

Conference Report

Second BeNeFri Student Spring Symposium 2024 – A Scientific Day in Neuchâtel

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The second BeNeFri Student Spring Symposium, held at the Faculty of Sciences, University of Neuchâtel on the 4th of April 2024, emerged as a platform for young researchers across Bern, Neuchâtel, and Fribourg to showcase their research and discoveries spanning from organic synthesis to machine learning, materials and cancer therapy.



Fig. 1. Student Spring Symposium 2024 group picture.

The symposium kicked off with an opening ceremony led by *Gaetano Geraci*, Vice-President of youngSCS, setting the stage for a day of scientific exchange and introducing the aims of the youngSCS community.



Following this nice introduction, our first invited speaker, *Prof. Stefan Vučković*, from the University of Fribourg, presented his work on transforming the applicability of density functional theory simulations for complex molecules. His talk set a high standard for the day, highlighting novel avenues for computational chemistry research.



In the afternoon, the symposium welcomed *Prof. Bruno Therrien* from the University of Neuchâtel for the second invited talk. He introduced us to the elucidation of the biological applications of coordination-driven self-assemblies. His pioneering work holds promise for drug delivery systems and biomedical applications.

Throughout the day, master's and PhD students and postdocs from the Adolphe Merkle Institute (AMI) and the Universities of Bern (UniBE), Fribourg (UniFR) and Neuchâtel (UniNE) were given the opportunity to showcase their research in short oral presentations, underlying a unique perspective on the diverse research endeavors taking place across the BeNeFri region. The brilliant attendees of the Symposium were *Luca Grillo* (AMI), *Melina Tschopp* (UniBE), *Niklas Schwarz* (AMI), *Leonie Braks* (UniFR), *Elias Polak* (UniFR), *Matilde P. H. Folkesson* (AMI), *Iulia Scarlatt* (AMI), *Marie-Désirée*

Schlemper-Scheidt (UniNE) and *Subhradip Kundu* (University of Geneva).

As one of the highlights of the day, *Matilde P. H. Folkesson* (Adolphe Merkle Institute) was awarded the prestigious Best Presentation Award, sponsored by *Helvetica Chimica Acta* and presented by *Dr. Richard J. Smith*. This recognition underscored Matilde's outstanding contribution to the symposium, with her talk on stimuli-responsive composite hydrogels as soft artificial muscles.

Moreover, the jury happily took the time to engage in discussion with each speaker in order to give them personal feedback and help them improve their presentation and communication skills.



Fig. 2. Awardee of Best Presentation Award sponsored by *Helvetica Chimica Acta*.

As the day drew to a close, participants gathered for an aperitif, providing a convivial setting, leaving room for exchange around research and establishing links between chemists from different fields, and different universities.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge all the other members of the organising committee:

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Special thanks to Dr. Richard J. Smith and *Helvetica Chimica Acta* for sponsoring the Best Presentation Award.

We would like to thank the University of Neuchâtel for hosting the event, the Swiss Chemical Society for their support, as well as the NCCR Bio-inspired materials and the Swiss National Science Foundation for funding.

And finally, a big thanks goes to all the brilliant participants for contributing to this enriching experience.

Photo credit goes to Ghewa AlSalbeh and Leonie Braks.

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