

## Newsletter

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## In This Issue:

A Successful In-Person Return for the 49 <sup>th</sup> College Chemistry Canada (C3) Conference2
College Chemistry Canada General Student Awards – 20238
College Chemistry Canada Host Institution Student Award – 20239
50th College Chemistry Canada (C3) Conference10
Submitted Articles11
There's a Chemistry Conference Happening in Winnipeg; You Should Sign Up to Speak11
Laboratory Skills Assignments as a Teaching Tool to Develop Undergraduate Chemistry Students' Conceptual Understanding of Practical Laboratory Skills12
A Focus on Faculty Wellness14
Research: It has to be done, but does it need to be done at Langara College?15
Message from the President16
C3 Executive and Board Members

## A SUCCESSFUL IN-PERSON RETURN FOR THE 49<sup>TH</sup> COLLEGE CHEMISTRY CANADA (C3) CONFERENCE



François Gauvin (<u>f.gauvin.14@gmail.com</u>), Retired Chemistry Professor, Winnipeg, MB

After three years without in-person conferences (and two virtual meetings in

2021 and 2022), College Chemistry Canada (C<sub>3</sub>) held its 49<sup>th</sup> conference in person at the *Université de Saint-Boniface* (USB) in Winnipeg, Manitoba, from May 26<sup>th</sup> to May 28<sup>th</sup> 2023. For the benefit of everyone (especially those who could not attend), this article reports on the main themes and activities of this conference.



Figure 1: Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Esplanade Riel

Originally planned as the  $47^{th}$  C<sub>3</sub> conference edition in May 2020 (during a sabbatical leave and after the

great meeting we had at Camosun College in Victoria, BC in 2019), this conference had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic (but everything was ready to go!). In 2021 and 2022, C<sub>3</sub> board members decided to hold virtual conferences (the 47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup>) that turned out to be very successful in terms of covered topics and participation rates; so, it looked good for coming back to in-person conferences in 2023. The

idea was to hold the 49<sup>th</sup> conference in person under the same 2020 planning and, although I retired from the *Université de Saint-Boniface* in the meantime (in August 2022), I remained the coordinator of the event with the help of a great organising committee.

The main theme of our 2023 conference, related to my 2019-2020 sabbatical work, was "**Nuts & Bolts Challenges in Chemistry Education, from Primary School to University Level**". The intention was to bring together different groups of people involved in chemistry education (school teachers, educators, college/university professors, chemists and other specialists) in order to share our experiences and knowledge to better support student success. We had 45 participants from across the country (and from the U.S.A.) among which was a dozen pre-university teachers; hence the conference being held during a weekend. In addition to our two plenary speakers, our conference also counted 15 oral presentations and 5 posters.



*Figure 2:* The official 49<sup>th</sup> C<sub>3</sub> conference poster

#### **CONFERENCE PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES**



Figure 3: Crowd in the conference room

Apart from the conference content itself (plenary speakers and oral/poster presentations on the Saturday and Sunday), the other official activities included Friday visits to the Winnipeg Royal Canadian Mint and The Forks National Historic Site, along with the classic Welcome Reception at a local brewery (namely the Nonsuch Brewery) in the evening. The traditional conference banquet was held on Saturday evening and the "essential" Fun Run & Walk was done on Sunday morning. The conference was concluded by a visit of the USB newly renovated chemistry laboratories on Sunday afternoon



Figure 4: Lunch at The Forks





Figure 6: Pre-banquet cocktails at the Restogare



Figure 7: Banquet dinner at the Restogare



*Figure 8:* 2023 Fun Run & Walk "Winners" Left to right: Amit Raga, Lawton Shaw, Jennifer Wolf and Andy Dicks



Figure 9: Newly renovated chemistry labs at the USB

#### **PLENARY SPEAKERS**

Our plenary speakers, Sarah Pelletier (from the University of Alberta *Campus Saint-Jean*) and Yann Brouillette (from Dawson College in Montréal, Québec) respectively entertained us with very dynamic speeches and discussions on Outreach programs for elementary and high schools, and Comic Book Chemistry and Superheroes.

