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Dr. Michael Gerken named a Fellow of the American Chemical Society

Dr. Michael Gerken, a professor in the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry, was recently named a Fellow of the American Chemical Society (ACS), an honour currently shared by only seven other Canadians.



“I was absolutely thrilled and honoured,” says Gerken. “It’s fantastic to be named an ACS Fellow.”

The honour recognizes both scientific contributions to the field of chemistry and service to the Society.

Gerken works in the field of fluorine chemistry. Fluorine is the most reactive element in the periodic table and is used in many different compounds.

“Fluorine chemistry is very specialized because it really focuses on the chemistry of the element fluorine,” says Gerken. “It also involves organic, inorganic and polymer chemists within the fluorine chemistry community. The Division of Fluorine Chemistry of the ACS is very international and we have currently around 430 members, so it’s a very close-knit community.”

On the organic chemistry side, fluorine can be combined with carbon to form strong carbon-fluorine bonds. These compounds can be used in pharmaceuticals, agrochemicals and fluoropolymers such as Teflon. Gerken’s research focuses on inorganic fluorine chemistry. He makes new compounds with unique structural properties. Understanding the structure of these new molecules can help predict the structures of molecules that haven’t yet been made, which in turn could help pave the way for the development of new materials.

In terms of service, Gerken chaired the Division of Fluorine Chemistry of the ACS for a year. During this time, he established a doctoral thesis award and facilitated setting up an undergraduate award for students who conducted summer research in fluorine chemistry. In addition, he’s been on the executive committee for around 15 years and served as vice-chair of membership. His contributions to the community included organizing symposia and

conferences. Gerken was also one of the chairs for the International Symposium on Fluorine Chemistry recently held in Quebec City.

The ACS Fellows Program honours members of the ACS for their outstanding achievements and contributions to the science and the profession more generally, as well as their exemplary service to the Society.

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Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.