

7<sup>th</sup> Annual NIH Career  
Symposium  
May 16, 2014  
Speaker Biosketches

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## **Abby Robinson**

Director of Communications  
University of Maryland  
abbyr@umd.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Maryland, Bioengineering, 2007

**Other degrees:**

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

I supervise the communications and publications team in the College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences at the University of Maryland. Team members include a science writer, graphics designer and editor. The team produces regular news releases about research being conducted in the college, a monthly e-newsletter and a biannual print magazine, and runs the college's website and its media relations and social media outreach programs.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

Fascination with science; able to see the implications of scientific discoveries; able to write clearly, accurately, with an interesting flair (and sometimes quickly); skilled in verbal communication for interviews; manage time well; organized; self-motivated; and imaginative.

**How did you get your current position?**

I obtained my current job by applying to an opening on the university's website.

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I was awarded an AAAS Science & Engineering Mass Media Fellowship, which allowed me to explore a science writing career by working at a newspaper for a summer. After that summer, I had a few years before I would graduate with my Ph.D., so I volunteered as a 'free' writer to several organizations (including NIH and a local university). Writing these articles helped me build my portfolio and keep it current until I graduated and could search for a full-time job.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Investigate fellowships (like the AAAS Mass Media Fellowships), science writing programs (like the UC Santa Cruz science communication program), science writing workshops (like the Santa Fe Science Writing workshop) or journalism classes (if you're still in school) that will help you obtain the science writing skills you'll need to succeed. Read as much science journalism as you can, and start writing about science yourself (even if it's on a blog you don't think anyone's reading). Volunteer your writing skills to a local museum, your professional society/organization, school newspaper, or university communications offices. Buy and read 'A Field Guide for Science Writers.' Join the D.C. Science Writers Association (DCSWA) and/or the National Association of Science Writers (NASW).

## **Albert Avila**

Director, Office of Diversity and Health Disparities, NIDA  
NIDA  
aavila@nida.nih.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** Georgetown University, Pharmacology, 2003

**Other degrees:** UCLA, Psychobiology/English

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

Develop effective strategies, research programs and initiatives such as Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs), contracts, and other award mechanisms/programs to enhance NIDA's diversity recruiting, retention and training efforts to enhance NIDA's underrepresented workforce and health disparities research portfolio; advise grantees on their research proposals and grant applications; provide input to the NIDA Director on matters pertaining to diversity and health disparities research; develop goals and priorities for NIDA outreach efforts; organize and lead committees and work groups; present at local and national meetings; and supervise office personnel.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Broad understanding of my IC's scientific mission and research priorities; organizational and communication skills; data analysis and interpretation; and creativity, persistence, and drive.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Job-listing and networking.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Actively serving on committees and taking on additional responsibilities within your current position to build experience and a track record of success. Through these efforts others will recognize your work and opportunities will present themselves.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Persistence, hard work, and determination are keys to success. You have to believe in yourself, appropriately advocate for yourself, and be true to yourself every step of the way.

## **Aleksandar Stojmirovic**

Scientist

Janssen R & D, Immunology Therapeutic Area

aleksandar01@stojmirovic.org

**Where is your highest degree from?** Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, Mathematics, 2005

**Other degrees:** For my BSc, I have also majored in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I work in a network pharmacology group in Immunology Therapeutic Area. My main task is to analyze network-based data to aid drug target discovery. I am also tasked with developing new analytical methods and tools that would aid this goal, both internally and through external partners.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Technical competence in bioinformatics/computational biology and ability to work with people coming from different backgrounds.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I found the job listing on the ISCB web site. Everything moved quickly after that: phone interview, on-site visit, offer.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I happened to be the only candidate with strong expertise in network analysis (i.e. beyond using pre-packaged tools).

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

As far as I can see, the key to succeeding in pharma is the ability to work well with others to achieve one's goals. Much else depends on the overall goals/directions of the organization one is considering joining.

## ***Anna Maria Calcagno***

Management and Program Analyst  
HHS/ASFR  
anna.calcagno@hhs.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Kansas, Pharmaceutical Chemistry, 2003

**Other degrees:** MS (Pharmaceutics) University of Michigan; BS (Pharmacy) West Virginia University

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a management and program analyst working to implement and monitor the HHS Program Integrity Initiative. The core purpose of this Initiative is to increase efforts to integrate program integrity into all HHS program operations and business processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness across HHS. In my role as the data analytics team lead, I transform qualitative data by overlaying quantitative and scientific principles and utilizing business analytics and advanced statistical analysis to better inform decision makers.

I have recently established a first-of-its kind fellowship opportunity for NIH Pharmacology Research Associate (PRAT) fellows seeking exposure to non-traditional careers for scientists. This fellowship is known as the OPIC-PRAT Joint Fellowship in Policy and Quantitative Analytical Sciences (PQAS), and I have served as a mentor to two PQAS fellows. This fellowship led to the creation of the Data Analytics, Research and Evaluation Division within our office.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

The following skills are necessary for this job: communication, critical thinking, knowledge of risk management and public policy, and translation of scientific principles to a public policy environment.

