

Memo: Proposed process for the Davidson School ChE Research Seminar Series (starting Fall 2026)

To: Department Head, Davidson School of Chemical Engineering

From: David Bernal, Tayler Hebner, Can Li (Seminar Coordinators)

Subject: Proposed seminar cadence, speaker selection priorities, and operating process for Fall 2026 onward

Date: February 18, 2026

Following your note authorizing us to develop the process for the School's research seminar series starting Fall 2026, and noting that the School can support **7–8 invited seminars per semester** (excluding the Mellichamp Lecture), we propose the structure below to make the series predictable, high-impact, and cost-conscious.

1) Weekly cadence as the default department gathering

- Establish a regular **weekly Tuesday afternoon** time block as the standing “department research gathering.”
- Within that weekly slot, we schedule:
 - **7–8 invited external research seminars per semester** (hosted),
 - Plus additional weeks filled with **low-cost internal speakers** (Davidson faculty and Purdue faculty) to maintain the weekly rhythm.
 - Note that seminars will **be held only on Tuesday afternoons** to establish consistency and expectations among faculty and students; alternative other day seminars will not be offered as scheduling options. The award lectures (Mellichamp and Kelly) will be exceptions to this scheduling restriction, with more flexibility offered for the awardee's visit.

2) Invited external seminars: priorities and selection

For the **7–8 invited seminars per semester**, we will prioritize invitations that support:

1. Faculty who will need **external letters** for promotion/tenure cases (as appropriate and consistent with established practices),
2. Faculty being positioned for **awards** and high-visibility recognition,
3. **Assistant professors**, to accelerate network-building and visibility.

In parallel, we will solicit a broader list of candidate speakers from the full faculty to ensure coverage across research areas and strategic opportunities.

3) Filling remaining weeks: internal speakers with reduced cost

To sustain the weekly cadence while limiting costs, we propose filling the remaining weeks with:

A) Davidson School faculty talks (2–4 per semester).

- Purpose: strengthen internal awareness and shared intellectual culture.
- Prioritization: (i) faculty who have recently given national/international plenaries; (ii) assistant professors.
- Mechanism: alternate between more senior and more junior faculty to ensure balanced progression across the faculty over time. With ~40 faculty, 2–4 internal talks per semester supports a rotation on the scale of a few years.

B) Purdue-internal (non-Davidson) faculty talks (1–2 per semester).

- Purpose: build collaborations across Purdue at minimal cost.
- Mechanism: nomination-based selection, rotating across the department's **six research areas**.
- These speakers require **no hosting** and typically no lodging.

4) Faculty input and tracking

- We will collect nominations from all faculty (rolling list) and maintain a consolidated tracking spreadsheet (leveraging Josh's historical spreadsheet) including: nominee, institution, nominator, research area alignment, and invitation status.
- The spreadsheet will also track prior hosts to distribute service fairly and record postponed invitations to carry forward.

5) Scheduling and attendance expectations

- All Tuesday events will be sent as **calendar invites**.
- We will set the expectation of **graduate student attendance** and strong **faculty participation** (as schedules permit), consistent with treating this weekly slot as a core departmental activity.

6) Logistics note on Mellichamp Lecture

- We will keep the Tuesday series compatible with the **Mellichamp Lecture**, which typically occurs in **October** and is finalized around **May**. This event will remain outside the 7–8 invited seminar count.

Implementation plan: In Spring 2026, we will (i) solicit faculty nominations, (ii) incorporate postponed invitations using Josh's tracking file, and (iii) build the Fall 2026 calendar with the weekly Tuesday cadence and the 7–8 invited seminar slots.