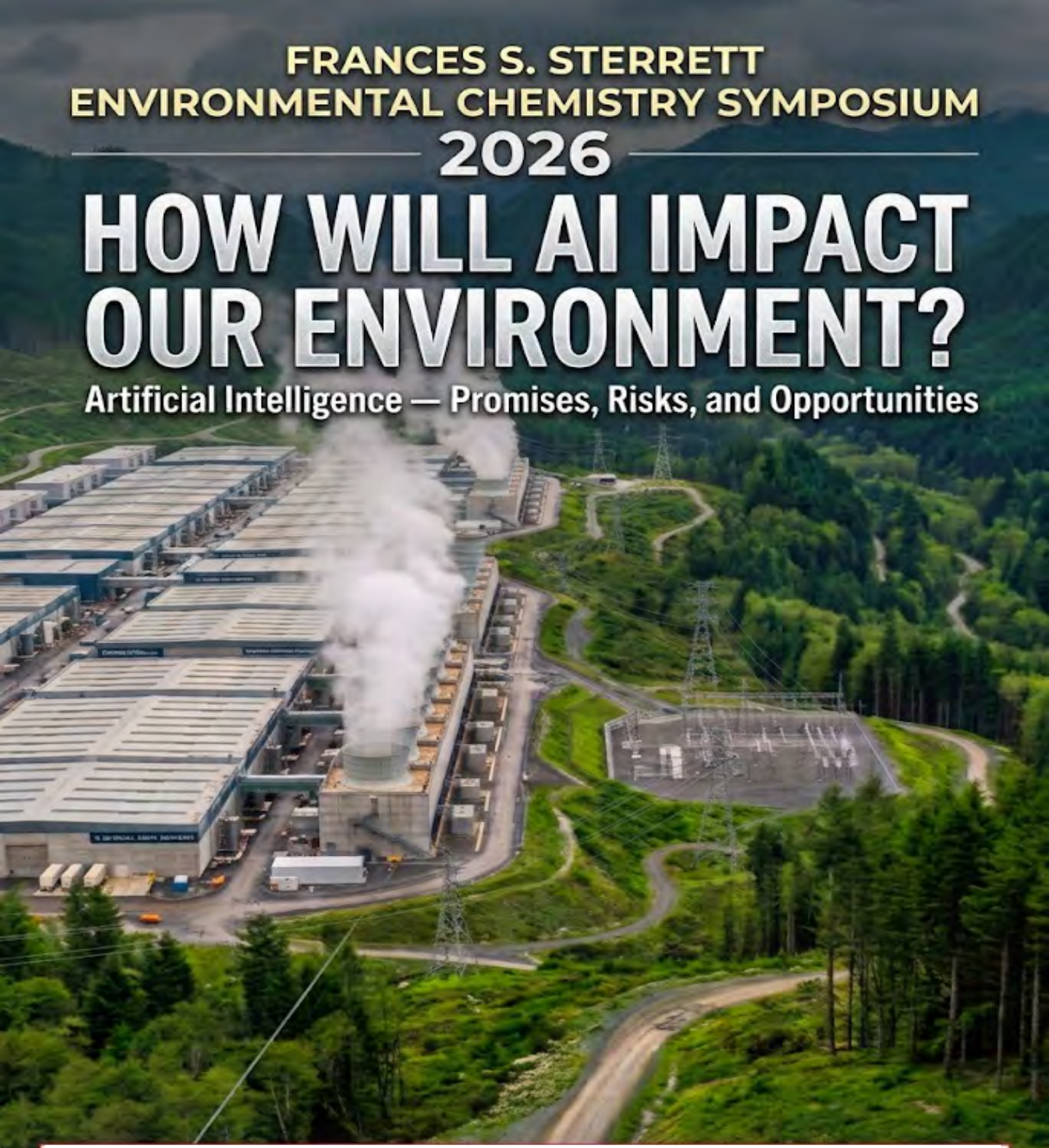
FRANCES S. STERRETT ENVIRONMENTAL CHEMISTRY SYMPOSIUM 2026

HOW WILL AI IMPACT OUR ENVIRONMENT?