Through the use of Jamboard<sup>®</sup>, Sarah Pelletier was also able to draw our attention on the goals, outcomes and, more importantly, challenges that are met in chemistry education. Below are some examples of topics brought on by conference participants.

Goals/Outcomes at elementary/high schools and at university level:

- Getting kids excited about science
- Science career exploration
- Develop scientific autonomy and self-confidence
- Show students a range of essential chemical techniques to master
- Encourage cross talks between high schools and universities

### Some encountered challenges:

• Lack of proper equipment, laboratory space and allotted time in schools



*Figure 10: Plenary speakers Sarah Pelletier* (top) and Yann Brouillette (bottom)

- Lack of effective study and basic math skills from students
- Ensuring laboratory safety
- Running out of ideas or always repeating the same activities
- Teacher training (what do elementary and high school teachers need as professional development aid)
- Complexity of the logistics for school visits at universities (permissions, insurance, budgeting costs, finding volunteers, etc.); burn out of staff
- Laboratory report structure and writing

All these goals, outcomes and challenges clearly demonstrate that there **should be more communications between high school teachers and university professors** in order to help each other for the benefit of students' chemistry education.

### A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATIONS AND POSTERS

Here are some of the themes that were discussed in the other presentations and posters given at the conference:

- Adapting to AI: ChatGPT, Learning, and Assessment (by Lawton Shaw from Athabasca University)
- Making Wikipedia a better place (one article at a time) (by Emma Davy, Robin Stoodley, and Chris Addison from UBC)
- **Reaching out to indigenous communities in BC with chemistry education** (by Jennifer Wolf from BCIT)
- Let them do it! How to foster student autonomy in the lab (by Véronique Turcotte from *Cégep André-Laurendeau* and Sean Hugues from John Abbott College)
- Laboratory sessions to enhance teaching and learning in high school chemistry (by Shannon Baxter from *Collège Béliveau* in Winnipeg, MB)
- Plug and play flow chemistry (poster by Rachel Kaine and Guzal Mamadalieva from MacEwan University)
- Data collection in inorganic laboratory to promote student engagement (poster by Kimberly Buffie from the University of Winnipeg)

As one can see, the 49<sup>th</sup> C3 conference program was very interesting and participation of high school teachers was greatly valuable. Technical talks given by Jack Randall (from Vernier) and Ketan Trivedi (from Trivedi Chemistry) were also very appreciated.

For more information about the conference and abstracts of all the presentations and posters, people are invited to consult the  $C_3$  Facebook group page at

https://www.facebook.com/groups/17938199225 and the conference webpage at http://collegechemistrycanada.ca/conferences/23conf/conf2023E.html.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We are grateful to the following people and organisations for the help and funding they provided us to make the  $49^{th}$  C<sub>3</sub> conference a great success.

Organizing committee: Bilkiss Issack, Gabriel Marineau-Plante, Michael Dickman, Madeleine Asselin, Diane Pellerin, Janelle Beaulieu, and Amy Gudmundson

Université de Saint-Boniface: Vice-recteur à l'enseignement et à la recherche Peter Dorrington et Bureau des communications (Nathalie Roche, Sylvie Beaudry et Réal Durand)

### MANY THANKS TO OUR CONFERENCE SPONSORS



## Saphir / Sapphire



## COLLEGE CHEMISTRY CANADA GENERAL STUDENT AWARDS - 2023

#### Drew Biletski

#### Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Edmonton, AB

Drew is recognized for her academic achievement, dedication, and enthusiasm for the study of chemistry. In the words of Laura Lucan (Instructor of Chemistry at NAIT), "As an instructor in the Chemical Technology program at NAIT, I had the privilege of teaching and mentoring Drew. I have been consistently impressed by their work ethic and genuine passion for chemistry".



Drew consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to

academic excellence. Her performance in coursework is reflected in her GPA and in the continual and consistent improvement Drew demonstrated during the two years of studies at NAIT. Drew consistently exhibited a deep understanding of chemical concepts and an ability to apply them effectively in both lecture and lab settings.

Her aptitude for problem-solving and advanced lab and technical skills have been truly commendable and ensured the successful completion of her capstone project. Her communication and leadership skills contributed decisively to the cohesion and success of the project team and fostered a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Drew's dedication and passion for the chemical profession extend beyond the classroom at NAIT. Drew has recently been accepted into the Bachelor of Science degree at a local university in Edmonton and will commence her studies in Fall 2023.

