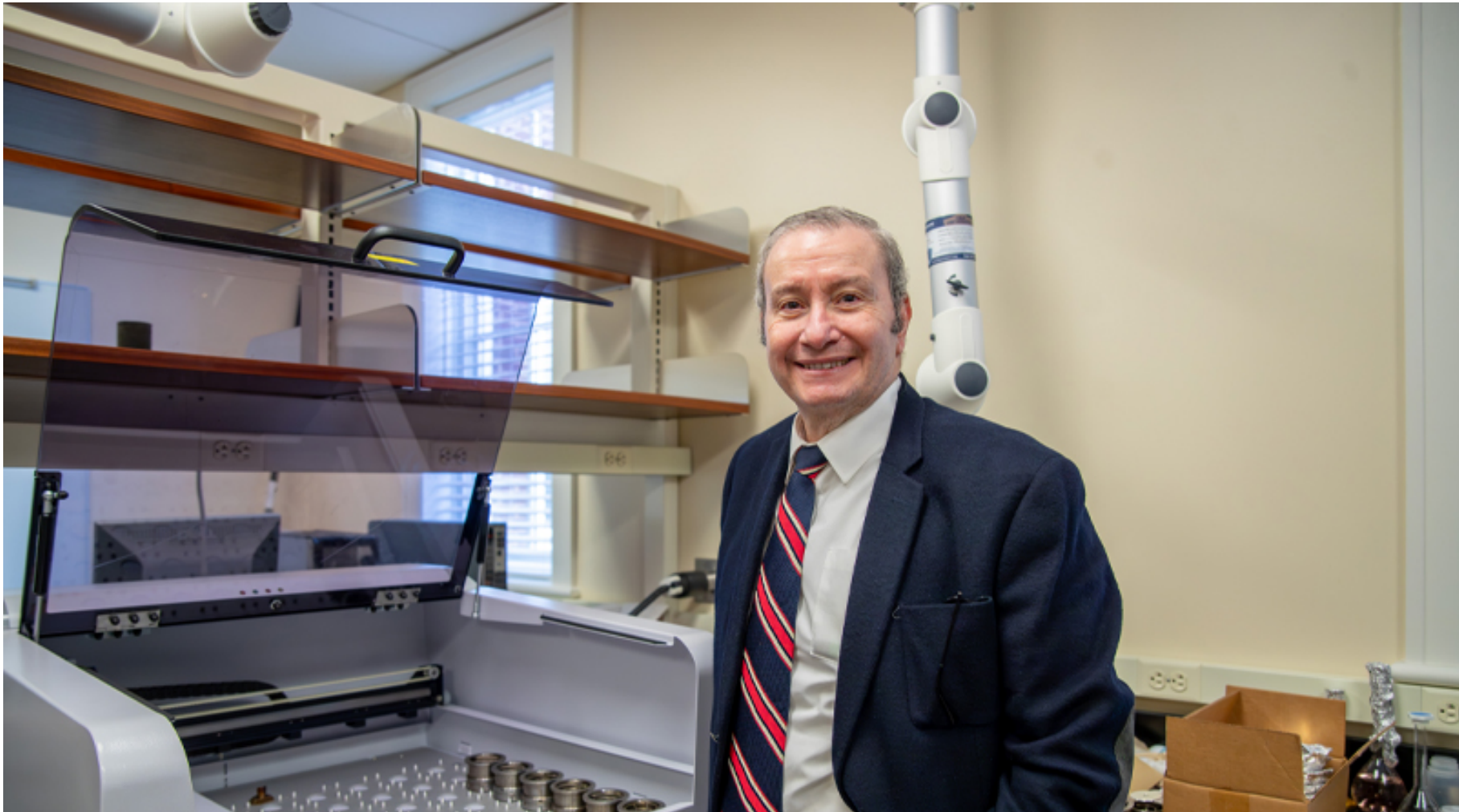


## NEWSROOM

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### TAREK ABDEL-FATTAH SELECTED AS ONE OF VIRGINIA'S 'OUTSTANDING FACULTY OF 2024'

**DEDICATION TO STUDENTS EARNS CHEMISTRY PROFESSOR, DR. TAREK ABDEL-FATTAH,  
TOP TEACHING HONOR**

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | January 26, 2024

*Read time: about 3 min*

For 23 years, Dr. Tarek Abdel-Fattah has been imparting his chemistry knowledge and expertise on Christopher Newport students.