### **How did you get your current position?**

USAjobs.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

During my time as an NIH Pharmacology Research Associate (PRAT) Fellow, I was introduced to a variety of non-bench careers for scientists. Additionally, I was able to develop the networking skills which have been vital to my success in science and beyond.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Strong communication skills particularly to non-technical/non-scientific audiences are the key in a policy environment.

## ***Annalisa Scimemi***

Assistant Professor  
SUNY Albany  
scimemia@gmail.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA/ISAS) - Trieste, Italy, Biophysics, 2001

**Other degrees:** Postdoc 1: University College London; Postdoc 2: NIH

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

Design research; apply for funds; mentor and train lab personnel; perform experiments; analyze data; stay updated with the literature; and teach a Neurobiology course.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Persistence and perceptiveness.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I applied to >200 jobs over the course of 3 years. The jobs were typically advertised in Nature, Science, Journal of Neuroscience, and internal university websites.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I just learnt from my own mistakes and asked help from those that I felt were more experienced and knowledgeable than me.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Never give up!

I still have an intense time schedule. I still love what I do.

## **Bingwu Yu**

Quality Assurance auditor  
Takeda Vaccine, Inc.  
bingwuyu@gmail.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Chinses Academy of Sciences, Chemistry, 2001

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

My major responsibility is to provide quality assurance support on vaccine development from investigational phase to product licensure. In detail, my work includes overseeing CGMP and regulatory compliance in the manufacture process, development and validation; vendor audit; and drafting of internal policy and SOPs to improve quality system.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Scientific and regulatory background plus communication skills. Scientific and regulatory background are the basis to understanding the job. Communication is the key to getting the job done.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

I applied on Indeed.com

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Use the NIH OITE staff as much as possible.

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Understand the job and prepare early.

## **Bo-Shiun Chen**

Assistant Professor  
Georgia Regents University  
bochen@gru.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** Rutgers University

**Other degrees:**

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

My lab is interested in how synapses work with the focus on glutamate receptor function. My research team is comprised of two graduate students and a postdoctoral fellow. I meet with each of them once per week for discussions of experimental details and to provide instruction and mentoring as needed. I also teach graduate level courses. My teaching activities consist of classroom instruction, research instruction and course director for graduate student seminars. In addition, I review animal protocols for IACUC as my school service.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

I think time and people management skills are critical for me.

**How did you get your current position?**

Job-listing.

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Plan on applying to career transitional grants such as K99 at the early stage of your postdoc training.

## **Brendan Rich**

Assistant Professor  
Catholic University of America  
richb@cua.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Florida, clinical psychology, 2003

**Other degrees:** Vassar College

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I divide my time between research, teaching graduate and undergraduate classes (2 classes each semester), and University service (IRB, Academic Senate).

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Knowledge of a wide range of information in my field of clinical child psychology. As a teacher: enthusiasm, organization, public speaking skills. As a researcher: organization, collaboration, grant writing and management.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Primarily networking. A former co-worker let me know about the job opening. I then had to apply with multiple essays regarding my teaching and research interests, a job talk, and interviews.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

The ability to work with others. Forming collaborations, using connections to establish my research lab. Getting involved in University service to get to know other faculty and administrators.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

You need to wear multiple hats and enjoy applying yourself in different ways every day. Realize that grant funding can be a big part of what you do. Developing new classes and establishing yourself as an independent researcher can be a lot of work.

## **Carey Petrie**

Project Manager and Program Manager  
The EMMES Corporation  
<https://secure.emmes.com/emmesweb>

**Where is your highest degree from?** Emory University, Biochemistry, Cell and Developmental Biology, 2003

**Other degrees:** Grinnell College, Chemistry, BA; McGill University; Infectious Diseases, Post-doctoral fellowship

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I have two roles and responsibilities in my current position. In the first role, I manage several teams that are responsible for collecting and analyzing safety and efficacy data from clinical trials of vaccines and other products sponsored by the NIH (NIAID-DMID). My job is to ensure the contract deliverable requirements are fulfilled in a timely manner and with high quality. This involves training and supervising staff in a variety of roles (data management, statistics, programming, administrative), communicating with the client and various partners in the process, developing internal processes, and negotiating for shared resources. In my second role I am the program director of a brand new contract to provide clinical trial services for the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (HHS). In this role I will be the primary person responsible for all activities under the contract, which are similar to those described above and include additional activities such as sub-contract management, safety oversight, regulatory submissions, and clinical trial execution. In this role I will have responsibility for determining the scope of work and identifying the staff and resources to carry out that scope of work.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

I am surprised by the number of diverse skills that are necessary to complete my job. It requires excellent time management, organizational and prioritization skills; communication and negotiation; attention to detail; critical thinking; emotional intelligence; and, a great deal of hard work and persistence. My science background has given me the capacity for those last two skills in particular, as well as a desire to continue to learn, inextinguishable curiosity, and a healthy drive to avoid failure.