Artificial Intelligence — Promises, Risks, and Opportunities



DATE: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026
TIME: 9:00 – 14:30 EST

LOCATION: BERLINER HALL 117,
Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY

ACS New York ACS Long Island Subsection | ACS New York Local Section | ACS Senior Chemists Committee | SHIMADZU Excellence in Science | HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

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Saturday, November 7th, 2026; 9:00 – 14:30
Berliner Hall Room 117, Hofstra University; Hempstead, NY 11549-1000

The Frances S. Sterrett Environmental Chemistry Symposium *is dedicated to presenting the public with up-to-date, factual scientific information on environmental topics. The symposium is organized by members of the Long Island Subsection of the American Chemical Society (LIACS) and cosponsored by the New York Section of the American Chemical Society (NYACS); This event is made possible with the support of Hofstra University's Chemistry Department, ACS Senior Chemists Committee and Shimadzu Scientific Instruments. We invite you to join us, together with scientists, educators, students, and community members, for a timely discussion on AI and the environmental future.*

For more information regarding the Environmental Symposium, LIACS, and NYACS, please visit the following sites:

- Frances S. Sterrett Environmental Symposium – **http://newyorkacs.online/sterrett/**
- Long Island Subsection – **http://newyorkacs.online/long-island-subsection/**
- New York Section – **http://newyorkacs.online/**

Acknowledgements:

- The organizing committee extends its gratitude to Dr. Brian Gibney, the NYACS webmaster for his technical assistance in managing the symposium webpage and promoting the event. We also appreciate the Hofstra University IT department for their support in facilitating the Zoom sessions.

Frances S. Sterrett Environmental Chemistry Symposium Committee:

Chair: Dr. Paris Svoronos

Co-Chairs: Dr. Ronald P. D'Amelia, Dr. Ping Furlan

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Agenda

08:30	**REGISTRATION & WELCOME; LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
09:00	**Welcoming Remarks** **Dr. Paris Svoronos**; *Chair, Sterrett Environmental Chemistry Symposium* **Dr. Joseph Wiener;** *Chair (2026), ACS New York Subsection* **Dr. Scott T. Lefurgy**; *Chair, Department of Chemistry, Hofstra University* **Dr. Charlie Riordan**; *Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Hofstra University* **Dr. Ruomei Gao**; *Chair (2026), ACS Long Island Subsection*
09:15	**Frances Arnold, Left-handed Sugars, and Malthus: Thoughts on Chemistry's AI-enabled Future.** **Dr. Debra F. Laefer;** *Department of Civil, Urban, and Environmental Engineering and Center for Urban Science + Progress, New York University*
09:45	**"AI for the Planet?" - Artificial Intelligence: Promises, Risks, and Opportunities.** **Dr. George K. Giakos;** *Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Manhattan University*
10:15	**BREAK**
10:30	**Opportunities for AI in Environmental Sciences and Beyond.** **Dr. Hendrik Hamann;** *Brookhaven National Laboratory & Stony Brook University*
11:00	**From Self-Driving Cars to Self-Driving Cloud Chambers: Embodied AI for Atmospheric Discovery.** **Dr. Arthur J. Sedlacek;** *Environmental Science & Technologies Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory*
11:30	**From Cloud to Community: Rethinking Data Centers for a Sustainable Digital Future.** *(Zoom)* **Dr. Suchi Gopal**; Department of Earth and Environment, Boston University
12:00	**GROUP PHOTO & LUNCH**
12:30	**Query-level Accounting of GHG Emissions from AI.** **Dr. Marc Conte;** *Department of Economics, Fordham University*
13:00	**Medical Physics & AI: What's Happening Now, What's Coming Next, and What We Must Address.** **Dr. Jenghwa Chang**; *Hofstra University and Radiation Medicine at the Zucker School of Medicine*
13:30	**Greening While Growing.** *(Zoom)* **Mr. Hessann Farooqi;** *Boston Climate Action Network*
14:00	**RAFFLE**
14:20	**Closing Remarks** **Dr. Shanzhi Wang**; *Chair-Elect (2026), ACS Long Island Subsection*

