

AIChE Chicago

January 2026 Newsletter

Inside this issue:

Chair's Corner – 2
January Meeting Information – 3
AIChE Chicago Dues – 4
Thiele Award Nomination – 4
MRC 2026 – 5
AIChE ECC/YPC Chicago News – 6
AIChE Local and National Events – 7

Joint ACS/AIChE Chicago January Meeting

UOP eFinishing™ methanol to jet process and renewable fuels



Leigh Abrams

Senior Business Leader for Emerging Renewable Fuels, Honeywell UOP

Date: January 15th, 2026

Location: Moretti's Restaurant in Rosemont

9519 W Higgins Rd, Rosemont, IL 60018

Registration and Information: <https://cvent.me/02X45Z>

Cost: \$55 Non-Member
\$45 Member* / Retired*
\$30 Unemployed*
\$10 Student

*Must be AIChE Global and Chicago Section Member OR Chicago ACS Member to be eligible for rate



Chair's Corner

This is the time when many of us set goals for the coming year. One international goal that I have been watching our progress on for quite a few years is the goal to limit global warming to 1.5 °C. Carbon dioxide is one greenhouse gas contributing to warming. The transportation sector accounts for almost 30% of US CO₂ emissions and electrification on its own cannot reduce these CO₂ emissions sufficiently to achieve this goal in the short term because of the lifespan of existing liquid-fueled assets and because the higher energy density of liquid fuel makes it advantageous for aviation and marine transport.



Consequently, renewable liquid fuels are needed, and the US have set two associated national goals: the Renewable Volume Obligation (RVO), an annual sustainable fuel target for refineries, and the Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Grand Challenge to produce 3 billion gallons of SAF by 2030 and 35 billion gallons by 2050. I'm heartened to see the number of innovative processes our chemist and chemical engineering colleagues have developed to meet these goals. These diverse processes utilize a variety of renewable feedstocks such as fats, oils, and greases (FOG); sugar and starch; wood, agriculture, and energy crop biomass; municipal solid waste; and CO₂/CO/H₂ and convert them to petroleum-equivalent liquid fuels.

Honeywell UOP is commercializing process technology for all these production routes, and I am therefore excited to hear from our speaker this month – Leigh Abrams, the Senior Business Leader for Emerging Renewable Fuels in the Low Carbon Energy business at Honeywell UOP. She will be discussing UOP's full renewable fuels technology portfolio, including FOG to jet/diesel, methanol to jet, ethanol to jet, and pyrolysis/ upgrading for biomass conversion into liquid fuels.

This is our annual joint meeting with the Chicago chapter of the American Chemical Society so it will be well attended, and the chemists are sure to add to the discussion by posing some interesting questions that we engineers might overlook. The joint meeting also presents some novel networking opportunities – an extra incentive to attend this one!

As I mentioned last month, our Midwest Regional Conference is coming up soon, it will be held at IIT on April 14th. If you would like to present at the conference, the deadline for submission of abstracts is March 3rd and the deadline for poster submissions is April 7th. Watch our newsletter and website for Information regarding the submission and registration process.

As you know, volunteers keep our local section running and, in my experience, volunteering benefits the volunteer as much as the organization. We have begun assembling the slate of candidates for next year's leadership team. Please let me or any of the leadership team know if you are interested in running for an office or if you want to nominate a colleague for that opportunity. If you have suggestions for improvement or want to volunteer in the section, as always, feel free to approach us at a meeting or email us at aichechicago@gmail.com.

Warm wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Lance Baird

2025-26 AIChE Chicago Section Chair

January Meeting Information

UOP eFinishing™ methanol to jet process and renewable fuels

Biography:

Leigh Abrams is the Senior Business Leader for Emerging Renewable Fuels in the Low Carbon Energy business at Honeywell UOP. She is responsible for UOP's technologies to produce renewable liquid fuels from next-generation feedstocks. The UOP renewable fuels portfolio includes Ecofinishing™, UOP eFinishing™ methanol to jet and the UOP ethanol to jet process, as well as pyrolysis and Biocrude Upgrading technology for biomass conversion into liquid fuels. Leigh has over a decade of experience at Honeywell UOP working in R&D and commercial roles, and earned her Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Abstract:

