Chemistry & Biochemistry

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Academic Programs

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The Chemistry and Biochemistry Department has two roles in the university: to provide professional education for students who are majors in chemistry and biochemistry and who plan careers in the natural sciences and related fields, and to provide instruction in the fundamentals of chemistry to students with majors in fields related to chemistry, especially in the life sciences, agriculture, and engineering.

The department offers a flexible chemical education degree option for students interested in a career in pre-college science education. Interested students should contact the single subject teaching credential advisor early in their academic career for more information.

Career opportunities for chemists are increasing. There are openings in traditional areas such as environmental analysis, the health professions, industrial research and production, pharmacology, toxicology, product quality control, and teaching at the secondary or university level. Newer opportunities lie in related areas such as library science, market research, patent law, and safety engineering.

Undergraduate Programs

BS Biochemistry

The Chemistry and Biochemistry Department provides curricula leading to the Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and the Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry with a concentration in Polymers and Coatings.

The baccalaureate curriculum in biochemistry includes required courses in general chemistry, analytical chemistry, inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry and physical chemistry. Advanced undergraduates choose electives from courses that cover a broad range of specialized topics, such as environmental chemistry, nutritional biochemistry, advanced organic and physical chemistry, pharmacology, and polymer chemistry. The curriculum emphasizes laboratory work, especially current techniques and the use of instrumentation in all fields of chemistry. The program provides opportunities for independent research under faculty guidance, including a requirement for a senior project. A senior project may consist of pure or applied research in chemistry, or it may involve interdisciplinary work with another field such as art, biology, agriculture, civil or environmental engineering, psychology, or soil science. Under the department's cooperative education program, bachelor's degree candidates may work full-time in industry or government for one or two quarters, for pay and academic credit.

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Concentration

Polymers and Coatings Concentration

Students may select the Polymers and Coatings concentration instead of advanced approved biochemistry electives in Major Courses. The concentration includes the required courses in the biochemistry curriculum and electives in the area of polymers, coatings, surface chemistry and materials engineering. The concentration gives students the background and practical experience to move into a rewarding career in a wide range of fields including paints and coatings, resins, plastics, adhesives and sealants.

BS Chemistry

The Chemistry and Biochemistry Department provides curricula leading to the Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and the Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry with a certified concentration in Polymers and Coatings. Both the BS in Chemistry and the concentration in Polymers and Coatings are certified by the American Chemical Society. An option in Chemical Education designed for aspiring teachers in secondary schools is also available.

The baccalaureate curriculum in chemistry includes required courses in general chemistry, analytical chemistry, inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry and physical chemistry. Advanced undergraduates choose electives from courses that cover a broad range of specialized topics, such as environmental chemistry, nutritional biochemistry, advanced organic and physical chemistry, pharmacology, and polymer chemistry. The curriculum emphasizes laboratory work, especially current techniques and the use of instrumentation in all fields of chemistry. The program provides opportunities for independent research under faculty guidance, including a requirement for a senior project. A senior project may consist of pure or applied research in chemistry, or it may involve interdisciplinary work with another field such as art, biology, agriculture, civil or environmental engineering, psychology, or soil science. Under the department's cooperative education program, bachelor's degree candidates may work full-time in industry or government for one or two quarters, for pay and academic credit.

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Biotechnology Minor

For information regarding the Biotechnology minor, see the College of Science and Mathematics (http://catalog.calpoly.edu/collegesandprograms/collegeofsciencemathematics) section of the catalog.

Graduate Program
Master of Science Degree in Polymers and Coatings Science

General Characteristics

The MS degree in Polymers and Coatings Science offers a unique, focused program closely tied to industry. Students gain academic preparation in polymers and coatings science through lecture and laboratory courses, then undertake a rigorous industrial internship or thesis research. Through the internship or thesis research, students specialize and develop advanced skills related to their internship work or research. The program is designed to prepare students for challenging careers in the polymers and coatings industry. The program also provides excellent background for doctoral studies in areas related to polymer and coatings science. This program is unique in California and relies on the close relationship between the department and the polymers and coatings industry for its success.

Prerequisites

Students entering the program must have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution with a minimum grade point average of 2.5 in the last 90 quarter units attempted. Applicants with majors in chemistry, biochemistry, materials engineering, chemical engineering or related fields generally meet the prerequisites for courses in the program. Applicants with degrees in other areas may need to take supplemental courses in organic and physical chemistry and can be admitted conditionally. For information concerning additional departmental requirements, the student should contact the Graduate Advisor in the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department.

Advancement to candidacy requires completion of 12 units of an approved study plan with a minimum grade point average of 3.0.

Blended BS + MS Program in Chemistry or Biochemistry (BS) and Polymers and Coatings Science (MS)

The blended program provides motivated students with an accelerated route to the MS in Polymers and Coatings Science, with simultaneous conferring of both bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Students in the blended program are provided with a seamless process whereby they can progress from undergraduate to graduate status.

Eligibility

Students majoring in chemistry or biochemistry may be eligible to pursue the blended program toward the MS in Polymers and Coatings Science. Participation in the program is based on prior academic performance and other measures of professional promise, with a minimum GPA of 2.5 required (3.0 recommended). Students are generally selected for the blended program by a faculty committee during the junior year. Please see the catalog description on Blended Programs for eligibility criteria.

Students may begin taking the required graduate courses in either their junior or senior year depending on their preparation. Students may not pursue both the Concentration in Polymers and Coatings and the MS in Polymers and Coatings Science. Students pursuing the concentration take the 400-level polymers and coatings courses while those pursuing the MS degree take the 500-level polymers and coatings courses. Students cannot receive credit for both 400 and 500-level courses in the same topic.

Students in the blended program are eligible to begin the Industrial Internship or Thesis Research upon completion of the required graduate-level chemistry courses.