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09:15 - 09:45



Dr. Debra F. Laefer

Professor of Urban Informatics
Department of Civil, Urban, and Environmental Engineering, Center for Urban Science + Progress
New York University

Frances Arnold, Left-handed Sugars, and Malthus: Thoughts on Chemistry's AI-enabled Future

Abstract: While humans have proven themselves highly adept at creating technological innovation, they have a fairly abysmal track record of predicting the affiliated impacts of technological adoption, especially long-term. In that context, this talk will do three things: (1) present examples of the unintended, existential consequences of some of these adoptions; (2) explain why chemistry is exceptionally well-aligned for pairing with artificial intelligence (AI), and (3) provide thoughts on a pro-active, risk framework to manage the blossoming romance of chemistry and AI.

Dr. Debra Laefer holds the title of Full Professor of Urban Informatics at New York University where she is affiliated with the Department of Civil, Urban, and Environmental Engineering and the Center for Urban Science + Progress. Prof. Laefer is a recognized thought leader in Urban Engineering and has pioneered novel acquisition, storage, and processing pipelines to enable district-level modeling for topics as divergent as tunneling, flooding, pedestrian wind comfort, and epidemiology. She is the author of nearly 300 peer-reviewed publications and has spoken at venues as disparate as the Brookings Institute, the European Research Council, and DEFCON. Her work has been featured in a wide range of technical and general interest publications including National Geographic and TechCrunch.

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09:45 - 10:15



Dr. George K. Giakos

Professor | IEEE Fellow | Fulbright Specialist
Fellow International Academy of Artificial Intelligence Sciences (AAIS)
Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering
Manhattan University

"AI for the Planet?"
Artificial Intelligence: Promises, Risks, and Opportunities

Abstract: Artificial intelligence stands at a pivotal intersection with one of humanity's most pressing challenges: environmental sustainability. This presentation offers a balanced examination of the promises AI holds for climate mitigation and resource management, the risks it poses to energy systems and biodiversity, and the emerging opportunities for responsible innovation.

While AI systems offer significant promises for climate modeling, energy optimization, and ecological monitoring, their development and deployment entail substantial environmental externalities, including energy consumption, water usage, and resource extraction. Specifically, this talk examines AI's paradoxical relationship with the natural world — a technology that can optimize energy grids, accelerate climate research, and enable precision conservation, yet also imposes real ecological costs through its computational demands, energy use, and resource extraction. Moving beyond a simple beneficial or harmful framing, the presentation situates AI within a broader lens of promises, risks, and opportunities, drawing on current research to identify where its environmental potential is most credible, where its costs are most significant, and what governance and design choices might reconcile the two.

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Dr. George K. Giakos is an architect of novel frameworks in imaging science, neuromorphic engineering, and quantum–AI with a focus on fusion architectures, translating complex ideas into scalable systems. He envisions a future where neuromorphic systems, quantum computing, and biologically inspired AI converge to dramatically enhance sensing, computation, and real-time decision-making. Elected Fellow of the IEEE (2010), Fellow of the International Academy of Artificial Intelligence Sciences (AAIS) (2021), recipient of the Office of Naval Research (ONR) Distinguished Faculty Fellow Award (2004), selected as one of the world's top industry scientists by Artificial Intelligence Industry Alliance (AIIA)-2023. He promotes collaborations and funded research with US Air Force, Office of Naval Research, NSF, NIH, DOD, NASA, National Academy of Sciences, Lockheed Martin, Philips, Cleveland Clinic, Varian Medical Systems. He has been recognized for "his leadership efforts in advancing the professional goals of IEEE" by receiving the 2014 IEEE-USA “Professional Achievement Award" in "recognition of his efforts in strengthening links between industry, government and academia". He has been recognized by the IEEE Instrumentation and Measurement Society “as a Top 70 Most Published Author of All Time” (2021). Dr. Giakos is the inventor of 21 U.S. patents and published more than 250 technical papers.