Globally, the aviation sector is responsible for approximately 2.5% of energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.^[1] In the first half of 2024, jet fuel consumption averaged 7.5 million barrels per day (MM BPSD^[2]) and is projected to rise to greater than 9 MM BPSD by 2050^[3]. Similarly, the global maritime shipping sector had a fuel demand of 4.2 MM BPSD in 2023^[4], contributing around 3% of global CO₂ emissions—much like the aviation sector. Reducing emissions in these difficult to decarbonize sectors relies on lower carbon drop-in alternatives to fossil fuels that work with existing fleets and fuel infrastructure.

Today, SAF and renewable diesel production predominantly rely on hydrotreatment processes using waste fats, oils, and greases. Utilizing widely available, low-cost biomass residues that don't compete with food as feedstock supports the production of renewable fuels with both lower carbon intensity and higher value compared to conventional fossil fuels.

This presentation will introduce Honeywell UOP, give a brief overview of Honeywell's Low Carbon Energy business and then discuss Honeywell's newest renewable fuels processes, including UOP eFinishing™ and Biocrude Upgrading. Leigh will describe the worldwide SAF opportunity, review UOP's previous technology contributions to this market, and introduce recently developed solutions from UOP to meet the growing demand for renewable fuels.

[1] <https://www.iea.org/energy-system/transport/aviation>

[2] <https://energynow.com/2024/08/slowing-global-jet-fuel-consumption-adds-to-oil-demand-concern/>

[3] <https://www.spglobal.com/energy/en/news-research/latest-news/crude-oil/080724-global-jet-demand-set-to-soar-past-pre-pandemic-heights-while-saf-takes-off>

[4] <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/how-the-shipping-sector-could-save-on-energy-costs>

[5] <https://unctad.org/publication/review-maritime-transport-2024>

Meeting Agenda:

5:30 – 6:00 PM: Check-in / Networking

6:00 – 7:00 PM: Buffet dinner

7:00 – 7:15 PM: Section announcements

7:15 – 8:30 PM: Technical presentation + Q&A

Registration: <https://cvent.me/02X45Z>

Local Section Dues Notice

AIChE national send out their membership renewals at the end of each calendar year. Please help support us by including Chicago Local Section dues in that national membership payment – our local section dues are only \$25.

We really appreciate your financial support. Without local section dues, we would not be able to hold monthly meetings, plan the Midwest Regional Conference, support local chemical engineering student chapters, or even send out this newsletter by email!

Pay Local Section Dues by following the links on our website: [Join the Chicago Local Section](#) | [AIChE](#)

Nominations Requested for the Ernest W. Thiele Award

The Ernest W. Thiele award is sponsored by bp and recognizes the outstanding contributions to our profession by a Midwest region chemical engineer. This award was established by the AIChE Chicago Section and is presented annually to a Midwest region AIChE member. This internationally recognized award consists of an engraved plaque and \$1,000 honorarium presented at a monthly section meeting.

Nomination forms and additional information can be obtained from the Thiele Committee Chair. Completed nominations for the current year are due to the committee chair no later than **April 01, 2026**.

One of the highest honors a distinguished chemical engineer can receive is our AIChE Chicago Section Thiele award. Please consider nominating a deserving engineer for this prestigious award.

To nominate, please contact: **Jeffrey Zalc – bp Solutions, P&O**

Phone: 630.881.5478 Email: jeffrey.zalc@bp.com

More information about this award and the past winners:

<https://www.aiche.org/community/sites/chicago-local-section/ernest-w-thiele-award>

<https://www.aiche.org/community/sites/local-sections/chicago/thiele-award-past-winners>

Connect with members and participate in discussions on [Engage](#)!

Check out AIChE's member benefit, AIChE Engage. Use the robust directory search to find and connect with members. Participate in technical, career, and academic discussions about chemical engineering.