### **How did you get your current position?**

As a post-doctoral fellow in infectious diseases, I worked about one day per week at a clinical site enrolling human subjects to evaluate the safety and efficacy of vaccines. It was my apprenticeship in clinical research and I did everything from filing to consenting subjects to collecting the data to protocol development. I believe it was an experience that was critical to finding my current position, to which I applied directly on the company website.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I volunteered for two years at the Koshland Science Museum in DC, which helped me feel comfortable talking to complete strangers about any number of both scientific and non-scientific topics. I also completed an intensive leadership course that was offered by my company that taught me about a number of concepts I didn't learn in graduate school (how

to be a good listener, giving feedback, difficult conversations, emotional intelligence, stress management).

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

There are a number of different positions available in clinical research. I started in data management, but there are positions in regulatory compliance, trial execution, medical writing, and safety oversight to name a few. In my experience it is rare to transition directly from a post-doctoral fellowship (or graduate degree) directly to clinical research without some intermediate experience in an aspect of clinical research. I was very lucky to find this experience as part of my post-doctoral fellowship, but had this not happened, I suspect I would have needed a volunteer position to develop this experience to be successful. Unfortunately, attending workshops and joining professional societies may not be enough to make the transition. The field of clinical research has a large number of highly talented professionals and both a scientific background and relevant experience are highly valued.

## ***Carina Howell***

Associate Professor of Biological Sciences  
Lock Haven University  
chowell@lhup.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Pittsburgh, Developmental Biology, 2000

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a faculty member and teach Genetics, Developmental Biology and Bioinformatics/Genomics classes. I supervise undergraduates in research, advise undergraduates, and do university and departmental service activities.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

I found that the most important skill for success in this job is to be very organized, as my job tasks are so varied that it is hard to do any of them well if you are not organized. It is also important to be able to multitask, as my day at the university is very broken up with a mix of tasks to be completed at any given time. You also have to be very self motivated.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

Job ad on [higheredjobs.com](http://higheredjobs.com) and [chronicle.com](http://chronicle.com).

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

If you are interested in a faculty position at a primarily undergraduate institution, it is very important to have teaching experience that is more than a graduate teaching assistantship. Mentoring students in research projects while a graduate student or postdoc is also helpful.

## **Carley Shaut**

Technical Director, Assistant Professor  
Oregon Health & Science University, Laboratory of Immunogenetics and Transplantation  
shautc@ohsu.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** Oregon Health & Science University, Molecular and Medical Genetics, 2007

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I'm the technical director of the transplant histocompatibility lab, which is the clinical lab that performs cellular and genetic tests for matching organ and bone marrow transplants. It is my responsibility to approve all test results and reports for clinical use. I'm in charge of test quality, test interpretation, troubleshooting difficult results, consulting with MDs on clinical decisions, and maintaining our lab's accreditation (QA, inspections, proficiency testing).

I'm also an assistant professor involved in teaching immunogenetics to grad students.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

High-complexity clinical testing requires serious attention to details, no shortcuts or ambiguity allowed on the reports that I sign off. I get to be creative and team-oriented to make sure the job is done right. I've learned to be decisive and articulate as a decision-maker.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

While I was a post-doc doing basic science research, I heard about this position from a colleague. A clinical lab was looking for a person with strong molecular biology skills who was willing to train to be the director.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Don't be afraid to change course in your professional life and explore different careers. While that seemed outrageous in grad school, life moves on, and it is great to find a job where you can apply your training and that fits your life.

If you are interested in a career in transplant histocompatibility, see the following website for information on requirements and training programs: <http://www.ashi-hla.org/> (American Society of Histocompatibility & Immunology)

## ***Catherine Swanwick***

Director of Life Sciences Programs  
Ideaventions  
catherine.c.swanwick@gmail.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Virginia, Neuroscience, Ph.D.

**Other degrees:** Duke University (B.S., Biology with Neuroscience Certificate)

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

In addition to teaching various science courses for ages 3-13, I perform many other varied functions. I design curriculum and write lesson plans, mostly for biology courses. I develop innovative new programs for our company, including a research program for gifted middle-schoolers. I also perform special projects in research and development, ranging from writing abstracts about our education programs to hosting special science nights for families.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

A wide variety of skills are necessary for my job, but some of the most important are teaching ability, people skills, and time management. I am surprised by how busy I constantly am, stretched from one project to another, so time management is crucial. It also helps to be entrepreneurial, coming up with creative new ideas to help the company's success.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I answered a job listing. I have been involved in science outreach since graduate school and have always felt passionate about transforming science education. The company said that my resume showed how passionate I was about outreach, so they were convinced that I could make the transition from research to education, and I received a phone call for an interview.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

While at the NIH, I served on many different postdoctoral committees, including FELCOM. I was committed to serving my scientific community, and these experiences helped me learn people skills necessary for dealing with the public.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Be enthusiastic! To succeed in science education, you must feel passionate about your mission. Your love for science will shine through to the families that you teach and inspire other educators around you.

