

National Lab Honors

Grad student Nick Pollak selected for research program at Brookhaven

Tuesday, October 4, 2022



NICK POLLAK, A PH.D. CANDIDATE IN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY CHRISTINE CAPUTO'S LAB, WILL SPEND THREE MONTHS DOING RESEARCH AT BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has selected Nick Pollak, a Ph.D. candidate in chemistry, for its prestigious [Graduate Student Research Program](#). Pollak, one of just 44 graduate students nationwide chosen for the program, will pursue his research harnessing sunlight to produce excited electrons using the world-class facilities at the Department of Energy's [Brookhaven National Laboratory](#) on Long Island, New York.

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“This award allows me to use state-of-the-art research instruments that are not available at UNH, which not only benefits our understanding of the fundamental electron dynamics at play in our system but also gives me the opportunity to learn a wider array of techniques that will ultimately make me more marketable as a scientist when my time at UNH comes to a close,” says Pollak, who studies with associate professor of chemistry and materials science

[Christine Caputo](#). “I will also have the

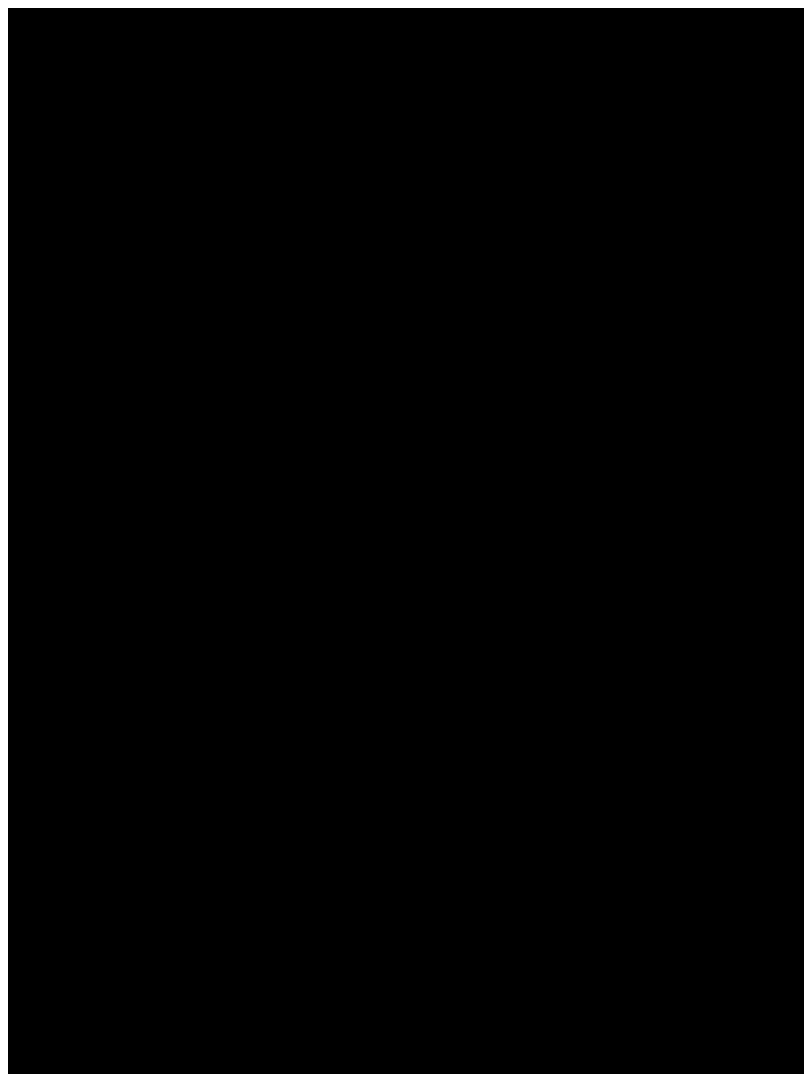
opportunity to work alongside experts in a highly technical field, gaining knowledge from them as I am exposed to research in a non-academic setting.”

Pollak will spend the first three months of 2023 at Brookhaven, where he will continue his [research](#) using two ultra-thin materials, carbon nitride and black phosphorus, that capture sunlight to excite electrons that break the bonds of carbon dioxide, a powerful driver of climate change, into carbon monoxide while also producing hydrogen gas. This mixture of gasses, called syngas, is a building block used to create alternative fuels.

Pollak detailed his research in last year’s [Three Minute Thesis](#) (3MT) competition; his presentation, called “[Combating Climate Change With Sandwiches](#),” won third prize and fueled his passion for science communication. “I can say with certainty that I am a better communicator thanks to my experience with the 3MT,” he says. “Better communication of science and the scientific process benefits everyone and helps the public trust and follow the advice of science and scientists.”

“The Department of Energy is committed to growing the American science and technology workforce. SCGSRs are one way we contribute to nurturing the incredible talent and curiosity in students from all walks of life to meet the great scientific challenges of the world,” says Asmeret Asefaw Berhe, director of the DOE Office of Science, which funds this program. “I know the future is bright for these students, and I’m honored that the Department of Energy can be a part of their stories.”

UNH will host representatives from the Department of Energy’s 17 national labs, Brookhaven among them, at the [UNH National Lab Day](#) conference Oct. 27 and 28. Registration is open and is free for students.



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