

January Monthly Meeting

By Carol Mulrooney and Catherine Rawl

The first NESACS meeting of 2017 with ACS President Allison Campbell had several notable events.

The day started at noon with a lunch at Catalyst restaurant in Cambridge, sponsored by the WCC. Here a diverse group of women chemists at varying stages of their careers met with Allison, shared their backgrounds, and connected in a small, informal setting with many vibrant discussions.



Chemists shared their experiences addressing issues such as work-life balance and finding new career opportunities. One important lesson the attendees learned from Allison is if you have a pet snake, don't mention it to her! (She does not like snakes at all, not a surprise for someone who lives in rattlesnake country.)

The WCC is looking forward to hosting more of these lunches at future NESACS monthly meetings and enabling more women chemists to interact with NESACS guest speakers.

Following lunch, lead members of the Younger Chemists Committee and the Government Affairs Committee reconvened at the Broad Institute for a joint meeting with Allison. There, Allison was able to touch on her three main foci for her term as President with one being an emphasis on scientists interacting with Congress.

Since the goals and members of these committees were in line with each other, much was discussed on how to attract more young chemists to focus on science policy.

The Younger Chemists were able to share details about their leadership structure, organization, and successful events and initiatives. The Government Affairs Committee was able to give feedback about how ACS can improve their policy and advocacy webpage and make it more accessible to members. Allison's goal is to provide a start-up kit for members to better prepare for congressional visits and to engage the ACS community in science policy. Allison was very receptive to new ideas and it made for a fruitful and productive discussion.

After this meeting, Allison was given a tour of the automation and chemistry labs of the Broad Institute. The day was completed by a reception, dinner, and then Allison's presentation titled "*ACS Presidential Focus: Initiatives and Symposia for 2017*".

Highlights of the talk included previews of the Presidential Symposia, some to be held at the April 2017 National Meeting and some in Washington DC. There will be new workshops developed to promote outreach, helping ACS leaders speak effectively to Congress and the public. A safety summit will bring together Presidents and Directors of international chemical societies building common principles and practices.

Allison also shared her career path and insights into helping young chemists achieve their goals. One of the major challenges scientists face as they advance in their careers is work-life balance. With this challenge, there were five insights that worked for her: being selfish with family time, mixing priorities (Allison did this by combining her love of biking with her morning commute), saying "no" but offering alternatives when asked to do extra work (for example helping find someone who would be able to do the work and offering help in the future), asking for help when needed, communicating expectations (especially with family when planning a busy work schedule) and finally, compromise. These insights were well received and the audience had many questions and observations to share.

At the end of the day, Allison expressed her pleasure at being able to meet so many members of NESACS and was very impressed by their enthusiasm and engagement, especially from our younger chemists!