

## *In Memory of Francine Morris, 1978 - 2020*



Francine Morris received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Chemistry from Bryn Mawr College in 2000 where she was as an undergraduate researcher with Prof. Sharon Burgmayer, working on the synthesis of molybdenum dithiolene complexes. In 2001, Francine entered the graduate program in Chemistry at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, with an ambition to pursue studies at the interface of chemistry and biology. At Emory she earned an MS degree, working in the laboratory of Prof. Debbie Mohler on radical-based modification of RNase B. After a brief time working at AppTech as a Research Assistant in the Quality Control/Analytical Testing group, Francine matriculated into the Chemistry-Biology Interface (CBI) Graduate Program at Johns Hopkins University. Shortly after in 2008, she joined the Freel Meyers lab to pursue thesis research. During this time, she demonstrated a true commitment to research and a passion for teaching. Francine's thesis research focused on the bacterial metabolic enzyme DXP synthase as an antibacterial target. Her findings revealed a remarkably relaxed specificity of the enzyme for large substrates, and the discovery that DXP synthase catalyzes C-N bond formation from nitroso substrates. The insights she gained from applying nitroso substrates as tools to probe the enzyme active site have significantly impacted research on this enzyme target, guiding the design of new enzyme inhibition strategies, and contributing to important questions about enzyme function in pathogens.

Francine was incredibly dedicated to her research and the pursuit of her goals to become a teacher and role model to students from under-represented groups. She was a strong



*Francine's Thesis Defense, July 2013*

team player in the lab and a supportive friend to her lab mates and peers in the CBI program. She could often be found working quietly in the lab early in the morning, late into the evenings and on weekends. This serious side of Francine which drove her as a scientist was balanced by her warmth and witty personality, her big smile, and her infectious laugh. In addition, Francine was a passionate, accomplished teacher in the lab and in the classroom. During her graduate training, she embraced opportunities to build her teaching skills inside and outside the lab, and ultimately pursued an academic path. After completing her PhD at JHU, Francine entered a postdoctoral teaching-research program at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and held a teaching position at Lehman College before taking a position as Assistant Professor of Biology at Concordia College in New York. We are proud of all that Francine had accomplished on her path. She was a passionate scientist, a gifted teacher and an inspiration to her students...she will be sorely missed.

The lasting impact Francine had on her friends and family, colleagues and students is unmistakable from the many tributes they have posted in recent days:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008142847382>

<https://www.concordia-ny.edu/about/news/1679765/dr-francine-morris-1978-2020>