She possesses the qualities and potential to make significant and consistent contributions to the field of chemistry.

#### **Ujas Acharya**

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC

Ujas is an academically outstanding student in the third-year of UBC's chemistry program. He has been involved in the Undergraduate Chemistry Society (UCS) for the last two years, currently working as the Outreach Coordinator. Ujas is also involved in the Department's teaching mission, working as a TA for our highest enrolment introductory courses (CHEM 121/123). Although this level of involvement would be enough for a nomination, Ujas has done all of this while having a visible disability which requires him to use a wheelchair. His level of academic success and



commitment to improving teaching and learning in the Department, make him a role model for students with disabilities who wish to pursue a career in chemistry. His impact on how our program manages accessibility needs cannot be understated.

Ujas completed the third-year of his program in April 2023. His academic performance is outstanding, with an average of over 85% over all three years. He has excelled in Chemistry, Physics, Math, Arts, and Communication courses. He is a truly well-rounded student. In the words of José Rodríguez Núñez "I had the privilege of teaching Ujas in a 3rd year introductory materials chemistry course last term (Jan-Apr 2023). He participated in lectures, showed innate scientific curiosity, academic integrity, and desire to learn". It is clear that these exemplary qualities are characteristic of how Ujas behaves in all his courses. Naturally, Ujas wanted to gain experience doing research. In 2022, he was awarded a WorkLearn Research Award and completed a four-month research project with Prof. Eva Nichols. In August of 2022, Ujas received a poster award for his work "Investigating Solvent Effects on Electrocatalytic CO2 Reduction" at the Young Electrochemist Symposium. This award recognizes Ujas' technical skills, research ability, and communication skills.

Ujas is a permanent staple of Departmental events organized by the UCS. In 2021, Ujas was in the general executive while this year, he works as Outreach Coordinator. He has organized, hosted, and participated in outreach, professional development, and recruitment events. For example, he helped at Faculty Meet and Greet, an event that brings faculty and students closer in a social setting. His commitment to disseminating Chemistry is not limited to UCS events. In May 2023, Ujas helped run Science Rendezvous, a Canada-wide science outreach event. He is committed to disseminating chemistry at Departmental, University, and community levels.

Ujas has also worked as an undergraduate TA (UTA) in our highest enrollment courses (CHEM 121/123). In his role, he attends lectures and answers questions in the online discussion board (Piazza). He brings his knowledge of chemistry, excellent communication skills, and a positive attitude into these activities which undoubtedly contribute to improving students' learning experience. He is also an utmost professional, communicates clearly with his supervisors, and goes above and beyond what is expected from this role. In numerous occasions he has spoken about his career goal of becoming a post-secondary chemistry educator.

## COLLEGE CHEMISTRY CANADA HOST INSTITUTION STUDENT AWARD - 2023

Amy Gudmundson

Université de Saint-Boniface, Winnipeg, MB

Amy is currently a 2<sup>nd</sup> -year student at the Faculté de Sciences de l'Université de Saint-Boniface (2023-2024). Passionate about science since a young age, she presented research projects at the Canada-Wide Science fair when she was in high school and conducted workshops at her school division science camp. In addition to being actively involved in her chemistry courses, Amy also helped prepare the newly renovated chemistry laboratories this spring. She would like to pursue a career that will allow her to continue sharing her passion for science with other people. This summer, Amy helped teach computer coding to young kids at the University of Manitoba Mini U program.



## 50TH COLLEGE CHEMISTRY CANADA (C3) CONFERENCE

May 24-26, 2024, Trent University, Peterborough, ON





Trent University, bisected by the Otonabee River Peterborough, ON

Shannon Accettone Assistant Professor, Trent University

After a highly successful and anticipated return to in-person C3 conferences with the 49<sup>th</sup> annual C3 conference taking place in Winnipeg at the *Université de Saint-Boniface* (USB) in 2023, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary C3 event will be hosted at Trent University from May 24-26, 2024.

