

International scientists recognize Ashbaugh

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Everyone can recite the adage “oil and water don't mix,” but Hank Ashbaugh, an associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering in the Tulane University School of Science and Engineering, has made a career of it.



The international Helmholtz Award is the latest for Tulane researcher Hank Ashbaugh, who has received several prestigious awards since joining the university in 2004. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

His work on the hydrophobic effect ? the aversion of water to nonpolar substances like oil in solution ? is also earning him recognition. On Sept. 2, he will travel to London to accept the 2013 Helmholtz Award, which is given annually by the International Association for the Properties of Water and Steam to recognize promising early-to-mid-career scientists and engineers who are making significant contributions in water research.

[Ashbaugh](#) is being honored for his thermodynamic studies on the hydrophobic effect and the resulting insolubility of oils in water. His work focuses on how this antipathy for water stabilizes soap molecules and biomolecular structures, like micelles, and folded proteins ? both vital to every function of the human body ? to form the nano-building blocks of life.

“I started studying the hydrophobic effect when I started working on my doctorate,” Ashbaugh says. “You can devote an entire career to studying why oil and water don't mix, and still not get to the bottom of it.”

Ashbaugh is not new to winning awards. In 2008, he received a National Science Foundation CAREER Award and \$431,000 in research funding. He is also winner of a Tulane President's Early Career Development Award in recognition of his scientific contributions and potential as a researcher.

A Tulane faculty member since July 2004, Ashbaugh says he is honored to be receiving the Helmholtz Award, considering the competition. “There were five people nominated for the award, and they are all excellent researchers,” he says.

Ashbaugh was nominated by Pablo Debenedetti, dean of research at Princeton University, where Ashbaugh did postdoctoral work from 1999 to 2001.