and have her certify your past lab section performance.
- b) **If I can opt out of the lab section, do I need to sign up for the lab section?**
- In the event that you qualify for the “opt out”, you do still need to register for a lab section with the lecture. However, the lab fee will be refunded.

What are the titles of the textbooks for my chemistry courses?

- The course textbooks are picked out by the corresponding course instructors. You can find the names of the instructors for your registered courses in your MyRed account. You can look up the contact information of the UNL chemistry faculty on this webpage: <http://chem.unl.edu/faculty-directory> and send them an email inquiry for the information.

Whom should I contact to evaluate my transferred chemistry credits?

- For general chemistry courses at the 100 level, you should email your evaluation request to the general chemistry coordinator, Prof. Jason Kautz (Email: jkautz2@unl.edu). For other chemistry courses, you should email your evaluation request to the Chemistry Major Advisor, Prof. Marjorie Langell (Email: mlangell1@unl.edu). All evaluation requests should be accompanied with the corresponding course syllabi. Examples of past exam and laboratory reports are desirable, especially for 200 or higher level courses. These extra example materials are necessary for requests to evaluate course equivalency for advanced and accelerated courses.

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POLICIES ON COURSES AND DEGREE PROGRAMS

I tested out of Math 106 via the math placement exams. Can I get retroactive credits for Math 106?

- If you did very well in Math 107 (you got an "A") and you skipped Math 106, you may be qualified for retroactive credits for Math 106. In this case, you would need to apply for retroactive credits with the Math Department through the Math advisor, Lori Mueller (lmuel2@math.unl.edu, 402-472-4319, 210 Avery Hall). Students may want to get these retroactive credits if they are a few credits short to get a Math Minor.

I am planning to study in a foreign country for one semester. How can I transfer education abroad credits back to UNL?

- Many chemistry students have considered spending either a summer or even a semester studying abroad. Before the study, students are encouraged to seek assistance from Academic Advisors to determine the correct form, and the appropriate department from which to seek evaluation of their transfer credit. Some instructions for evaluating credits can be found in this link. There is no guarantee that transfer course equivalence can be established. So check out the details ahead of time.

Here is a brief summary of a typical transfer credit process. Transcripts from the study abroad commonly come back to UNL 1-3 months after a student completes their education abroad experience. Transcripts are usually sent directly to Education Abroad. Once these documents are received, Education Abroad (or Ed Abroad) will send a copy over to Admissions. They will add these into the system. At the same time, Ed Abroad starts all of the post-approval paperwork for the student. An email attached with transcript and post-approval forms will be sent to the student. The student can also access the email in MyWorld if they cannot find it in their inbox. Note that the students have access to their pre-approvals in MyWorld. If there are any pre-approvals in which further evaluation was not needed, then Ed Abroad completes the paperwork and sends it on to Admissions. Ed Abroad can also resend the email.

Students who do not complete the post-approval process may panic during their graduation check because they are missing credit hours or requirements. So the safest way is to first check with Education Abroad before your study abroad.

How to obtain a dual matriculation? What are the requirements for double majors in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering?

- The only way to double major in Chemical Engineering and Chemistry is to complete a process called “Dual Matriculation.” To dual matriculate, students are required to pursue degrees in both major colleges (Engineering and Arts & Sciences). The course work that is completed applies to both degrees, but students have to complete ALL of the requirements for BOTH colleges. Therefore, for an example, ENGL 150 taken to complete an ACE 1 requirement in the College of Engineering will complete the ACE 1 requirement for the College of Arts & Sciences. However, the College of Arts & Sciences would require an additional ACE 1 course to complete the College Distribution Requirement A (CDR A). In addition, students are required to complete an additional 30 credit hours of course work beyond the requirements of their primary college (120 credit hours for Arts & Sciences, 131-132 credit hours for Engineering). After completion of their degree programs, students would earn both a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from the College of Engineering and a Bachelor of Science with a major in Chemistry from the College of Arts & Sciences (and receive two diplomas). If you are interested in double majoring in majors outside the College of Arts & Sciences, contact the Arts & Sciences Advising Center for an individual consultation.

Can students earn a minor after graduation?

- For students in the College of Arts & Sciences, it is possible to earn a minor after graduation, although it is very rare for this to happen. Typically, after graduation, the graduated students take extra courses either at UNL or another college. These courses, together with other courses already taken at UNL, may satisfy the additional minor requirements. To earn a minor after graduation, the application process starts with students having a discussion with the Director of Advising for the College of Arts & Sciences. Note that everything is done and approved on a case by case basis. Once completion of the minor requirements is verified, the College will have the degree plan changed.

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ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN THE CHEMISTRY MAJOR PROGRAM

I am a Chemistry major. How should I prepare a 4-year plan for my course planning so that I have a better chance to finish college in 4 years?