This year's C3 conference aims to celebrate 50 years of College Chemistry Canada history. While the conference goal remains to bring together the diverse groups of individuals involved in promoting excellence in chemistry education across Canada, we additionally wish to honour the history of C3 across these last 50 years and the individuals who have kept C3 at the forefront of promoting student success in chemistry education in Canada.

Stay tuned to the College Chemistry Canada <u>webpage</u> for details as they become available!

We look forward to welcoming you to Trent University and our little slice of paradise in May 2024.

## SUBMITTED ARTICLES

# There's a Chemistry Conference Happening in Winnipeg; You Should Sign Up to Speak Shannon Baxter (Shannon.baxter@lrsd.net) Collège Béliveau, Winnipeg, MB



I'm a High School Science and Chemistry teacher in a French Immersion School in Winnipeg. I had the good fortune to work with Madeleine Asselin during the pandemic as she was an advisor to my Student Teacher at the time. Out of the blue, I get an email from her explaining that there's a conference coming up in Winnipeg, it's at Université de Saint-Boniface and that they were looking for High School Teachers to participate. I debated for a few weeks, wrote my abstract and submitted it. Why not and the talks are only fifteen minutes in length so I'll likely still make it to my cottage north of Winnipeg for the weekend.

I didn't make it to the cottage. What a fabulous weekend meeting all of the C3 attendees and learning about the projects, teaching strategies and programs that you all are using at the post-secondary or CEGEP levels. Your

talks spoke to resilience, learning vs memorizing, student and teacher mental well-being, artificial intelligence, writing and communication all of which are things we see and are actively working on in High School. The program lives on my desk and many of my current and former students have perused it. Not only did I return to my classroom with a bunch of ideas and new perspectives from the conference, but my students got a glimpse of what awaits them in their post-secondary careers.

I spoke about the importance of incorporating lab sessions into High School Chemistry courses. This is a subject I'm quite passionate about and one of my goals as a High School teacher is to give my students some lab skills so that they have a foundation that they can build on when they arrive in a first-year Chemistry course. My students are engaged during lab sessions and they often have their eureka moment of connecting the course content with the hands-on experiment or they realize what should've happened had they read the instructions properly. All great experience for becoming more confident and independent with their learning.

My next steps in my classroom this year are experimenting with un-grading and outcome based assessment in Grade 11 Chemistry. My goal is to have students focusing on what they can do and how they are improving rather than obsessing over the mark on the page.

We're all working on the same Nuts and Bolts of Chemistry Education, and I hope to continue the

conversations between High School and Post-Secondary teachers and professors.

Thank you so much for all the great conversations and collaborations and look forward to Trent in 2024.

Shannon Baxter Enseignante 10 à 12e sciences, biologie et chimie



Laboratory Skills Assignments as a Teaching Tool to Develop Undergraduate Chemistry Students' Conceptual Understanding of Practical Laboratory Skills Cassandra DeFrancesco (cassandradefrancesco@trentu.ca) Trent University, Peterborough, ON



Having students come out of a chemistry degree with a well-developed set of technical laboratory skills allows them to confidently obtain accurate and reliable data, while also being an attractive trait for employers. However, effective ways in which to help students conceptually understand practical lab skills outside of simply mechanically repeating them are currently lacking. Therefore, within a second-year analytical chemistry course at Trent University (Peterborough, ON) we created virtual laboratory skills assignments in conjunction with in-person skill development that improved students' understanding of these traditional laboratory skills and the consequences that arise from poor laboratory techniques.

Intended learning outcomes in undergraduate laboratories have typically been evaluated through the completion of written laboratory reports. However, these reports simply probe theoretical understanding of concepts and do not necessarily assess students' practical skill ability. As such, formal

