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## Scientific Pioneer' Named Joseph Sam Award Recipient

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## ‘Scientific Pioneer’ Named Joseph Sam Award Recipient

Aaron Beeler talks photochemistry in award lecture

DECEMBER 19, 2022 BY NATALIE EHAROT

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Pharmacy professor John Rimoldi (left) presents the 2022 Joseph Sam Distinguished Alumnus Award to Aaron Beeler. Beeler, a 2002 graduate, was Rimoldi's first graduate student at Ole Miss. Submitted photo

OXFORD, Miss. – Aaron Beeler, a 2002 alumnus of the [University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy](#), has been named the [Department of BioMolecular Sciences'](#) 2022 Joseph Sam Distinguished Alumnus Award recipient.

Beeler is an associate professor of medicinal chemistry at Boston University and co-founder of two companies, Snapdragon Chemistry Inc. and biotech startup Prisma Therapeutics.

"It was humbling to be selected from so many outstanding alumni," he said. "It's truly an honor and something I'm grateful for."

The Joseph Sam Distinguished Alumnus Award honors extraordinary alumni who have embodied the Division of Medicinal Chemistry's tradition of excellence by their scientific accomplishments, professional achievements, inspirational leadership or service to the discipline.

John Rimoldi, research professor in the [Research Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences](#), said the committee decision to select his former student as this year's recipient was unanimous.

"Aaron has built an outstanding research group at Boston University and has made significant impacts as a scientist, entrepreneur and educator," Rimoldi said. "Aaron receiving this award is particularly gratifying for me, as Aaron was my first graduate student and his research productivity contributed largely to my success when I was an assistant professor."

Rimoldi called Beeler a scientific pioneer, describing his research as "out of this world," both literally and figuratively. Beeler's research in flow chemistry and photochemistry earned him the distinction as the first to build and send flow chemistry synthesis technology to space to study organic chemistry reactions on the International Space Station in 2020.

Beeler shared details of his work in an award lecture on campus earlier this semester. The talk featured an overview of projects from his lab where his team has developed photochemical transformations to create natural products and explore their chemistry.

The best aspect of the honor was having an opportunity to visit the school, catch up with Rimoldi, connect with faculty and meet with students to learn about their research and plans, he said.

After earning a bachelor's degree in biology from Belmont University, Beeler completed his doctoral

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degree in medicinal chemistry at Ole Miss. He then served as a postdoctoral research associate at Boston University, where he has spent the bulk of his career.

Reflecting on his time as a UM pharmacy student, he credits the quality of the education he received for where he is today.

"The medicinal chemistry program was very unique in that it prepared me to think about chemistry in the context of biological problems," he said. "The environment, being so connected to pharmacognosy and pharmacology, truly prepared me for a career in interdisciplinary science."



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