- Many college students desire to finish their college degrees in four years or sometimes in a shorter period of time. Since not all courses are offered every semester and some of them may have schedule conflicts, it is best to have a detailed plan early in the 1st year at UNL. Chem Majors taking Chem 101 will receive detailed assistance from the course through many weekly lectures and course assignments to explore course options for putting their 4-year college plans. The course will also help the students to learn the difference between a BA and a BS degree in chemistry. Of course, students are always welcome to make appointments with the Chem Major Advisor for help with their 4-year plans. Students can find the most current undergraduate programs in Chemistry at this UNL undergraduate bulletin website: <http://bulletin.unl.edu/undergraduate/major/Chemistry>.

Usually, undergraduate courses offered in the current year may have the same class schedules when they will be offered in future years. So using MyRed to check the availability of these courses in different semesters and their corresponding time schedule can provide good bases in planning your courses.

Typically, students majoring in chemistry will take one year of general chemistry (Chem 109+110, or Chem 113+114) in their freshman year. It is advantageous for them to take the organic chemistry sequence (Chem 251+252+253+254 or Chem 261+262+263+264) in their second or sophomore year because they are the prerequisites for many 400-level chemistry courses. Please note that almost all courses for BS degrees are offered either in the fall or spring semester. The only exceptions are Chem 211 and Chem 431 and Chem 433 which are currently being offered in both fall and spring semesters. Please note that Chem 481, Chem 441 and Chem 443 are offered in the fall semester, whereas Chem 482, Chem 484, Chem 421 and Chem 423 are offered in the spring semester. Changes can happen to these general schedules. Students should monitor changes in the course offering schedule each year to prepare for unexpected.

Students in the BS track program are advised to take 2 credits of Chem 399 (undergraduate research) in their second or third year in the chemistry program. They can take one credit of Chem 399 in each semester or two credits in one semester. Students can look up the chemistry research faculty list on the website: chem.unl.edu and sort out the research area for this research experience. They should discuss with potential research faculty mentors and ask for permissions to have their Chem 399 undergraduate research training at least 1 semester before registering the Chem 399 credits.

I am planning to take the Biological Chemistry course. Do you have some advice to prepare myself before taking this course?

- Some chemistry courses are more difficult than others. Here is one piece of advice from a past chemistry major for studying Biochemistry I: Structure and Metabolism (CHEM 431 or BIOC 431).

"To learn (the course materials) successfully, in my experience for this class, I think students should realize that this class requires more effort and precaution from the beginning. And when midterm comes, be well prepared by scheduling study time early because it has lot of materials that you have to memorize..."

The student recommended reviewing the chemical structures of molecular building units such as amino acids, carbohydrates and nucleic acids before taking this course. While the textbooks for Organic Chemistry II have chapters of materials on these biomolecules, the materials are often not

covered or covered in a limited extent in the lectures because there is too much to cover in one semester. Some biochemistry texts have good reviews on this topic.

What should students look into when planning for the summer and coming fall semester?

- Students are encouraged to review their 4-year plan at least once a semester before each registration. There are three possible reasons. First, students may have changed their education goal or may need to re-take courses. For both cases, a new course plan will better fit their needs. Second, students may find it more suitable to take a series of courses over another one (for an example: 250 series vs. 260 series) because they may know better which pace of instructions best assists their learning experience. Third, students may have incorporated a number of activities (such as doing research, volunteering for non-profits or running ROS organizations) in their schedule. Student should evaluate these activities and if they may affect their overall performance in their course grades and their learning of the materials. Sometimes, it is very easy to say "yes" to these activities, but our limited time in each day does constraint our focus and their performance in each activity. In my opinion, it is better to succeed in doing a few things well than being busy with too many tasks to handle. In the job market, especially in academic, employees are often evaluated by their excellence. While there are many "roads" to build "excellence", it is difficult to do so without having enough time to focus on the areas you care most.

If students have no plans to take summer courses, I would strongly encourage you to take summer internships at companies or participate one of the many research opportunities offered by the NSF, DOE or DOD. These are invaluable experiences which will not only "beef up" your resume and build your career network but help you to determine what fits you the best for your career path. The summer internship pay scale varies a lot, from over \$1,500 per month to over \$5,000 per month, depending on experiences, types of work and programs. Quite often, many of the internships at companies lead to job opportunities. So, use your summer wisely.

For those of you who are looking for opportunities to gain summer research experiences, ACS has posted a very informative YouTube video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsrkANfLMR8>

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APPLYING FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS

I am a Chemistry major. What should I look into when preparing for my professional school applications?

- Majoring in chemistry can open the doors to many options of professional careers in for examples medicine, optometry, nursing, public health and law. These are just a few of the many possible career paths. Students are encouraged to make appointments with the advisors at the UNL Explore Center (<http://explorecenter.unl.edu/>) to learn more about these opportunities.

