

FEATURE

Institute of Chemistry of the University of São Paulo Celebrates 50 years

The Institute of Chemistry of the University of São Paulo (IQ-USP), Brazil, celebrated its 50th anniversary in a ceremony that brought together its directors, professors, employees, and students. The commemorative ceremony was held at USP's Camargo Guarnieri Amphitheater and was also attended by important members of the university, such as USP rector Vahan Agopyan, IQ-USP director Paolo Di Mascio and deputy director Pedro Vitoriano Oliveira, and Senior Professor Shirley Schreier, who was a student in the 1958 chemistry class.



IQ-USP director Paolo Di Mascio (left) and vice director Pedro Vitoriano Oliveira (right).

“Today we celebrate 50 years of the Institute of Chemistry and also 85 years of the chemistry program at USP. Reminders have a more individual nature; each has its own reminders. Memory, which is more material and corresponds to a set of information, is important to build and maintain reminders, avoiding situations that happened in the past”, stated the director of IQ, Paolo Di Mascio, at the opening of the event.

Professor Shirley Schreier spoke about the history of IQ-USP since its origin as the Department of Chemistry of the former Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters located in downtown São Paulo city, its change of address to the campus of USP “Armando Salles de Oliveira” on the west side of São Paulo in 1966, and the creation of the IQ-USP to meet the norms of the Brazilian reform of higher education in 1969.

Rector Vahan Agopyan pointed out that this celebration consolidates an institute that is already a source of pride for USP and for the whole of São Paulo society. “Institutions don't come out of nowhere. There is always a story behind them, and there is the intense work of several people who build a successful institution. In 1934, the founders of USP had the view that quality education is essential for building a society. We have to maintain that vision. Even if the current Brazilian conditions are not the most favorable, they motivate us to work even harder, produce more, and make a difference in our São Paulo State” he said.



Vahan Agopyan, USP Rector, speaking at the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of IQ-USP.

Golden Jubilee

In 1934, together with USP, the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters (FFCL) was created with the vision of developing a culture of teaching in a research environment. Over the course of three decades, the FFCL developed, and the need arose for its dismemberment into various institutes. Thus, the IQ-USP was born. It was created on December 16, 1969, by Decree No. 52,326 of the Brazilian reform of higher education.

IQ-USP currently has 126 professors, 190 employees, 672 undergraduate students, about 400 postgraduate students, 96 post-doctors, and five collaborating researchers.

“IQ-USP follows its path with the mission of promoting the training of highly qualified human resources to be citizens and leaders in the areas of chemistry and biochemistry, meeting the needs of Brazilian society, and contributing to the development of our State and our Country”, said the vice director Pedro Vitoriano Oliveira.

Homages

During the ceremony, the pioneers of the chemistry course at the former Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters and from the IQ-USP were honored. A souvenir of the celebration was given personally to those who are alive and to the relatives of those who have passed away.

More about the honorees



Heinrich Rheinboldt (Karlsruhe, Germany, Aug. 11, 1891 – São Paulo, Brazil, May 12, 1955) was a professor at the University of Bonn, Germany. In 1934, he was hired to be responsible for the Chemical Sciences sector of the newly founded FFCL, which he was the director of until his death. He organized the teaching of chemistry according to the German tradition, which is based on lectures accompanied by demonstrative experiments and on the individual work of students in the laboratory. He was a scientist with an eclectic background, an educator, and a profound cultivator of the history of Chemistry. He was President of the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência – SBPC) in the 1953-1955 biennium.



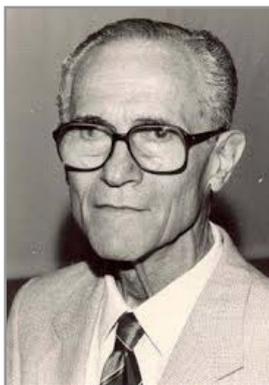
Heinrich Hauptmann (Breslau, Germany, April 10, 1905 – São Paulo, July 21, 1960) was German by birth and a naturalized Brazilian. He graduated and obtained a PhD degree in Chemistry in his hometown, and worked with great researchers in the European centers at a high academic level. He arrived in São Paulo in February 1935 and was hired as an assistant to Heinrich Rheinboldt. He became responsible for the Organic and Biological Chemistry sector in 1939 and obtained the chair in 1946. He was the director of the Department of Chemistry at FFCL from December 1955 until his death. He was the mentor and coordinator of the construction project for the set of buildings called by the responsible architects the “Conjunto das Químicas”, which included the Institute of Chemistry, the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, and the Faculty of Chemical Engineering.