## **Charles Reed**

Senior Director, Protein Engineering  
Intrexon  
creed@intrexon.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Thomas Jefferson University, Structural Biology, 1999

**Other degrees:** Undergraduate degree in biology from St. Joseph's University

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I lead a team of PhD level scientists with experience in a variety of protein engineering and design methodologies. We work to support multiple projects that leverage novel protein design or analysis across our company's commercial divisions. The team participates in project scoping and feasibility, planning, experiments, and data analysis.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Technical expertise in certain areas of protein structure determination and analysis is, of course, valuable. As team leader, however, being able to effectively communicate, prioritize and delegate tasks, and provide appropriate advice or guidance to team members are actually skills that I use most often along with time management, which in a growing biotech company with diverse interests is always a challenge.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I responded to an announcement posted online for a position at Intrexon. Upon interviewing, I learned that another position was also open, one with an even more appropriate fit to my skill set. As Intrexon evolved over the years, I had to remain flexible and adaptable to take on new and different roles, including a two year move into translational medicine where I developed the nascent immunotherapy program, built a team of translational scientists, and established multiple sponsored research agreements with academia as well as series of contract studies with CROs.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

In my previous place of employment (National Disease Research Interchange, NDRI), I was responsible for establishing relationships with researchers in need of rare human cell types, paired cancer and normal tissue samples, tissue microarrays, and other complex or rare biosamples. As the primary liaison with many of these researchers, I learned a great deal about customer service and also effective matrix team management within the organization. That customer service experience gave me a great deal of crossover knowledge on how to handle numerous and varied requests which sometimes compete for time and resources in my current role of mostly consulting across all of our commercial divisions.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Being able to write or verbally communicate technical information to an intelligent but non-technical audience is a vital skill in biotech. With both scientific and business audiences to consider, you need to be able to provide information with both scientific rigor and an accurate view of the bottom line. Remaining flexible and adaptable is another vital trait. Being able to clearly demonstrate adaptability will serve to show that you can survive and

even thrive in a quickly changing environment. Continual growth, change, and evolution are the only constants in biotech; you have to always be ready for that.

## ***Daniel Chertow***

Assistant Clinical Investigator  
Critical Care Medicine Department/CC/NIH  
chertowd@cc.nih.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** Northwestern University, Medicine, 2000

**Other degrees:** MPH - University of California, Berkeley

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

Design and execute basic and clinical research.  
Provide clinical care in NIH ICU

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

- Advanced clinical training
- Experimental design and implementation
- Written and oral communication

**How did you get your current position?**

Through fellowship training at NIH.

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Diversity of experiences in clinical medicine, applied epidemiology, and basic/translational research.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Identify good mentors.  
Be persistent and flexible.

## **Daniel Marshak**

Senior Vice President & Chief Scientific Officer  
PerkinElmer Inc.  
dan.marshak@perkinelmer.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** The Rockefeller University, Biochemistry, 1983

**Other degrees:** BA Harvard University, 1979

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

Oversee science & technology for PerkinElmer (NYSE:PKI) and contribute to strategic and commercial planning and execution.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Broad experience in different disciplines and applications of science, ranging from math, physics, engineering, chemistry, biology, informatics. Business skills and computer science play very important roles.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Recruited by a large retained-search firm. Referred to recruiters via networking in academics and industry consulting.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Transitioning from academia to industry at the right time was crucial. My previous position as CTO at Cambrex Corp. (NYSE:CBM) was important, and business experience in an early stage start-up, Osiris Therapeutics, Inc. (NASDAQ:OSIR) was helpful.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

(1) Don't underestimate networking. (2) Use mentors to learn new fields, such as business. (3) Take calculated risks. (4) Bring real value to every organization in which you work. (5) Pay attention.

I love my job; It is fascinating and very stimulating. Don't spend your life doing something that you don't enjoy. Life is short, so have fun.

## **Denise Saunders**

Career Counselor and Consultant; Licensed Psychologist  
OITE/NIH; Private Practice  
saundersd2@mail.nih.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** Florida State University, Counseling Psychology, 1997