assessments of skills, which have been previously underutilized, are needed for evaluation of students' practical skills. Some established methods for evaluation and refinement of skills, exemplified by SChemES, a method of assessment that focuses on developing and rewarding competency in the laboratory by examining generic, practical, and laboratory-based skills associated with industrial research in a rotational station-based session, have been used. Similarly, a station-based style assessment method utilizing a boot-camp scenario for students was used as a practical-exam method of evaluation of skills. Lastly, an example which has been implemented in several peer-reviewed articles, is the digital badging system that rewards students based on their ability to complete practical skills based on video submissions, with an opportunity to resubmit after receiving feedback.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic also brought further challenges to our ability to evaluate student's skill abilities in-person, let alone allow students to develop or improve their technical skills with hands on learning. This placed educators in a position where they had to become creative in their delivery while teaching virtually on short notice. Pre-pandemic, pre-laboratory assignments would be assigned to introduce students to chemical concepts, introduce pertinent laboratory techniques, and other relevant materials to the upcoming lab. Some instructors would use instructional videos to deliver this information while testing students' knowledge with a short quiz. One study allowed students to hone-in on their laboratory skills during the pandemic by providing them with at-home kits containing the glassware they needed to complete short experiments, with a later intervention including student-submitted video quizzes which increased the students' ability in completing the skills fully while absent from the lab.

Our recent project added to the pool of ways to teach skills virtually using a compare and contrast method where students were shown two different videos, 1) in which a particular skill or technique was performed correctly, and 2) where the same skill or technique was performed incorrectly with deliberate errors included. The idea was that students would identify the video where the skill was performed correctly, explain in detail what errors were present in the incorrectly performed skill video, and how the improper steps would affect the accuracy and precision of collected data. Overall, five skills were showcased in these videos: pipetting, quantitative transfer, serial dilutions & solution preparation, weight-by-difference mass measurements, and burettes & titrations. The main goal of these videos was to allow students to think critically about how to properly perform the skills while also providing them an understanding of why the

skills are performed in a specific way using methodological steps. We hoped that in being able to identify their own pitfalls in performing skills, students would be able to refine their skills and build confidence to perform them correctly in the analytical laboratory. The full methodology can be viewed in our article - Accettone et al. 2023.

After the first iteration of these videos were implemented in 2021, changes were made to improve the delivery of videos so that students were better able to understand the assignment expectations. Four key changes included: both videos being delivered by the same instructor to avoid students being focused on stylistic differences of performing the skills, giving the students the expected number of errors present, the inclusions of a TA-led tutorials to be able to ask questions and receive feedback immediately while working on the write-up, and including a more analytically relevant skill of using a burette and performing titrations (as opposed to doing thin layer chromatography in the first iteration). Also, students received an instructor-led demonstration of the skills to see the proper performance, as well as having the chance to hone-in on and refine their skills in the laboratory.

Majority of students (74%) had a positive experience with the assignments, finding them "simple and effective... displaying what they have to do on the lab to have accurate results" as one student wrote. Further, another student realized the "benefits in the long run" that these assignments have on their skills performance, as well as "searching for the errors was useful" for the effect on accuracy and precision of data. Not only did students give positive feedback regarding these assignments, improvements of the delivery of the assignments from one year to the next significantly improved students' grades, meaning that students were able to better articulate what the errors were and the specific affect that poor performance of techniques has on data collection. Overall, this assignment was positively received by students and helped increase the students' confidence in skill performance in the laboratory. We intend to build on this assignment in the future and encourage other educators to record their own skills videos for their students to teach and help them understand the importance of proper skills performance in analytical chemistry.

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## A Focus on Faculty Wellness Jimmy Lowe (Jimmy Lowe@bcit.ca) BCIT, Burnaby, BC



Each term we encounter students that are on the scale of thriving to surviving. Your *multiple hats* may include being a mentor, coach, advisor, facilitator, role model, and A.I. monitor.<sup>1</sup> Students may also approach you to inquire about the range of support services and resources available as they deal with issues with academics and wellness. There is a lot going on with the students in combination with world events and home life. At BCIT, the Student Life Office encourages students to develop activities along the "Eight Dimensions of Student Well-being". We do a lot for the students – did you forget about yourself along the way?

Over the last year, I have refocused on my own wellness so I could

improve my sleep, set better boundaries, and increase my energy. For myself this has been ongoing work in the physical, occupational, and emotional dimensions. These are three of the "8 dimensions of educator wellness" described by Montoya and Summers. Additional dimensions discussed include environmental, intellectual social, spiritual, and financial wellness.

In addition, here is a list of resources that faculty and staff can normally access at work.