His passion for science has fortified generations of college students who have graduated from CNU and gone on to do big things in the science world. He thrives on being a mentor and professor, and is focused on helping young people find their calling and achieve greatness.

"I am very proud of my work and my achievements at CNU," Abdel-Fattah said.

"I didn't expect this award even though many of my friends read my draft and indicated to me it was a very strong application," said Abdel-Fattah, professor in the [Department of Molecular Biology and Chemistry](#). "But I was so pleased when I heard about it. I was very excited and I'm deeply grateful for what I have received. "

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) recognized Abdel-Fattah's commitment to education by naming him one of the recipients of the 2024 Outstanding Faculty Awards, a coveted honor that goes to a handful of faculty of Virginia schools who have risen to the top. Abdel-Fattah's CNU colleague, Dr. John Finn, chair of the Geography Department, was also selected. Each recipient will receive a \$7500 gift from the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation during a ceremony in Richmond in March.

"It's a reflection of my career at CNU," Abdel-Fattah said. "My commitment to students, passion for teaching, and dedication to the community are evident in my collaboration with research students from CNU. This collaboration extends to various institutions within Virginia and globally, including Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, UCLA, Universidad de Oviedo (Spain), Alexandria University (Egypt), University of Kitakyushu (Japan), and Hanyang University (South Korea). The goal of these global collaborations is to integrate CNU's students into international research initiatives, enhancing their educational experiences and contributing significantly to advancing knowledge and fostering a global research community. Additionally, this professional network facilitates collaborative learning and work among scholars and students from diverse backgrounds, promoting increased inclusion and diversity within our research group."

The SCHEV award is the second esteemed honor Abdel-Fattah has recently received. He was also named a Fulbright Specialist in December, a prestigious designation reserved for top scientists. The tenure for the role is three years, meaning he can be called to work on any Fulbright project anywhere in the world until 2026.

Helping students succeed in the classroom is Abdel-Fattah's top priority. He works diligently to build a foundation that he hopes will allow them to thrive both academically and in the science world.

"I like to motivate students first, helping them at every stage. After a certain point, I give them a chance to get their self-confidence and learn, even with mistakes. It is amazing to see what they can do. I'm very, very pleased. The impact I have on them is most important for me. My students are flourishing, and that makes me very happy."

Abdel-Fattah is the Lawrence J. Sacks Endowed Professor of Chemistry and the CNU director of the Applied Research Center at Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility in Newport News. His focus in chemistry is on nanotechnology and its uses in the realms of sustainable materials in nanoscale for environmental remediation and energy. Nanotechnology is the manipulation of matter on a near-atomic scale to produce new structures, materials and devices.

A native of Alexandria, Egypt, Abdel-Fattah was raised in a family that placed a huge emphasis on learning. His father was a literature lecturer, and the library in his childhood home housed 10,000 books. His family traveled extensively to Africa when he was young, so he was exposed to different parts of the world and developed a strong "appreciation of diversity."

Abdel-Fattah attended college in Egypt, receiving both his bachelor's and master's in chemistry. He decided to come to the United States to earn his doctorate in inorganic and materials chemistry from Northeastern University. After getting his PhD, he worked in the aerospace industry.

But the world of academia beckoned him, and he returned to the classroom. He worked at Michigan State, but decided the cold was too much. When he heard about an opportunity at CNU, he jumped on it.

After interviewing on campus in 1999, Abdel-Fattah knew Christopher Newport was meant to be his next academic home. Not only was the weather warmer, but CNU was located within miles of NASA Langley Research Center and Jefferson Lab, both giants in the science world. CNU was much smaller back then, but had a dynamic vision that included lots of growth, and Abdel-Fattah quickly recognized that he was getting in on the ground floor of something special with loads of potential. The University was positioned in a place, both geographically and academically, where Abdel-Fattah could make a difference. Over the years, he has worked with neighboring companies, energy labs, military bases, and NASA, to elevate their applications of nanotechnology.

"I knew that this place was for me," said Abdel-Fattah, who is proud of the scientific reputation CNU has built both in the U.S. and world. "There was an opportunity to have a strong impact, there was a lot of potential for the future. It is in my nature to build, to be part of growth and contribute to it. I have been very lucky to have grown in this University. We have established a good foundation here at CNU."