**Other degrees:** BS in Psychology, Bridgewater College

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

As a Career Counselor and Consultant for the OITE office at the NIH I provide career and professional development services to trainees at the NIEHS in NC. In addition to individual meetings with trainees I offer workshops on career decision making and professional development topics. In my private practice I provide counseling and consultation to individual adult clients. I meet with many adults who are in education and training programs or engaged in academic research from a variety of disciplines. I also provide consultation on career related topics and program development for scientists in training in higher education, government agencies and community groups.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Training in counseling, research, writing and practice in the area of counseling and career development, communication, listening, empathy, assessment, program development and evaluation, and networking. Since I am in business for myself I also utilize budget management, planning, marketing, financial and organizational skills. I am probably most surprised at how much I draw on marketing skills, a must for success in your own business.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I started a small private practice after working at a large university in the Counseling and Psychological Services Center. I had the freedom and flexibility to begin slowly with little overhead and have expanded to growing a practice that includes work with individual private clients and consultation and contracts with others organizations. I began working at OITE/NIH through relationships that I had previously developed and done some work for - network contacts.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I have been fortunate to be involved in numerous activities that allow me to collaborate with others on writing projects, stay involved in the academic research in my field and have exposed me to other career counseling professionals with similar interest in working with research scientists in training.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Conduct informational interviews to see how others got their positions, what they enjoy about their work and what they find challenging. I did this as I was exploring areas to focus on within the counseling field and it was very beneficial in helping me determine my specializations in career and life adjustment issues and work with academic populations.

My work is varied, no two days are the same, and I enjoy having the opportunity to utilize a broad array of skills.

## **Francisco Andrade**

Professor and Interim Chair of Physiology  
University of Kentucky  
paco.andrade@uky.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Physiology, 1994

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

As a faculty member, I'm involved in research, teaching and service, in almost equal amounts. As interim chair, a significant fraction of my time is devoted to administrative duties.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

We are all talented and knowledgeable about our fields. On top of that, the #1 skill is being organized: I'm a planner by nature, but not inflexible. Good oral and written communication skills are important too.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

I got my job by networking: I already knew the past department chair and he asked me to apply for the job when I called for a reference letter for a different post.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Doing a postdoc abroad as part of an exchange program, and soon after that, jumping to a very unique area in my field.

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Think ahead: there is a wealth of career information available now that I didn't have access to when I was coming up. Your current work is setting you up for your next job.

## **Gaia Shamis**

Scientific Program Manager  
NIH/ NIAMS  
gaia.shamis@gmail.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** NYU School of Medicine, Immunology, 2009

### **Other degrees:**

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

My role is to analyze and evaluate operations, management and productivity of the IRP. My responsibilities range from science communication to web presence & social media to working with IT to develop web applications to organizing seminars and special events.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Communication skills - I have to be able to communicate effectively with the leadership, scientists, admin and IT people. I also need to know how to communicate science in an engaging way to a variety of audiences.

### **How did you get your current position?**

My postdoc advisor told me about the job opening and I applied.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

As a grad student and postdoc I was involved in the fellows committee, wrote for the school newspaper and was on this Career Symposium organizing committee for 2 years. I also did things for my lab, like building a reagent database.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Do things beyond the bench from the get go and don't wait until the end of your grad school or postdoc to realize that you don't want a career in academia. While your research should be your first priority, set time aside to do other things - whether it's joining a fellows committee or teaching. First, it will teach you if you actually enjoy doing X and second, it will give you the actual experience to put on your resume. However, don't do things just for the sake of putting them on your resume, do things you would actually enjoy.

## **Grace Wong**

Founder, CEO  
ActoKine Therapeutics  
grace@actokine.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Melbourne (WEHI) Australia,  
Immunology

**Other degrees:** Monash Medical School, Melbourne

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am the Founder & CEO of ActoKine Therapeutics ([www.actokine.com](http://www.actokine.com)), which focuses on discovering new drugs to protect against radiation, cancer, and viral infections. As a CEO, I create novel technologies, discover new drug candidates for unmet medical needs, build a team, share data for open innovation and global collaboration, and seek investors. I am also the Founder & President of Nobel-Pauling ([www.nobel-pauling.org](http://www.nobel-pauling.org)) and Student Vision ([www.studentvision.org](http://www.studentvision.org)). These companies are dedicated to world-wide advancement of research opportunities for students, postdocs and young scientists. As their President, I seek sponsors, speakers and volunteers, seek advice from Nobel Laureates and science experts from academic, biotech and big pharmaceutical institutions, present career seminars for students and postdocs at universities throughout the country and speak at science career symposia. In addition, I contribute to organizing the Nobel-Linus-Pauling Biotech Dim Sum, which gives students, postdocs and scientists, who cannot be with their families during Christmas, the opportunity to speak and learn from science experts about new directions in biomedical research.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

**Innovation skill:** One has to be very innovative and should be able to blend different ideas and technologies to successfully develop new drugs. Starting a drug discovery company is not easy, specially when getting funding for startup companies is very difficult.

**Persuasion skill:** This is an essential skill for all entrepreneurs because one has to convince and influence other people to believe, support and invest in a biotech company.

**Decision-making skill:** One has to be a good decision maker to select suitable scientific advisors, board of directors, or collaborations so that goals are achieved rapidly at minimal cost.

**Publish in high impact journals;:** One has to publish in high impact journals (e.g. Nature, Science, Cell & PNAS) in order to gain respect and trust from investors, sponsors and collaborators.

