**Biotechnology Symposium 2025**

# AI & Biotechnology

For M.S. in Biotechnology Students, Alumni, Faculty, and Invited Guests

**Tuesday, October 28, 2025**
**Element Hall, University Reseach Park**
**4:00pm - 9:00 p.m.**

## SPEAKER BIOS

### Eric Horler, MBA, MEM

Eric Horler recently joined the MS in Biotechnology Program faculty to teach the program's *Commercialization Pathways* business course and serve as a capstone master's thesis mentor. Eric is President and CEO of AIQ Solutions, a software medical device company helping improve care of patients with late-stage cancer. He has led AIQ through multiple rounds of equity financing, team construction, product commercialization, and international expansion. Before joining the AIQ team, Eric was President and CEO of Swallow Solutions LLC, a medical device start-up with both therapeutic devices and functional beverages for dysphagia patients. Before that, Eric was General Manager, Premium Anesthesia and Respiratory Care at GE Healthcare. While at GEHC, Eric was responsible for a $220 million global business and a large team spread over three continents. He has also held a series of marketing and business development roles at Baxter Healthcare, including Director of Renal Products and Services for the Latin America region. Eric has a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Rice University and both an MBA and Master of Engineering Management degrees from the Kellogg School of Business.

### Jessica Martin Eckerly, MS Biotech, MBA

Jessica Martin Eckerly is a faculty member with the MS in Biotechnology Program, teaching the *Corporate Strategy* business course and mentoring student's completing their capstone master's thesis. Jessica is the CEO and co-founder of Forward BIOLABS, Madison's co-works lab space providing infrastructure and resources for new biotech startups. A relentless advocate for Wisconsin's biohealth ecosystem, Jessica is a consortium member for the Wisconsin Biohealth Tech Hub, an advisory board member for the WiSys VentureHome network of innovation hubs, an associate with the Wisconsin Investment Partners, and a mentor for the Creative Destruction Lab for health-tech innovation. Jessica is a double Badger, having earned her MS in Biotechnology from the School of Medicine and Public Health and an MBA from the Wisconsin School of Business.

ms-biotech.wisc.edu/symposium-2025/

## Thomas Kirkland, PhD

Tom is a Senior Scientific Investigator in Promega Corporation's AI Molecular Design team within the Advanced Technology Group, where he applies generative AI to design new proteins and small molecules. His work integrates computational predictions with experimental testing to accelerate the development of innovative life science tools. Tom earned his Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from the California Institute of Technology and completed postdoctoral research in total synthesis at the University of Texas at Austin. Before joining Promega in 2008, he worked as a medicinal chemist at Berlex Biosciences. Over the course of his research at Promega, he has made inventions in fluorescent and luminescent molecules that underpin widely used technologies in DNA analysis, PCR, and live-cell imaging. Thomas Kirkland is a guest lecturer in the UW–Madison Master of Science in Biotechnology Program's molecular technologies hands-on laboratory courses.

## John Lemmon, MS Biotech

John Lemmon is a Commercial Program Manager at Promega Corporation where he works with R&D, Operations, and commercial teams to develop customized solutions that meet customer needs and advance Promega's Custom/OEM business. John is a leading AI adopter at Promega, developing new AI problem-solving applications and functional tools. His career began at PPD Inc. in biopharmaceutical manufacturing, followed by roles at Exact Sciences in manufacturing operations and technical transfer, and later at BellBrook Labs, where he managed operations and technical transfer activities. John's work has consistently bridged technical and commercial strategy, focusing on product development, market insight, and data-driven decision-making. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison's Master of Science in Biotechnology Program in 2021.

## Darcia Schweitzer, MS Biotech

Darcia Schweitzer is a Marketing Services Manager at Promega Corporation, where she leads content strategy for Brand Engagement and other creative and strategic marketing initiatives. She has guided teams through organizational change, content strategy development, and the adoption of Agile practices to enhance collaboration and impact. Darcia has not only embraced AI as a functional resource but has led the implementation and adoption of AI within the marketing services team. Before joining Promega as a Science Writer in 2016, Darcia taught high school science for ten years—an experience that continues to shape her belief in the power of clear communication and organizational agility to drive innovation in scientific environments. She earned her Master of Science in Biotechnology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2016.