



UW-MADISON CHEMISTRY BUILDING

AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE REIMAGINED

BACKGROUND

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Department of Chemistry is one of the leading departments in the country for chemistry research and education, with courses that represent some of the highest enrollments on campus. While the science of chemistry has advanced substantially over the decades, the teaching facilities in the Chemistry Building had remained firmly planted in the 1960s. With safety requirements becoming more stringent and teaching practices changing, the 50-year-old instructional facilities were ill equipped for today’s undergraduate lectures and labs. A new building was needed.

PROJECT NEED

55 percent of undergraduates take a chemistry class at UW–Madison, but space limitations meant students were often unable to schedule needed courses. Enrollment bottlenecks then increased the time necessary to earn a degree.



Many students who wanted to enroll in laboratory courses were impacted by failing equipment in the chemistry building complex. In addition, the aging facility made chemical storage and maintaining proper ventilation a challenge, among other safety concerns. The storage and use of chemicals and the creation of byproducts requires efficient and effective ventilation, as well as two entry and exit points to each room, to keep students, faculty, and staff safe.

AN IMPROVED STUDENT EXPERIENCE

In July 2015, the state of Wisconsin committed \$91 million toward a new \$133 million Chemistry building project. Project construction began in 2018 and the new tower was put into service in early 2022, dramatically improving the student experience and immediately relieving many scheduling constraints. The new facilities included:



Modern Teaching Laboratories

New and updated laboratories meet current safety standards, allowing instructors to significantly advance the undergraduate lab curricula.

Flexible Learning Spaces

The new lecture halls and classrooms are ideal spaces for active, collaborative learning. Designed for future flexibility, these highly trafficked rooms see thousands of students each semester.

Accessible Student-Support Spaces

New offices, study spaces, and student resources and an Information Commons help students to succeed in undergraduate chemistry classes.

Critical Improvements

The project includes 173,000 square feet of additional space and 52,000 square feet of renovated space. A refurbished HVAC system should keep all of the Chemistry Building facilities in good working order for years to come.

“This building addresses the instructional needs for a diverse palette of majors across the spectrum, including science and engineering, but also the entire constellation of professions in the health care industry, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dietitians.”

– Robert McMahon,
Professor of Chemistry

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY 2021–2022 FACTS

14,000 undergraduate chemistry enrollments

6,000 enrollments in general chemistry

5,000 enrollments in organic chemistry

207 undergrad chemistry majors

139 bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees

\$25 million per year in research grants

150% increase in inflation-adjusted annual grants over the last 20 years