

## **UIC News**

For the community of the University of Illinois at Chicago

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By [UICNEWS staff](#)

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### **Cynthia Jameson wouldn't take no for an answer**

By Susan Baltasi

She earned the highest grade in the Philippines on a national accounting exam, but Cynthia Jameson's love for science led her to a career in chemistry.

Jameson, UIC's only female chemistry professor, was interested in many subjects during her undergraduate studies at the University of Philippines, including math and physics.

She decided to focus on chemistry while she attended graduate school at Urbana.

"It's the sort of thing you like to do and you're happy you get paid for doing it," said Jameson about her work as a physical chemist and a professor who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the field.

Jameson's area of research is nuclear magnetic resonance, which is used to image various parts of the body.

She describes it as, "how molecules hop around from pore to pore."

"I'm interested in principles -- how are things happening at the molecular level?" she said.

Jameson says she would never give up teaching to work in industry.

"I like interaction with students. I always get a big charge when I have to give my first lecture of the year."

During her 30-year career at UIC, she has worked with only two other female chemistry professors.

Although she spends many of her evenings and weekends working, Jameson balances a family life with her busy career.

She has two daughters, both full-time homemakers, and three grandchildren.

"I wouldn't have opted to not have a family," said Jameson. "I was a supermom, before the idea of supermom became popular."

Balancing a family and a career in science wasn't easy.

"I always felt guilty," Jameson said. "When I was doing dishes, I felt like I should be in the lab working on a project, and when I was in the lab I felt guilty calling my husband and asking him to put dinner on the table."

Jameson's husband teaches chemistry at Loyola. They consider themselves lucky to have found faculty positions within the same state, much less the same city.

"When my husband and I were looking for jobs, we took a map of the United States and put a pin in every city where there were faculty positions available," said Jameson.

In the early '60s, faculty positions were almost impossible to come by. Many couples in academia had what Jameson termed "the two-body problem," married couples forced to live in different states because of their work.

Ironically, both Jameson and her husband applied for the same position at Loyola. The school told her there were no faculty positions available. A week later, her husband was interviewed and offered a position there.

Jameson says the number of women entering the science field since the late '70s has increased steadily. Still, there aren't enough.

"At some point, girls become less interested in math. It seems like, with the way society perceives them when they hit puberty, they lose interest," says Jameson.

During her job search in the late '60s, women in science were rarely interviewed for academic or industry positions. Jameson says she realizes how fortunate she was to receive an opportunity at UIC.

"I give Bill Sager [professor emeritus] a lot of credit for hiring me at a time when women weren't given a chance," she said.