



Maryland Local Section Qualifies for the ACS 2026 ChemLuminary Awards

Congratulations to the Maryland Local Section of the American Chemical Society on our nomination for the 2026 [ChemLuminary Awards](#).



I am excited to report that the poster presentation regarding the US National Chemistry Olympiad (USNCO) held at the [American Chemical Society](#) meeting in Chicago on August 23, 2026, was a great success. Over 16 visitors stopped by to learn about our program and share memories of our local section. The poster stood out thanks to the collaborative efforts of many members, with special thanks to [Ioan Marginean](#), Ph.D., for his detailed suggestions and feedback.

I am also grateful to local section members: Ioan Marginean, Robert Von Tersch and Stephanie Watson for attending and supporting the session. Below is a summary of the attached photos highlighting our visitors and the event:

Poster:

2026 Nomination



MISSION and VISION

Our mission is to provide high school students with opportunities to expand their knowledge of Chemistry. We aim to engage students and the community through programs that prepare future young chemists.

BACKGROUND

The Maryland Local Section has coordinated USNCO events since the 1950s.

In 2010 Beatrice Salazar Teacher-Mentor, Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) inherited the program and assumed the role of the coordinator of USNCO, succeeding Michael Zapf from McCormick. Since then, we have celebrated student's achievements and have seen a steady increment in participation of students and academic collaborators.

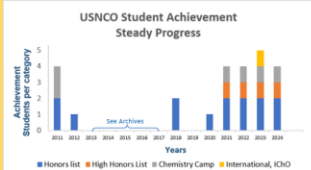
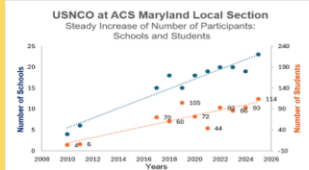
HIGHLIGHTS

★ **2024** The program gained momentum. It has become well-established to the point that individual invitations are no longer necessary. Teachers, students and parents are registering independently.

MARYLAND LOCAL SECTION INVOLVEMENT WITH THE US NATIONAL CHEMISTRY OLYMPIAD USNCO



PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT: Nominee Growth (2011): the Number of national nominees increased from 4 to 11 (Pic. 1) at Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU). **International Success (2023):** Maryland was represented for the first time at the 55th International Chemistry Olympiad in Switzerland. Anurag Sodhi (Pic. 2 left), from Centennial High School won a gold medal. **Membership Impact:** The increase in ACS membership, each year, has resulted in an increase in USNCO nominees (Pic. 3) at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), Essex Campus.



WHAT WE DO

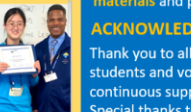
We support parents, students and educators by offering comprehensive preparation for the local and national exams, both in person and virtually.

We coordinate the Chemistry Olympiad at several Maryland institutions, including NDMU, CCBC and MSU.

We send invitations to over 360 regional high schools annually. We tutor students and meet with parents, teachers and students both in person and virtually. We coach students regarding competition procedures and chemistry core content of the exams; we use official ACS instructional materials and past examinations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all teachers, parents, students and volunteers for your continuous support. Special thanks to the hosts from all collaborating institutions, in particular, Evon Ford, Ph.D. and George Owens for their support over the last 4 years at CCBC, Essex.



CHEMISTRY OLYMPIAD PROCESS: The National Exam Part I and Part II (Pic. 1) at CCBC in Catonsville Campus. The laboratory practical, part III (Pics. 2 and 3), photos taken at Morgan State University (MSU). The Maryland Local Section recognizes each of the USNCO participants, teachers and hosts at each institution with award certificates and gifts (Pic. 4).

Poster Session Visitors:



-Pic 1 & 2: Dr. Malgorzata Thatcher (Director, ACS USNCO Program) with Beatrice Salazar (USNCO Poster Presenter); Dr. Camilo Rojas (JHU) and Dr. Robert Von Tersch (ACS Maryland Local Section) with a student from Virginia.

-Pic 3: A 9th-grade student from Virginia learning how to participate in the USNCO program in his state.

-Pic 4: Ms. Bober, who shared fond memories of her late father, Dr. Bober Currigan, a former active member who worked to increase exposure and recognition for student achievements. She recognized Michael Zapf from McCormick & Co. and noted how pleased her father would have been to see the section receive this nomination.



-Pic 5 & 6: Members from the ACS Virginia Local Section; Dr. McCallum, Ph.D. from The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) learning about our programs. We introduced him to Dr. Stephanie Watson (NIST), who is nominated for ACS District III leader.



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- Pics 7–11: Visitors from Utah, Virginia, Peru, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.
- Pic 12: Dr. Stephanie Watson (ACS Maryland Local Section) with Dr. Camilo Rojas (JHU).
- Pic 13: shows the poster section setup at the McCormick Place Convention Center in Chicago.
- Pic 14: Katherina Changanaaqui, from Lima, Peru, who expressed interest in implementing a similar program in her country.

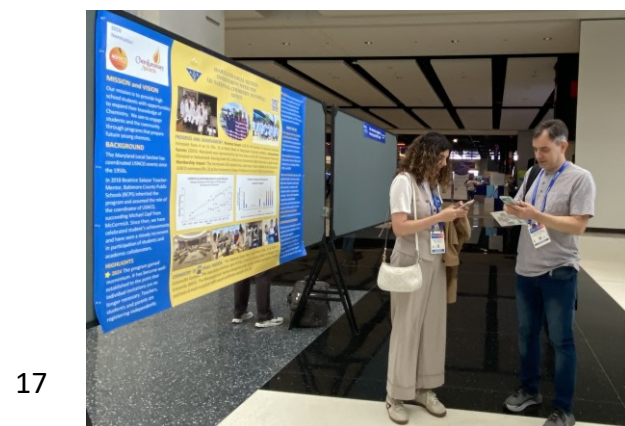


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- Pics 15 & 17: Dr. Ioan Marginean (University of Baltimore) networking with attendees.
- Pic 16: Ainhua Gonzalez, a recent graduate from ICESI University in Pereira, Colombia, who learned about our programs and connected with several scientists regarding U.S. internship opportunities.



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Overall, we welcomed visitors from across the U.S. (Utah, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Maryland) and internationally (Peru, Colombia, Canada, and Malaysia).

Note: Photos provided by Beatrice Salazar with consent from all featured participants.

REPORT by:

[Beatrice Salazar](#), Immediate Past Chair, ACS Maryland Local Section.