



# Department of Chemistry

## University of Central Florida

Department of Chemistry Seminar Series – Fall Semester 2023

Friday October 20<sup>st</sup>, 9:00 AM, Location CB2 105

### Aligning Teaching Values and Assessment Practices with Scalable Specifications Grading



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Chemistry Department  
University of California, Irvine**

Host: Dr. Cherie Yestrebeky

**ABSTRACT:** Assessing student work to assign final course letter grades has depended traditionally on points-based grading systems, often involving curves. This approach to grading in the college classroom is not ideal as it places emphasis on the extrinsic motivational factor of accumulating points rather than the intrinsic motivation of learning and meeting course learning outcomes. Although specifications grading has been used across numerous disciplines to support student-centered learning, examples of specifications grading often focus on smaller lecture courses. We first created a specifications grading system for one of three courses in an organic chemistry laboratory series and then scaled the grading format to support the full series of courses, with over 1,000 students enrolled in each course. After the success of specifications grading in the lab course, we also implemented a specifications grading system in a flipped, summer, online organic chemistry lecture course. This talk will describe the specifications grading system used in each course and how the system was perceived by the instructors, students, and graduate teaching assistants.

**BIO:** Renée Link is a Professor of Teaching in the UCI Department of Chemistry who designs, manages and teaches the organic chemistry lab courses taken by over 1,000 UCI students each year. Her scholarly activity focuses on using active learning and alternative grading in large courses to create a more inclusive and equitable learning experience for students from all backgrounds. As a community college transfer student and first-generation college graduate, Dr. Link serves as a mentor for UCI graduate and undergraduate students navigating the complex world of academia. Professor Link is originally from Florida, but grew up in many parts of the U.S. She moved to San Diego for college, where she attended Southwestern College before transferring to and earning her B.S. in Chemistry UC San Diego. Thanks to the preparation she received as a scholar in the UC LEADS program, Professor Link moved one UC up the coast to earn her Ph.D. in Chemistry at UCI. Although Professor Link's training was in organic chemistry methodology, she discovered that her true passion was in helping students learn organic chemistry. After earning her Ph.D. in 2008, Professor Link accepted a Lecturer position at UCI to oversee the organic chemistry laboratory program and held an adjunct position at Cypress College. In 2011 Professor Link accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Teaching at UCI, and she was promoted to Associate Professor of Teaching in 2014. She was promoted to Professor of Teaching in 2020.