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10:30 -11:00



Dr. Hendrik Hamann

Professor of Atmospheric Sciences &
AI Chief Scientist
Brookhaven National Laboratory &
Stony Brook University

Opportunities for AI in Environmental Sciences and Beyond.

Abstract: Recent advances in artificial intelligence are reshaping how scientific knowledge is produced, with particularly strong potential for environmental research. In this talk, a perspective on these opportunities is offered by focusing on the transition from task-specific machine-learning models to foundation models—large, pre-trained systems that can be adapted to many downstream problems and data modalities. After a brief overview of key developments that enabled this shift (scale, self-supervision, multimodal learning, and efficient adaptation), I highlight emerging applications relevant to environmental sciences. Examples include AI-based weather forecasting, data-driven emulation of complex physical models, remote sensing and Earth observation analytics, and optimization problems such as energy-grid operations. I discuss what these approaches enable—faster inference, new forms of data fusion, and improved access to large archives—alongside the practical challenges of reliability, uncertainty quantification, interpretability, and integration with physical constraints. I conclude with a view on how AI can complement theory, observations, and simulation to accelerate discovery and support decision-relevant environmental science.

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Dr. Hendrik Hamann is the Chief AI Scientist at Brookhaven National Laboratory for Innovation, Science and Security. He is also a Professor for Atmospheric Sciences at Stony Brook University. Before joining Brookhaven and Stony Brook, Dr. Hamann spent more than two decades at IBM Research, most recently as the Chief Science Officer for IBM Research at the T.J. Watson Research Center. There, he helped launch a new generation of AI foundation models—massive, physics-informed systems that can learn from and emulate the complexity of natural and engineered environments. His work helped create the first geospatial foundation models for global weather and Earth observations, and he now spearheads the world's first AI foundation model for the electric grid, designed to improve resilience and accelerate the transition to renewable energy. Dr. Hamann, a Fellow of the American Physical Society, has authored over 260 scientific papers and holds more than 180 patents. His contributions have earned him major honors, including the American Institute of Physics Prize for Industrial Applications of Physics and the Cozzarelli Prize of the National Academy of Sciences.

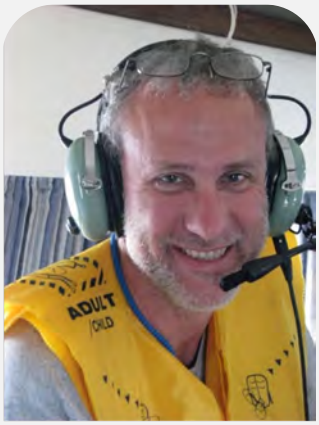
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11:00 - 11:30



Dr. Arthur J. Sedlacek

Atmospheric Chemist
Environmental Science & Technologies Department
Brookhaven National Laboratory

From Self-Driving Cars to Self-Driving Cloud Chambers: Embodied AI for Atmospheric Discovery

Abstract: Clouds strongly influence Earth's energy balance, precipitation, and our ability to predict environmental change. Cloud chambers bridge atmospheric observations and laboratory studies but present a challenging high-dimensional control problem driven by coupled turbulence, microphysics, and precipitation processes. This talk introduces a discovery-driven embodied AI framework under development at Brookhaven National Laboratory that transforms cloud chambers into autonomous scientific instruments. Combining agentic AI, large-eddy simulations, multimodal observations, and reinforcement learning, the system continuously senses chamber conditions, infers system state, and selects optimal control actions. The resulting "self-driving cloud chamber" represents a new paradigm for atmospheric science, accelerating discovery through autonomous experimentation and AI-guided exploration of complex cloud processes.

Dr. Arthur J. Sedlacek is a chemist at Brookhaven National Laboratory, where he leads the Aerosol Processes Group within the Environmental Science & Technologies Department. He earned a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from the University of Utah and joined BNL in 1992. His research has spanned remote sensing, aerosol science, optical engineering, wildfire emissions, and aerosol–cloud interactions. He currently leads development of a next-generation convection cloud chamber and AI-enabled experimental science initiatives. Dr. Sedlacek has participated in 26 field and laboratory campaigns, authored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications, and made sustained contributions to atmospheric and environmental science.