**Other skills:** Networking and presentation skills; management skills; interpersonal and problem solving skills, etc.

### **How did you get your current position?**

After obtaining my PhD, I was hired as a postdoc, and subsequently scientist, at Genentech and worked on cytokine research. I then moved to Millennium Pharmaceuticals as the head of apoptosis research and there worked on identifying cytokine inducible drug resistance

genes. At AstraZeneca I was the section head of Molecular Genetics and worked on the roles of cytokines in Alzheimer's disease. At Serono, I was the head of Functional Genomics and was responsible to discover new cytokines involved in infertility and obesity. With this background in cytokines, my biotech start up (ActoKine Therapeutics) now focuses on biologics and new cytokines that can be used to treat cancer, protection against radiation, virus infections, and CNS diseases.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

To be successful one has to be useful to the community. To be a successful entrepreneur, one needs innovative ideas to solve problems, ability to convince people (investors, sponsors, volunteers & collaborators), experience, and valuable contacts gained from working at the biotech/pharma. One has to be able to think out-of-the-box and be aware of the cutting edge technologies that can be useful to achieve a goal.

I believe the key to success is nothing new: work hard to discover and create, and sleep well. I am fortunate to have the support of family, friends and coworkers. I attribute my success to good mentors, great supporters, and a strong team.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

My career advice is straightforward and it is all about the P's: people, personal contacts, publications, patents, positions held, promotion, productivity, and your promise and potential.

Find out who you are and discover your strengths and weakness. Understand global opportunities and prepare for real world challenges and competition.

Work for biotech & pharma to gain valuable contacts and practical skills. Choose accomplished mentors, seek generous collaborators, identify the projects you love, build skills, knowledge, experience and reputation, and always learn to be a problem solver.

Always help your boss succeed, be loyal to your mentors and keep contact with your friends not just for jobs. Be excited and passionate. Finally, don't underestimate the power of a smile and a positive attitude. Doing what you love, what you are good at and doing what is useful to the world will be the path to your happiness & success.

## **Jeff Witherly**

Senior Advisor / Education  
NHGRI  
jlw@mail.nih.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** The American University, Education, 2007

**Other degrees:** Masters: Journalism. Masters: Natural Resources

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I work as the senior science educator in the Genome Institute. My interests are in contextual learning tools. I have created tools like the Talking Glossary of Genetic Terms (online in English & Spanish), NHGRI Short Course for Collegiate Science Teachers, the Understanding Life's Code website, the large color hologram on the 5th floor of Building 50, Magic Eye learning tools in genetics, and the Community of Genetic Educators (CoGE) that ran for 5 years out of the NHGRI and is now served by the National Association of Biology Teachers on their website as the NABT Ecosystem (same social community, different name).

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Most surprisingly valuable are skills I have acquired in web and print design, photography, and public speaking. I also have found my ability to record and edit digital audio extremely useful.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I was approached by NHGRI leadership while at the Jackson Labs in Maine. This was based on the work I was doing there communicating the value of genetic research in animal models to human health.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

A lifelong love of art and science. A love of sharing knowledge with others.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Learn how to do things, not just buy them. Even if you are not able to make them you will be a better judge of the work done for your effort by others and typically very catalytic as a member of the process.

I am an educator who uses the tools of education to enable people of different ages to learn genetic concepts, etc. To do this job, there is value in having a training in genetics, but I think there is an argument to be made that to be successful in working with the general public (non-scientists) having a genetic background is of modest advantage. It is critical to know how people learn, what teachers do in a classroom, and what regular people would find valuable in your institution's efforts. Go back to school for educational frameworks and theories. Don't fall victim to the common mistake of thinking that just because you can sequence a gene you can be a teacher. Truth is that it doesn't mean all other disciplines can be learned as life lessons. Education is commonly undervalued in this way.

## ***Jennifer Fortune***

Project Leader  
The Boston Consulting Group  
fortune.jennifer@bcg.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Biological Chemistry, 2010

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a project manager for a consulting firm. My job is to be the day to day manager for our projects, working collaboratively with the client team and internal BCG team to deliver on the project goals.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

There are several important skills for consulting: project management, critical & logical thinking, ability to communicate complicated topics simply, an ability to work well in teams and a strong desire to continuously grow and develop new skills.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

I learned about the position from my school career counselor and applied via the standard process after attending several informational sessions on campus.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

While in graduate school I took a few courses to learn about business and also collaborated with a company as part of my PhD work. These experiences gave me some insight into what it might be like to think about the business of science.

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Attend info sessions to get to know the various firms and a bit more about what the job entails. Also join the consulting clubs on campus to meet others with whom you can prepare for interviews.

## ***Jennifer Kimmel***

Principal Scientist  
Kraft Foods Group  
jennifer.kimmel@kraftfoods.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Texas A&M University, Biochemistry, 2001

**Other degrees:**

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

Protein chemist investigating the relationship between protein structure and food attributes such as texture, mouth-feel, and taste.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

Keeping my finger on the pulse of new technologies and how they can be applied to the food science industry.