- Free access to Recreation Services and fitness classes.
- Services coordinated by Human Resources such as counselling, MindwellU.
- Workshops on the topics of resilience, building emotional intelligence, the science of happiness.
- Employee Wellness Toolkit.
- Ergonomics Assessment.
- Professional Development Funding (offered by different groups).
- Free academic courses.
- Enjoy your vacation days and use your sick days.

I hope this is a reminder of services that you can use at your institute (employee orientation has changed a lot since I did it). If not, make a strong suggestion to your administration, PD Day Committee, or human resources. As they say in the safety presentation on flights "put on your O<sub>2</sub> mask first" - this will empower you to assist your students later.

François stated at the 49<sup>th</sup> Conference that the C3 group is an extended family for him. This was evident by the audience throwing hats after I presented the topic of faculty wellness. It was my third talk at the conference, and it was a '*hat trick*' to remember (thank you all – I am grateful for the acknowledgment!).

All the best and take care of yourselves, Jimmy Lowe (BCIT, Burnaby, BC)

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 Summers, Laura Lee (2023), Faculty Wellness: Strategies for Building Resilience and Finding Joy in Your Work. Course Hero. Please email me (Jimmy Lowe@bcit.ca) if you want a PDF copy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Take your pick: Academic Integrity and/or Artificial Intelligence

# Research: It has to be done, but does it need to be done at Langara College? **Todd Stuckless (**johntodd@langara.ca) Langara College, Vancouver, BC

Having trained and worked at some large research universities, I very much appreciated that being at a small 2-year transfer college like Langara allowed me to focus almost entirely on my lecture content and delivery, and that the small class sections made it easier for me to engage with the students. And Langara faculty have always been able to do occasional small research projects, as professional development in aid of answering questions brought in from our Community, work which provides useful experience for students and helps instructors stay anchored in problem solving. But while we are perhaps the epitome of a *non-research* two-year *transfer* college, there always seems more emphasis from the Province on helping make students job ready at any level. And the College has grown, now close to 600 students taking Gen Chem 1 in 15 sections each year, and over 150 taking Orgo 1 in 7 sections. We have been able to finance through tuition the building of some valuable infrastructure, and have recently become NSERC eligible. So, the College has set up an Applied Research Center, which last year bought out 3300 teaching hours and paid out about \$150,000 employing 44 students across all departments. It's really very nice, great even, those chemistry students are learning chromatography and other skills in a practical context. But it does take time away from lecturing. We may perhaps start doubling or even tripling class sections together to help free up more time and space for research ...



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear C3 Members,

I hope the new academic year is as rewarding as it promises to be. This year I find myself feeling more "back to normal" than what was the last 3 years or so. I am noticing more enthusiasm from my students. It's refreshing and long overdue.

The C3 conference in May, held at Université de Saint-Boniface and organized by François Gauvin, was amazing! It was so wonderful to connect with acquaintances, old and new. François and his team were



the consummate hosts and there wasn't a dull moment. The talks and sessions were extremely interesting and diverse. I had a lot to think about when I got back to work – things I'd like to investigate further such as generated AI and the drug testing program in Vancouver and – things I'd like to try such as using video / photography to aid in the conceptual understanding of skills related to theory. The extracurricular activities were, well... "what happens at C3 stays at C3".

At the Annual General Meeting we were able to recruit some new executive and board members. A big welcome and thank you to:

Shannon Accettone (Trent University) – Newsletter Editor Laura Lucan and Melanie Kaban (NAIT) – Web Masters Jennifer Wolf (BCIT) – Regional Director BC/Yukon Lawton Shaw (Athabasca University) – Regional Director Prairies

Over the course of the year, we are hoping to revamp the webpage and perform a review of the 2010 (?) bylaws.

Next year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> annual C3 conference. Shannon Accettone from Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario will be hosting and she is already in full planning mode. Mark your calendars for May 24-26, 2024!

If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions don't hesitate to reach out. As members of C3 and this professional community, I would like to thank you for your continued support and participation.

In the meantime, take care of yourselves and enjoy the ride!

Paula Rooksby C3 President

## C3 EXECUTIVE AND BOARD MEMBERS

## C3 Executive

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