

Successful Women in Chemistry Series—Continued

Professor Mary Watson By Ellen Keiter



WCC 2013 Rising Star Dr. **Mary Watson** credits her high school chemistry teacher, *Lisa Blowers*, with convincing her “that chemistry could provide a lifelong challenge” if she pursued it. She was also drawn to the field because she liked its hands-on aspect—“running reactions, seeing color changes, precipitates, etc.” That attraction was reinforced through the research she did as an undergraduate with Professor *Dave Evans* of Harvard University and Professor *Ken Wagener* of the University of Florida. As she pro-

gressed through her undergraduate degree program at Harvard, she also found the subject exciting because of its intellectual appeal and because she “began to realize there is still so much to be discovered and understood.”

After graduating Magna cum Laude from Harvard in 2000, *Mary* went on to the University of California, Irvine where she earned a Ph.D. in organic chemistry in 2006 and then returned to Harvard as an NIH post-doctoral fellow. Since 2009, she has been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Delaware where she manages a dynamic research group seeking new transition-metal catalyzed pathways for producing stereochemically complex organic molecules. Their overall goals are to develop more efficient synthetic methods and, through mechanistic investigations, gain insight into fundamental molecular interactions.

Mary describes the most satisfying aspect of her current position as working with the “extremely talented, energetic and dedicated students” who make up her research group. The significance of her research is evidenced by the funding it has attracted from a number of prestigious programs including the NIH Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence, the NSF, and the ACS Petroleum Research Fund. Its impact has also been recognized with an NSF Faculty Early Career Development Award and a Thieme Chemistry Journal Award in addition to her Rising Star Award.

Mary considers herself fortunate to have had excellent mentors both during her formal training and since she assumed her current position. She is especially grateful to senior faculty in her department who have “read grant proposals, included me on center proposals, introduced me to leaders in my field at conferences, advised me on mentoring my students, and always been available when I need to talk through an idea.”

As the mother of infant twins, *Mary* is definitely familiar with the challenge of achieving a work/life balance. In this arena as well as in her research pursuits, she acknowledges the importance of a supportive department and adds that the most crucial source of support and encouragement is her husband. Despite the challenges, she is “convinced that a professorship is a great job for a new parent” because of the schedule flexibility it provides.

Mary’s general advice to someone in any career search is two-fold: “First be sure you have the support of your advisors and then go for the job you want even if everyone tells you it’ll be hard to get. Have a ‘Plan B’ but only use it if Plan A fails (don’t assume Plan A will fail).”

WCC Rising Stars—2014 Class

The ACS Women Chemists Committee (WCC) would like to congratulate the recipients of its 2014 Rising Star Awards, which recognize exceptional early- to midcareer women chemists across all areas of chemistry on a national level. The awards were established in 2011 to help promote retention of women in science. The 2014 winners are:

- **Katherine Ayers** of Proton OnSite
- **Lauren Benz** of the University of San Diego
- **Louise Berben** of the University of California, Davis
- **Julia Brumaghim** of Clemson University
- **Michelle Claffey** of Pfizer
- **Nicole Crane** of the Naval Medical Research Center
- **Elizabeth Jarvo** of the University of California, Irvine
- **Katherine Kemmann** of Sherwin Williams
- **Judy Kim** of the University of California, San Diego
- **Jennifer Schomaker** of the University of Wisconsin

The winners will present their research at the WCC Rising Stars symposium that will be held directly following the WCC Women in the Chemical Enterprise Breakfast. After the Symposium, the recipients will be honored at the WCC Just Cocktails networking receptions. Congratulations again to the 2014 class of WCC Rising Stars.