AIChE Midwest Regional Conference



SAVE THE DATE

2026 AIChE Midwest Regional Conference

Chicago, IL – **April 14, 2026**

Hosted by Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)

Organized by Chicago Local Section of AIChE

Key deadlines:

- March 3, 2026: Abstract submission
- March 10, 2026: Acceptance
- March 17, 2026: Early Bird registration
- April 7, 2026: Poster submission
- April 7, 2026: Registration closes

If you are interested in:

- Presenting a poster or paper
- Being a session chair or co-chair
- Getting involved and volunteering

Please send an email to the conference chair: **Jason Wu**

Early Career Community (ECC) / Young Professionals Committee (YPC) Chicago Section

AIChE's Early Career Community (ECC) / Young Professionals Committee (YPC) Chicago Section was created to start and maintain young professionals' involvement in AIChE after graduation and to ensure that students retain their membership through their transition into the work force.

We enthusiastically welcome all people with a degree in Chemical Engineering, including those currently working in industry and academia, recent graduates, and those pursuing other paths. We also welcome current students, both undergraduate and graduate students to our events.

The Chicago YPC exists as a subset of the AIChE Chicago Section.

Our goal is to provide technical, career, and networking opportunities to young Chemical Engineering professionals in the Chicagoland area. To accomplish this, we seek to provide a variety of technical and social activities, provide outreach and volunteering opportunities, and to create programming that will appeal to ChemE's under 35.

General ECC Website: <https://www.aiche.org/community/sites/committees/early-career>

ECC/YPC Chicago Website:

<https://www.aiche.org/community/sites/local-sections/Chicago/young-professionals>

Email us at yp.aichechicago@gmail.com

Connect with us on Facebook! Search for 'YPC Chicago'

Join our mailing list! Find our Google group under 'ypcchicago'

Join Our GroupMe and become a part of the Chicago Chemical Engineering Young Professional Community:

https://groupme.com/join_group/99685952/GrFycymv

2026 AIChE Chicago Meeting Schedule and Speakers

Date	Speaker	Affiliation	Topic
January 15 th	Leigh Abrams	Honeywell UOP	UOP eFinishing™ methanol to jet process and renewable fuels
February 23 rd	TBA	Baxter	Plant Tour (Round Lake)
March	Sue Lotter Abdulbasit Owoseni	(retired) Mondelēz International	Process Safety in the Food Industry Tour of the Chicago Bakery
April 14 th	MRC (Dinner)		
May	TBA		

Upcoming AIChE Conferences, Meetings, and Webinars

AIChE Conferences	
February 17 – 19, 2026	2026 Center for Hydrogen Safety Europe Conference Wyndham Grand Athens, Athens, Greece
March 31 – April 2, 2026	2026 OTC Asia Kuala Lumpur Convention Center, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
April 12 – 16, 2026	2026 AIChE Spring Meeting and 22nd Global Congress on Process Safety Hilton Americas - Houston, George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, TX, USA
May 4 – 7, 2026	2026 Offshore Technology Conference NRG Center, Houston, TX, USA
May 5 – 6, 2026	PD2M AI For Pharma Conference Amgen, 360 Binney Street, Cambridge, MA, USA
June 2 – 4, 2026	2026 Process Development Symposium WV Regional Technology Park, South Charleston, WV, USA
June 15 – 18, 2026	2026 Synthetic Biology: Engineering, Evolution, & Design (SEED) Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center, Denver, CO, USA

Chicago ACS Meetings	
January 15, 2026	Joint meeting with AIChE Chicago Section

Chinese American Chemical Society – Great Lakes Chapter	
February 15, 2026	Lunar New Year Celebration Libertyville, IL

Volunteers needed for Chicago Local Section

How many opportunities can you find to learn project management, delegation, and leadership skills for free? Volunteering with the Chicago Section of AIChE is such an opportunity. While you're learning new skills, your professional network grows. Just about all of us are undergoing a career change, contemplating a career change, or are wondering if our career will be changed for us. Volunteering with AIChE is a way to add skills and accomplishments to your resume.