Sometimes, students may find it overwhelming to determine which of these possible professional career paths they may want to pursue and the corresponding professional schools to apply. In this case, students are strongly recommended to meet representatives from these professional schools and find shadowing opportunities as well. Such experiences can help students to sort out which paths fit them the most. Students are advised to take advantages of the professional school visits to UNL. This is a useful website for such dates and available time slots:

<http://exploreregistration.unl.edu/>. Students can also join the listserv at the Explore Center for alerts of these visits.

During these professional school visits, students are encouraged to ask questions about the corresponding professional programs and the typical profiles of applicants the programs admitted in the past. Such profiles may include resident and non-resident requirements, typical GPA of the applicants, amount of shadowing experience expected and other items which would make an applicant's file more desirable to the admission committee. Sometimes, students may ask these school representatives to critique their resumes and transcripts regarding their application files as well.

Remember, the application processes for some professional schools are highly competitive. The admittance rates for some are lower than 20%. Many of the applicants need to apply for more than one time to get into particular programs. So, pre-professional students should be prepared in case that their Plan A does not work.

I am looking into applying to graduate schools in science and engineering. What should I look into when preparing for my applications?

- Chemistry majors in their senior year sometimes consider pursuing further chemistry training by attending graduate schools in science and engineering. To start this potential career path, students can first determine the subjects or sub- disciplines which interest them most. Reading current literature, browsing academic websites and talking to research mentors, academic advisor or friends who have travelled this career path before are some ways to find out the “answers”. Students should also ask if they want to learn more about synthesis, measurements, or some of both. Answers to these questions can help students to narrow down the choices of graduate programs they may apply to. Typically, besides students’ transcripts and resume, applications for chemistry graduate programs require: 1) Graduate Record Examinations (or GRE’s). Sometimes, both general GRE and chemistry subject GRE are required or recommended; 2) Three letters of recommendations; 3) Personal statement.

While students can take the GRE exams in the Fall semester of their 4-year for the applications, some students find themselves better prepared to take these exams during the summer of their third year in college.

Students will likely get better well-written recommendation letters if they ask their professors’ or other recommenders’ help with the letters at least two or more months earlier than the application deadlines. College professors are busy people because their job duties include not only teaching but also doing research and other administrative responsibilities. They write recommendation letters using their spare time among all these duties.

Writing a good personal statement takes time. Besides personal aspirations, in this statement, students may describe the areas within the subject that interest them most and the research groups they want to join. Sometimes, students may use this opportunity to explain some questionable information in their applications such as some low grades in their transcripts and unexpectedly low GRE scores. There is no “one best formula” to write this statement. However, writing that shows the genuine and honest nature of the students is often appreciated by the graduate admission committee.

Remember, many graduate programs now have their application deadlines as early as December 1st of the year before the enrollment of the fall program in the follow year. Hence, students are advised to start plan their graduate education early.

American Chemical Society provides many useful materials for planning for graduate education in chemistry. Related website:

<http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/students/graduate/gradschool.html>

I am applying for graduate schools. Whom should I ask for recommendation letters?

- There are many sources of letter writers you can consider and ask for help. Your employers, advisors, volunteer supervisors, colleagues at work and course instructors are possible sources. Some applications may specifically ask for letter writers with certain background, such as a professor in the science field. So you need to read the instructions carefully. Please note that family members and friends are often perceived to provide biased evaluations and thus are not good choices of letter writers. There are exceptions, for examples friends from professional networks. Your choice of letter writers may also speak volume on your ability in building your professional network. So you should consider your choice of letter writers carefully.

Students should plan and ask for recommendations letters at least one month (preferably 2 months or more) before the deadlines of the applications. Good letters take time to write. Besides, your letter writers through your professional network usually have packed schedules. Unless you give them enough time, they often will not be able to provide thoughtful letters.

There is a misconception that course instructors are obligated to write student letters of recommendations. The truth is that course instructors write these letters in their own private time, usually after work hours. They are not paid to write these letters. After all, if you were an evaluator, would you want to read and evaluate heavily biased letters from paid letter writers?

What activities should I participate to get strong letters of recommendations?

- There are many professional activities you may participate or do to expand your network and get to know your professors/ instructors and supervisors enough for them to write you strong, detailed letters of recommendation.

Here are a few examples:

- Obtain a research or lab position with a faculty member. Do this early before you need your letter! There are limited undergraduate research positions in each research group. So do not assume that you can obtain one the first semester you inquire. If you are not sure whom to approach about research, contact the academic advisor within the department of your interest for advice. Note that paid positions are usually difficult to get in the beginning. You can consider volunteering your time and apply for other funding support such as UCARE later.
- Enroll in small sized classes. This gives you an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your ability and character in the class beside your performance in the regular exam and homework. On the contrary, do not do the minimal work for these courses. It will be easily noticeable.
- Visit your instructors during their office hours. Be prepared for these meetings with clear questions. By answering these questions, instructors can clarify course materials and discuss relevant advanced study or research opportunities.

