Dear Colleague,

 As chair of the Western Maryland Section of the American Chemical Society (ACS), I am pleased to announce that we will be participating in the 2018 U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad (USNCO). The primary goals of this program are to stimulate interest and achievement in chemistry among high school students throughout the United States and to provide recognition of outstanding young chemistry students, teachers, and schools.

Students competing in the USNCO are eligible to be selected as members of the United States team for the International Chemistry Olympiad (IChO). For the past thirty-four years, the United States has sent a team of four students to compete with nations around the world at the IChO. The students participate in both theoretical and laboratory examinations over several days. Gold, silver, and bronze medals are awarded to the best performers, and the IChO provides students the opportunity to interact with their peers from other countries. This year the international event will be held in Bratislava, Slovakia and Prague, Czech Republic, July 19-29, 2018.

 My immediate task is to encourage you and your students to participate in this program. It is the responsibility of the Western Maryland section to nominate students from this area to take the USNCO national examination. In order to identify these students, we have decided to conduct a preliminary screening of students through a locally prepared examination is to be administered between March 1-26, 2018. If you select to participate in the UNSCO competition, the examination will be sent to you by e-mail. The examination can be administered at your school and at the convenience of you and your participating students. The results of the examination are sent to the UNSCO Coordinator named below. You will be notified if any of your students are eligible to take the UNSCO national examination at Frostburg State University, Frostburg, Maryland, on April 21, 2018. The exact time and location will be provided closer to the event.

The national exam involves three parts administered to more than 1,000 students. Students can use past exams available at [www.acs.org/olympiad](http://www.acs.org/olympiad) to prepare.

 I encourage your school to participate in this academic competition. All students who participate will be recognized and presented with a certificate; top 150 students receive recognition for outstanding performance at the national level. We hope this recognition will serve to stimulate interest in chemistry and to promote a positive attitude toward chemistry.

 James D. Stickler, Ph.D.**,** has been appointed the USNCO Coordinator for this area. We encourage you to enter students from your school in this competition by completing and returning the enclosed registration form before February 28, 2018. Thank you for helping promote chemical education in this country.

 Sincerely,

 James D. Stickler, Ph.D.

 Chair, Western Maryland Local Section, ACS