Isaias Raw (São Paulo, Brazil, March 26, 1927) was a physician, professor of Physiological Chemistry at the Faculty of Medicine, and a cultivator of advanced ideas about the university. He was the first to settle with his team in the still unfinished “Conjunto das Químicas” in late 1965. Isaias Raw was compulsorily retired in 1969 by Institutional Act number 5 (AI-5) of the Brazilian military government. However, from 1970 onwards, the select team of researchers created by him became part of IQ-USP as the most numerous group in the Department of Biochemistry. Its members have achieved notoriety in the international scientific community.



Blanka Wladislaw (Warsaw, Poland, June 3, 1917 – São Paulo, Brazil, Jan. 26, 2012) was a Polish naturalized Brazilian. She graduated from FFCL-USP in 1941. As a doctoral student and later collaborator of Heinrich Hauptmann, she became responsible for the Organic Chemistry sector after the death of Dr. Hauptmann in 1960. She defended his associate professorship thesis in 1958 and became an associate professor in 1965, rising to the position of full professor in 1971. She developed research in the fields of organic sulfur compounds, organic electrosynthesis, and organic physical-chemistry. She was head of the Department of Fundamental Chemistry at IQ-USP from 1976 to 1980.



Otto Richard Gottlieb (Brno, Czechoslovakia, current Czech Republic, Aug. 31, 1920 – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 19, 2011), whose mother was Brazilian, emigrated in 1939 to Brazil, where he became a Brazilian citizen. With a degree in industrial chemistry from the University of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro in 1945, he was a pioneer in the study of plant composition and became a world reference in the area of Phytochemistry. He taught courses and created research groups at universities throughout Brazil. He was the founder of the Natural Products Chemistry Laboratory created by FAPESP in 1967 and incorporated into IQ-USP in 1970. In 1999, his name was proposed for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in recognition of his vision of science and for his proposal for classification of plants based on their chemical characteristics.



Simão Mathias (São Paulo, Brazil, Aug. 26, 1908 – São Paulo, Brazil, Aug. 25, 1991), graduated in the first class of Chemistry at USP. He remained at the institution as an assistant and was the first student to obtain a PhD degree in Chemistry from USP in 1942. In 1946, he began to develop research in Physics-Chemistry at the Department of Chemistry at FFCL, of which he was the director from 1960 to 1969. In this period, the Department of Chemistry was transferred to USP's campus in the São Paulo University City. He was the pro tempore director of IQ-USP from January to March 1970 and headed the Department of Fundamental Chemistry from 1970 to 1972. He strove to attract researchers to IQ-USP and to open new fields of research. He retired in 1972 and started to dedicate himself to the History and Philosophy of Science, in particular to the History of Chemistry.



Paschoal Ernesto Américo Senise (São Paulo, Brazil, Aug. 19, 1917 – São Paulo, Brazil, July 21, 2011), graduated in the first class of the Chemistry course at USP in 1937. He remained at the institution as an assistant to Heinrich Rheinboldt and obtained a PhD degree in Chemistry in 1942. In the 1950s, he introduced instrumental methods of chemical analysis in the Department of Chemistry at FFCL and became a full professor in 1965. He was a member of the USP University Council (1968-1987), coordinated the Post-Graduate Chamber for 17 years, and implemented the current USP post-graduate system. He was director of IQ-USP from 1970 to 1974 and from 1978 to 1982. He received the titles of Professor Emeritus at USP (1987) and Emeritus Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) (2006).

By Lilian Freitas – With information from “Jornal da USP”