**How did you get your current position?**

Job listing and recruiter

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I spent 5 years as a post-doctoral candidate which really helped me learn how to work independently and broaden my knowledge base. It is great to be an expert in a specialized field, however, knowing how your specialty relates to other research areas is invaluable.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

The food industry has many opportunities for employees with life sciences or analytical/instrumental backgrounds. The boundaries between pharmaceuticals, medicine, nutrition and food is becoming more blurred everyday.

Anyone who has a passion for food or cooking should consider a job in the food industry..., afterall the kitchen is a laboratory!

## ***Jill Hesse***

Senior Field Applications Specialist  
Genologics  
jill.hesse@genologics.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Arkansas, Cell and Molecular Biology, 2008

**Other degrees:** Baylor University, University of Central Oklahoma

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a Senior FAS. My main job responsibilities include providing technical scientific support for the pre-sale and post sale process. My job requires me to conduct software demonstrations, deliver end user trainings, and develop relationships with our customers. Additionally, I provide input into the development of new features in our software based on the needs of our scientific customers.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

The major skill required for my job is communication, both written and verbal. I spend most of my time communicating with customers and it is important to be effective.

Other skills necessary for my job are multitasking, organization of multiple projects at one time, and being self-motivated.

The one skill I think surprised me that is critical for my job is my teaching experience. The ability to present complex technical information to a variety of audiences is very important.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I got my job by applying for a job on the internet. Turns out the job had been posted through a scientific recruiters office.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

You can't be afraid to talk to people. Talk about anything, the weather, coffee, new ideas in science. Many times PhDs are afraid to talk unless they are a subject matter expert. In my position, you have to get beyond that fear.

Travel is a big component to what I do, in some cases 60-75% of the time. Travel can mean many different things to different companies. If you are pursuing a job with a travel component, find it out if it is local, national, or international. As well as, if you will be home on weekends. Knowing what travel you are agreeing to in advance will help you be prepared.

## ***John Alvaro***

Director, Postdoctoral Affairs; Administrative Director, Biological & Biomedical Sciences Program  
Yale University  
John.Alvaro@yale.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** Yale University, Neuroscience, 1995

**Other degrees:**

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

I direct the Office for Postdoctoral Affairs for the Yale School of Medicine as well as for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the other professional schools at Yale University. Responsibilities include overseeing Human Resources (hiring, reappointing, firing, conflict resolution), orientation, one-on-one advising, career and professional development programming, data analysis, and policy oversight for 1,300 postdoctoral appointees and 500 additional scholars. Additionally, I administer the Biological and Biomedical Sciences Program, a university-wide program that supports 475 graduate students and 350 faculty in Yale's bioscience PhD programs. Responsibilities include advertising, admissions, orientation, data analysis, and reporting.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

I'm surprised by how important sound writing is to success in academic administration. I've encountered very few leaders who are poor writers but have seen many poor writers in lower and mid-level positions.

**How did you get your current position?**

My job with graduate students was posted in an ad in Science. My position working with postdocs happened accidentally.

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Time management, writing, public speaking, flexibility, hyper-organization, emotional intelligence, and self-motivation are some of the more important skills that come to mind.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Try to get some administrative experience as a student or postdoc. Serve on departmental committees, run a journal club, or take a leadership role in an on-campus organization.

## ***Juanita Sharpe***

Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
jcsharp@vcu.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** State University of New York at Stony Brook, Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, 1998

**Other degrees:** Bachelor of Science from Rider University

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

The assistant vice provost is responsible for co-developing strategies for and participating in the implementation of VCU's strategic plan and serving on the leadership team for the 2014 reaffirmation of SACS accreditation. Additionally, the assistant vice provost is responsible for overseeing the review of existing policies and procedures related to academic and faculty affairs; coordinating off-campus and online instruction with the schools and colleges for proper reporting of sites and programs; and providing oversight for the SCHEV Outstanding Faculty Awards program and other national awards. The assistant vice provost is also responsible for the coordination of the academic program approval process to the schools/colleges for new degree program development. The assistant vice provost is responsible for providing leadership, oversight, and coordination of a variety of functions in support of academic excellence and integrity as well as to ensure compliance with applicable academic regulations, policies, and procedures.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Working collaboratively with colleagues, communicating clearly and effectively, strong writing and personnel management skills are all required to do the job effectively. I was surprised at how much grant writing skills were translatable to accreditation standards writing.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I found this position through a job listing in the chronicle. The characteristics they were seeking in the person hired for this position were a perfect match for my experience at that time.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

My experience as Department Chair helped a great deal with my success in this position. Learning how to manage and, most importantly, prioritize tasks was and is extremely important to this position.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Most of the work in this type of position consists of service in support of the university mission. As such, a lot of what I do is not glamorous but is necessary to support the daily operations of the university. There are lots of long days and short nights but, in the end, I help individuals and the institution advance higher education through supporting faculty development, authentic listening and responsiveness to students and the inclusion of all university stakeholders in the decision making process.

