

Title: The (un)spoken conditions of being a chemist: exploring the culture of chemistry

Abstract:

As students, staff, and faculty navigate the field of chemistry, their experiences are shaped by its underlying culture. Culture is comprised of values and assumptions that influence individual behaviors and organizational systems (Schein, 2010). Organizational change researchers have observed that academic disciplines have unique and coherent cultures that create distinct environments and experiences (Reinholz et al., 2019; Simula & Scott, 2021).

In the Culture of Chemistry Project, we are researching the culture of academic chemistry. Since culture is often implicit, explicitly investigating and articulating overarching cultural features in chemistry will yield insights into why people are attracted to and stay in chemistry as well as features that may cause some to disengage. In this seminar, I will share the change theories and research that influenced the design of the project as well as preliminary findings related to overarching cultural features in chemistry. Initial findings include a strong value of “rigor and advancing the field,” with a potentially related assumption that “to achieve rigor, you must work lots of hours.” Another identified value is “being the first” in the field, which is reinforced by structures like publications and awards. I will share these themes and more and invite the audience to reflect on disciplinary cultural features they have observed in their own contexts.



Speaker Bio: To learn more about Courtney, check out her website: <https://www.courtneyngai.org/about-me-1>