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11:30 - 12:00



Dr. Suchi Gopal

Professor
Department of Earth and Environment
Boston University

From Cloud to Community:
Rethinking Data Centers for a Sustainable Digital Future

Abstract: The Fourth Industrial Revolution, powered by artificial intelligence, cloud computing, advanced manufacturing, and digital services, depends on a rapidly expanding network of data centers. Although often described as "the cloud," this infrastructure has environmental and societal footprints: electricity demand, cooling water use, refrigerants, backup fuels, battery systems, air emissions, embodied materials, and waste heat. This talk examines how data center siting can be made more sustainable by combining geospatial data science, artificial intelligence, environmental chemistry, and green finance. It highlights how states and countries seeking technological and economic leadership must also address the environmental burdens of digital infrastructure, especially in communities already facing energy, water, and pollution stress. Drawing on work in AI-based siting analysis and sustainable finance, the presentation discusses how renewable energy, water-efficient cooling, waste heat reuse, cleaner backup power, and green financing can help transition data centers from hidden environmental liabilities into better-planned, lower-impact assets for a sustainable Fourth Industrial Revolution.

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Dr. Suchi Gopal is a Professor in the Department of Earth and Environment at Boston University. She holds a visiting professor appointment at the Vienna University of Business and Economics in Austria. Her multi-disciplinary research primarily delves into the intricate world of geospatial data analysis and modeling, GIS, data mining, information visualization, and AI. Her work often combines data science, AI, and statistical analysis with practical applications in urban planning, systems modeling, public health, and sustainable finance, resulting in holistic solutions to some of society's most challenging problems. Her recent book, The Fintech Revolution: Bridging Geospatial Data Science, AI, and Sustainability, examines how emerging financial technologies, geospatial data science, and artificial intelligence can support sustainable finance decisions. Her recent publications explore the siting of data centers in the United States, the greening of digital infrastructure, and the role of green financing in advancing more sustainable data centers through renewable energy, efficiency upgrades, and technology investments.

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12:30 - 13:00



Dr. Marc Conte

Professor
Department of Economics
Fordham University

Query-level Accounting of GHG Emissions from AI

Abstract: Foundational models behind AI tools can rely on massive amounts of electricity to power the arrays of GPUs that help the tools respond to billions of daily queries posed by individuals, firms, and governments throughout the world. The fuel mix used to generate this electricity determines the amount of greenhouse-gas emissions, which impose significant costs on society that are not currently priced into the use of AI models, associated with each query. We develop a series of queries that vary in output media (text, presentation with images, and video), output size, and reasoning required and run them on a number of available AI tools with parameter sizes ranging from 500 million to 2 trillion. We also use data from the US Energy Information Administration to explore how the location of the data center where the queries are processed impacts the resulting emissions, based on the hourly fuel mix at all of the balancing authorities in the United States. Overall, we find that the emissions intensity of AI tool queries can vary by several orders of magnitude, depending on output media, output size, model parameters, and the location of the data center where the query is processed. Data center location in the United States and time of query processing alone can double/halve query-level emissions. These results offer direct guidance for how AI firms can best allow users to enjoy the benefits of AI tool use, while mitigating the social costs imposed based on resulting greenhouse-gas emissions. Our results also suggest price increases that could be implemented to account for these external costs of AI-tool queries, based on the social cost of carbon.

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Dr. Marc Conte is a Professor in the Department of Economics at Fordham University, with a primary research interest in environmental economics. Professor Conte has papers published in the top journals in his field and in some of the top natural science journals in the world, including Nature. His work has been cited over 1,700 times, according to Google Scholar. Over his career, Professor Conte has received over $4 million in support of his research from the US DOD, NSF, USDA, and the Environmental Defense Fund. Two of Professor Conte's papers relating to the economics of climate change were cited in the 2023 Economic Report of the President. Professor Conte is a lead author on the forthcoming Biodiversity and Climate Change Assessment commissioned by the United States Department of the Interior. In 2024, Professor Conte was appointed by the Mayor's office to the New York City Panel on Climate Change to play a lead role in authoring the Panel's 5th Assessment Report. In addition to his position at Fordham, Professor Conte occasionally teaches at the Yale School of the Environment. Professor Conte has been invited to share his research at the UN and the US EPA and has given invited talks at a number of universities.

