

NSYCC Career Symposium – April 28, 2012

By Shanadeen Begay and Jackie O’Neil, Northeastern Section Younger Chemists
Committee Organizers: Shanadeen Begay and NSYCC Executive Board

Resumes, Interviews and References

Kathryn Nicholson, Vice President, Human Resources at Nova Biomedical



Kathryn Nicholson began the afternoon with a step-by-step presentation on proven tactics and skills to utilize during the job search process. She gave a detailed analysis of how to write a resume that will be noticed and expertly answered questions that students had. She mentioned the need for students to brag about themselves during an interview, the need for a polished look, a timely and confident presence, a follow-up thank you and inquiry after the initial round of interviews. Her advice demonstrated the appropriate, respectful, and directed approach a job seeker should follow concerning their references was relevant to a majority of the attendees, as evidenced by the many questions she received during her talk.

Careers and Internships in Science Policy

Doris Lewis, Professor at Suffolk University

Doris Lewis continued our symposium with an overview of the ACS Policy work. She compared the ACS Policy Fellowship to the AAAS Policy Fellowship, gave some applicant advice for both processes, and highlighted individual stories and testimonials. The audience focused their attention on the incredible opportunity of working with chemistry legislation and learned how their skills can be applied to a non-traditional career path.

A Long, Strange, Rewarding Journey: The Trajectory of a Chemistry Career

Stewart G. Levy, SGL Chemistry Consulting, LLC

As an employed member of the pharmaceutical industry for the last 15-20 years, Stewart Levy gave a realistic overview of the need to manage one's career and seek a balanced strategy. He advised students to learn actively, embrace opportunities, network, and keep an eye on trends,

all into long-term work goals. His own life and career trajectory was given as an example; he told us of how he honed his synthetic bench skills, developed business acumen, maintained his travel responsibilities, and recently developed high-level administrative and managerial duties. Eventually, after a handful of positions of increasing responsibility he worked with an IPO and began to consult. He stressed the importance of positioning oneself to take advantage of fortunate circumstances and remained true to his commitment to networking by attending the mixer after the event was complete. Not surprisingly, many students chose to ask questions, and other speakers commented on his great insight and accurate description of the startup business process.

It's Not What You Know That Matters: Perspectives from an Industrial Chemist in Biotech

Michael Hurrey at Vertex Pharmaceuticals

With a mixture of humor, personal anecdotes, and presence, Mick gave an interactive talk on his experiences of being managed and business best practices for newly minted Ph.D.'s entering the workforce. Office etiquette, the importance and usefulness of various written and oral mediums for communication, and how to give winning presentations were discussed. The unspoken word, building relationships and managing to improve other's perceptions of you is where you can gain an edge in office politics. Understanding, deference and hard work will prove that you can manage your image. Being concise will get you points in all communication styles, as well as knowing your message, can help keep you focused. These points stirred much Q&A from the audience and proved to be valuable to most attendees.

Research Careers in Industry versus Academia: The Great Divide?

Adrian Whitty, Associate Professor at Boston University

Having the benefit of seeing if "the grass is really greener on the other side" in drug discovery explorations, Adrian Whitty used his careers in both industry and academia to compare and contrast various aspects of the drug discovery process. He gave valuable pointers on the similarities as to the nature of the science problems (defined, well-thought-out, sound, creative, balanced), as well as differences (career ladder uniqueness, pay, project structure, delegation and responsibility of authority/duties/research). In the end, his advice will lead the industry seeker to work with people from whom one can learn in a team environment that is focused on delivering tangible results in a changing and challenging setting. Accordingly, the academically minded career trajectory should make distinct contributions to important problems with quantity and quality no matter the managerial structure, with an eye on student success.

Career Management and Essentials: Job search methods, tips for your resumes, CVs, cover letters and interviewing exercises.

Patrick Gordon, Framingham State University, Dan Eustace, University of Connecticut

This in-depth session spanned the full spectrum of career development and management, from the review of cover letters, resumes/CVs, mock phone and in-person interviews, as well as tips for establishing and maintaining a trajectory for the newly-settled chemist. Dr. Gordon and Dr. Eustace engaged the workshop attendees with on-the-spot questioning, interviews, and encouraged everyone to ask the most important questions that they wanted answered, giving all the attendees valuable feedback, with input from their peers as well. They covered the basics of resume building, cover letter writing, as well as defining what types of application materials are expected for different job applications. They also discussed the importance of a well-maintained network and showed one attendee's LinkedIn page, giving feedback on ways that could improve its aim and reach, to become a very useful networking tool.

Effective Communication and Entrepreneurship Skills

Mukund Chorghade, THINQ Pharma

In showing some of the pitfalls and successes of communication, Dr. Chorghade provided us with a powerful picture of how communication is essential to a successful career. His humorous slides showed that sometimes science can get bogged down with inefficient communication between scientists and non-scientists, as well as within the scientific community. He also highlighted the different roles that exist in scientific jobs, as well as pointing out tips such as that knowing your company/employer is a very important step in the process. While many may be focused on merely finding a job, deciding if the job is truly right for you could be the most important decision of your career. The attendees also were shown some useful resume tips as well as tips for preparing a seminar as part of an interview. He wrapped up the workshop with insights from various fields in the chemical industry, reminding everyone that different fields have different ways of exploring and performing chemistry, but not to let that hold back visions for the future.

Should I start my own business? What are the barriers?

Jack Driscoll, PID Analyzers, LCC

In his workshop, Dr. Driscoll gave the audience all the details and stories about his entrepreneurial endeavor, creating PID Analyzers, from the ground up. The group discussed what it took for the company to get off the ground, and all the initial technical, business and legal barriers he encountered. Dr. Driscoll covered different types of funding for the potential entrepreneurs in the crowd and explained the differences associated with each. As he explained the process and the time that it took to find a niche in the market, to build an initial prototype and secure funding for the company, the audience got a taste of the skills required to venture off yourself, while learning the different types of insights you need (not just the scientist's) to get a new product to market and be truly successful.

Networking

Amy Kallmerten, Perkin-Elmer

We've all heard the top networking tips to succeed; however, Dr. Kallmerten's take on the modern rules of networking for young professionals seemed to hit a little closer to home than other workshops. By defining professional networking as the computer science idea of sharing resources by linking nodes, she explained in great detail dos- and don'ts in very real and likely scenarios scientists are likely to find themselves in. With her unique style, she shared personal anecdotes and reinforced that you need to be ready to network anytime and anywhere, because you never know what connection could be the most important. Dr. Kallmerten gave the attendees a refresher course in table manners, social etiquette and her favorite tip to create a goal for yourself for making new connections, including "homework" for attendees to network at the social hour following her closing remarks.



NSYCC CareerSymposium Group photo after the mixer.