- Participate in summer research programs. Besides chemistry, there are many summer research programs in other science and engineering disciplines. Many of them are available through the NSF REU programs and other undergraduate programs in national labs and research institutes. You will have the opportunity to learn new science, gain hands-on knowledge, and possibly meet new research mentors. If you perform well and professionally in these summer programs, these mentors can be your potential source of letter writers.
- Find volunteer, internship, or shadowing opportunities in your field of interests. These experiences will provide you a good glimpse of your desired career and what it is really like. Yes, they also help you to get to know a practicing professional and make new professional relationships. You can find these opportunities through many avenues such as career fair, ACS internship websites, advertisements in the Explore Center and referral through friends.
- Apply for a Teaching Assistant position with your department of interest. Such a position will provide you with the opportunity to interact with students and the supervisory faculty and instructors. You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the materials and your work ethics. If you are interested in being a chemistry teaching assistant, you should contact Dr. Jason Kautz for possible openings. Typically, the chemistry resource center will post such position openings in March and the instructions for the applications.

Could you give me suggestions on writing cover letters for my graduate school and job applications?

- Are you looking for summer jobs or summer internship applications? If your answer is "yes", then many such applications would ask you for cover letters or give you the opportunity to submit the letters. Typically, such cover letters are 1-page long. While good cover letters would not necessary lead to jobs, badly written cover letters certainly could eliminate your chance to land an interview. Most staff of the Human Resources will judge your desire for the advertised opportunities from the professionalism you "display" in your letter. If you are given the opportunity to upload a cover letter, you should do so because other diligent applicants will do. The absence of a cover letter in this case will give the Human Resources (HR) a reason to remove you from the pool of applicants for the second round considerations. A too-brief (2-3 lines long) cover letter tells the readers that the applicant is lazy to even read the advertisement carefully. This is a bad "omen" for the HR staff. The best cover letters I have read are ones which address the applicants' background in regards to the expectations in the requirements in the advertisements. Sometimes, the cover letter is a good "place" to explain the atypical background of the applicants, such as gaps between employments. Many good examples of cover letters can be found in the web. You can find many examples of cover letters, resumes and CVs in the ACS Network website: <http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/careers/career-services/resume.html>. Students may make appointments with the Career Center or with Dr. Cheung if you need help to review your cover letters, resumes and CVs.

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CAREER AND INTERNSHIP ADVICE FOR CHEMISTRY MAJORS

Where do I find internships for Chemistry majors in the chemical industry?

- If you are interested in finding a job in the industry right after graduation, doing a summer internship is a great way to build your work networking and to land a job. There are a lot of internships available from major companies at the Fall career fair for chemistry majors. Besides

traditional chemical companies, students should also consider companies such as 3M, GE, ADM, Monsanto, Cargill and General Mills. All offer internships. Many of the recruiters may not go looking for chemistry students in these job fairs. However, if the students go and ask these recruiters at the career fair, these options are often available. It helps the recruiter know that a student is eager and determined to succeed by then putting forth the effort. Also, recruiters like well-rounded individuals with good grades and involved in extracurricular such as R.A., student ambassadors to a college, chemistry club, and research groups. The more they are involved in leadership activities the better.

Where should I start for finding summer internships?

- There are many routes to search for summer internship opportunities. You may attend the fall and spring UNL career fairs or ask the Career Services for assistance. Another way is to search for jobs on the UNL's "Husker Hire Link". HHL has a lot of current job listings. More importantly, the website allows students to search for any employers (past or present) that has attended the UNL career fair and provides the contact information for the representative(s) that came to the fair. Students can use the contact info as a spring board to contact other potential contacts for the "hidden" summer internship opportunities. The truth is that many job opportunities are not necessary posted online and thus searchable. "LinkedIn", a social website for professionals, can also provide you contacts for hiring representatives from different companies. Of course, student may also want to attend regional and national chemistry conferences where many excellent companies may send representatives to recruit future interns and future employees. Check out the internships for undergraduate chemistry student website at the American Chemical Society often. You may find other excellent opportunities as well.

I'm interested in being hired as a chemistry teaching assistant or a staff assistant working in the Chemistry Resource Center. How can I apply for these positions?

- Being a chemistry TA or a staff assistant in the Chemistry Resource Center is a great way to earn a modest stipend while practicing your teaching skills. Typically, Dr. Jason Kautz is responsible for hiring and coordinating these positions. Look out for the announcements for these positions in March via flyers posted in Hamilton Hall and the Chemistry Resource Center.

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