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Dr. Jenghwa Chang

Professor of Physics & Astronomy
Hofstra University &
Radiation Medicine at the Zucker School of Medicine

Medical Physics & AI:
What's Happening Now, What's Coming Next, and What We Must Address.

Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) has been increasingly integrated into medical physics over the past decade, with applications spanning radiation oncology, radiology, nuclear medicine, and health physics. This lecture will review the current state of AI in medical physics through a series of clinical examples. The benefits and limitations of AI adoption will be examined, with particular emphasis on its impact on professional judgment, decision-making, and intellectual autonomy. Finally, I will present my perspective on how future medical physicists should be educated and trained to enhance their competitiveness through the acquisition of AI-related knowledge and skills while preserving and strengthening their intellectual autonomy.

Dr. Jenghwa Chang holds dual professorships in Physics & Astronomy at Hofstra University and Radiation Medicine at the Zucker School of Medicine, concurrently directing Hofstra's MS in Medical Physics Program and Northwell Health's Radiation Oncology Medical Physics Residency Program. An ABR-certified medical physicist with over 30 years of clinical experience, Dr. Chang is a Fellow of the AAPM, a member of IEEE and ASTRO, and actively contributes to the field as an ACR ROPA site surveyor and international journal reviewer. His research applies engineering and physics principles to medicine, particularly in radiology and radiation oncology, with past work including pioneering optical diffusion tomography and implementing cone-beam CT for radiotherapy, and his current focus on machine learning and automation for radiotherapy processes.

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Mr. Hessann Farooqi

Executive Director
Boston Climate Action Network

Greening While Growing

Abstract: NA

Mr. Hessann Farooqi is the Executive Director of the Boston Climate Action Network. Hessann was also appointed by Boston Mayor Michelle Wu to oversee the implementation of Boston's key climate law, BERDO, and serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors of Built Environment Plus. He has also served in advisory roles for projects with Healthcare Without Harm, Institute for Market Transformation, The White House, and Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Hessann previously worked in the United States Senate under Sen. Ed Markey, served on various federal, state, and local political campaigns, and studied economics at Boston University.

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- ***January:*** *Section-wide Conference*
- ***March:*** *Chemistry Olympiad*
- ***April:*** *Nichols Medal Symposium and Award Ceremony*
- ***April:*** *Chemists Celebrate Earth Week*
- ***May:*** *Undergraduate Research Symposium*
- ***October:*** *National Chemistry Week*
- ***November:*** *Sterrett Environmental Symposium*
- ***… And Many More!***

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- Support K-12 STEM Education and Outreach
- Collaborate with local sections and other ACS units
- Empower both active and retired senior chemists

Our Goals

- Outreach – Engage external audiences through impactful programs
- Inreach – Provide value and opportunities to senior chemists
- Partnerships – Collaborate across ACS to maximize impact

To learn more or get involved, visit ACS Senior Chemists Committee or email frank.romano@agilent.com

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Learn more at **hofstra.edu/chemistry**



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Notes

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Driving Directions to Berliner Hall (#61 on the Map) at Hofstra University

- Exit Meadowbrook Parkway at M4 to Route 24 West (Hempstead Turnpike).
- Drive about one mile on 24W, passing the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum.
- Turn left at the traffic light just before the second overhead walkway onto California Avenue.
- Berliner Hall is two blocks down at the intersection of California Avenue and Huntington Place.

GPS:

For GPS, enter "Berliner Hall - Hofstra University" or "906 Huntington Pl, Uniondale, NY 11553" as the destination.

Welcome to Hofstra! Visitor parking is available in any campus lot.