Volunteers are needed to help with:

- Programming – arrange speakers for monthly meetings and arrange catering/venues.
- Logistics – arrange catering and venues
- Newsletter Editor – prepare and publish ten monthly newsletters
- Newsletter Contributors – write meeting summaries, contribute photos, and more
- Engineering Outreach – coordinate three annual K-12 outreach events with high schools and colleges
- Professional Development and Sponsorship – arrange companies to sponsor pre-meeting talks to help fund student dinners
- Awards and Scholarship Committees – Review applications for local Section awards and scholarships
- Midwest Regional Conference – various roles with programming, logistics, website work, advertising, sponsorships, high school outreach, poster session, and more!
- Young Professionals – plan socials and programming for young professionals (under 35)

If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact us at aichechicago@gmail.com

Why renew your AIChE Membership?

Renew your membership now to keep learning and growing.

Stay connected to 40,000+ international members who take advantage of:

- Subscription to AIChE's flagship publication: CEP
- Education – Access to e-learning courses and instructor led training which can offer Continuing Education Units and PDHs.
- Access to CareerEngineer – a comprehensive job site tailored to chemical engineers
- Access to the AIChE eLibrary – a wealth of information from Knovel Life Sciences and the McGraw-Hill AccessEngineering Library collections

[View more benefits here!](#)

AIChE Volunteer and Meeting Attendee Conduct Guidelines

AIChE's volunteers are the core of the Institute and make all of its programs, conferences and educational efforts possible. These offerings provide excellent opportunities for AIChE members and meeting attendees to gain greater technical expertise, grow their networks, and enhance their careers. AIChE events provide engineers, scientists, and students a platform to present, discuss, publish and exhibit their discoveries and technical advances. At all times, volunteers and meeting attendees should act in accordance with AIChE's Code of Ethics, upholding and advancing the integrity, honor and dignity of the chemical engineering profession. AIChE's Board of Directors has developed these guidelines to foster a positive environment of trust, respect, open communications, and ethical behavior. These guidelines apply to meetings, conferences, workshops, courses and other events organized by AIChE or any of its entities and also to volunteers who conduct other business and affairs on behalf of AIChE.

Specifically

1. Volunteers and meeting attendees should understand and support AIChE's Code of Ethics.
2. Volunteers and meeting attendees should contribute to a collegial, inclusive, positive and respectful environment for fellow volunteers and attendees, and other stakeholders, including AIChE staff.
3. Volunteers and meeting attendees should avoid making inappropriate statements or taking inappropriate action based on race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, political affiliation, presence of disabilities, or educational background. We should show consistent respect for colleagues, regardless of discipline, employment status, and organizations for which they work, whether industry, academia, or government.
4. Disruptive, harassing or other inappropriate statements or behavior toward other volunteers, members, and other stakeholders, including AIChE staff, is unacceptable.
5. Volunteers and meeting attendees should obey all applicable laws and regulations of the relevant governmental authorities while volunteering or attending meetings. Volunteers and meeting attendees taking part in any AIChE event, including the ChemECar Competition™, should also comply with all applicable safety guidelines. Violations of this conduct policy should be reported promptly to the AIChE President or Executive Director.

AIChE Chicago Section

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<https://www.facebook.com/AIChEChicagoSection>

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4538581>

<https://www.aiche.org/community/sites/local-sections/chicago>

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Young Professionals / Early Career Committee	Allison Nordvall
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	Robert Tsai

Submitting Articles to AIChE Columns

We welcome email submissions for our monthly newsletter. Commercial announcements are subject to a fee. News stories, editorials, technical, or career related non-commercial contributions are always welcome for no charge. We consider job postings, announcements of for-free training courses, expositions, and conferences as commercial. Categorization of announcements is at the sole discretion of the Chicago AIChE Board of Directors. The AIChE Chicago Section may publicize activities of interest to our members by cooperating professional societies and other non-profits without charge.

Please submit your material to aichechicago@gmail.com with 'Newsletter Article' as a subject line.



We want you for AIChE Chicago!

AIChE is committed to promoting a fair, just, and equitable profession and society. AIChE believes that all who wish to be a part of the chemical engineering community should have equal opportunity to pursue and achieve success. We work toward a better future for all through our technical expertise; through how we inspire, engage, retain, and advance future talent; and through how we treat each other within and beyond the profession.

[AIChE Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement](#)