Consciously think about your leadership style and values as you develop your career path. You can be a leadership superhero or a leadership champion. Superheroes generally work as the center and originator of all change while champions empower those around them as originators and executors of change. While service is central to all administration, and it takes all types to lead in the various institutions in higher education, the best leaders I have worked with have been champions.

## ***Kathleen Caron***

Professor & Chair

Univ. North Carolina at Chapel Hill

kathleen\_caron@med.unc.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** Duke University, Cell Biology, 1997

**Other degrees:** Emory University, BS Biology; BA Philosophy

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I run an active, NIH-funded research program in the field of cardiovascular biology. I am a mentor and scientific advisor to graduate students, MD/PhD students and postdoctoral fellows. I also serve as Chair of the newly formed Department of Cell Biology & Physiology—now the largest basic science Department in our school of medicine. In this role, I oversee the research, educational and service missions of our unit. I interface with Department personnel, including scientists and administrators. I also interface closely with Leadership in the School of Medicine, including our Dean's Office and Office of Research.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Excellent communications skills---which first and foremost involves listening.  
Multi-tasking and delegating.  
Diplomacy.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking and previous track-record of successful leadership made me a qualified candidate in a national search.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Key Mentors; Leadership Courses  
Previous experience in leadership.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

You must figure out a way to balance science-administrative duties-family. You must be able to prioritize and recognize that perfection is not always required or possible. Surround yourself with incredibly talented people and ensure their success.

## ***Kenneth Ramos***

Associate Vice-President for Precision Health Sciences and Professor of Medicine  
University of Arizona  
ksramos@email.arizona.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Texas at Austin, Biochemical Pharmacology and Medicine, 1983

**Other degrees:**

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

Responsible for advancing precision health strategies and approaches to health outcomes and health care delivery, development of personalized diagnostics and therapeutics.  
Research into the genetic basis of human diseases of the lung and vasculature.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

Ability to communicate effectively with a variety of stakeholders, ability to strategically solve problems in a variety of settings

**How did you get your current position?**

Networking

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Perseverance, dedication and hard work.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Perseverance, dedication and hard work are keys to success for all career paths.

Success in a scientific/medical career requires the ability to be adaptive and to think out of the box.

## ***Kristen Mueller***

Senior Editor  
Science Magazine  
kmueller@aaas.org

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Minnesota, Immunology, 2006

**Other degrees:** B.A. from Carleton College

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

My primary role is to attract the very best research in immunology, virology and infectious disease to Science and then guide these manuscripts through the peer review process.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

You need excellent scientific training and a broad knowledge base in order to judge papers. Written and oral communication skills are also a must. Finally, interpersonal skills are critical. One of the most important aspects of my job is interacting with scientists in order to get papers, learn about important areas of research or communicate about specific issues pertaining to a paper.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I heard about the opening from an ad on the NIH Immunology listserv. Luckily, I had a connection to the person who was hiring that position through my PRAT fellowship. Before applying, I called her to ask specific questions about the position to make sure

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

A solid track record of publications throughout graduate school and my postdoc (although only one in Science!), a history of successful oral and written communication (through grant and fellowship awards, papers published and invited talks), and an interest in scientifically-related activities that were distinct from bench work (journal clubs, data clubs, FELCOM).

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Editors go to meetings! If you're interested in this career path, see whether there is an editor at a meeting you are going to and talk to them about this career path.

## ***Li-hong Zhang***

Technical Applications Scientist II  
Thermo Fisher Scientific  
li-hong.zhang@thermofisher.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Northeastern University, Boston, MA, Molecular biology, 1992

**Other degrees:** I have done 4.5 years of post-doctoral research at Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a Technical Applications Scientist with Thermo Fisher Scientific, Life Technologies Brand (real-time PCR). My job mainly is to analyze/troubleshoot technical problems related to real-time PCR instrument software/application software, reagents and applications by phone conversation and email communications. Sometimes I also go to a customer's site to provide training.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Scientific technical skills and communication skills. I have to identify the problems that customers have in terms of running an instrument, using software, using reagents and data analysis. I also need to provide clear explanations on possible causes of the problem, and provide instruction/suggestions on how to solve the problem for customers. Presentation and teaching skills are necessary when I provide training to customers.

### **How did you get your current position?**

My network (previous colleague in this company) alerted me to the job when the opening was posted.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Soft skills on customer services are important and required by the company to deliver good customer services.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

In addition to scientific technical knowledge and skills, you want to be willing to meet industrial standards and matrix target. For example, high survey scores to show good customer services; high answer rate on the phone/low waiting time on emails to satisfy customers; help sales to generate sales opportunities, etc.

## ***Lilia Mijares***

Assistant Professor  
University of Maryland, School of Medicine  
lmijares@som.umaryland.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** Yale, Microbiology, 2008

**Other degrees:** MLT (medical laboratory technology) ASCP certified

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a faculty member in the Department of Medical Research and Technology. The majority of my responsibilities are related to teaching. I teach various Microbiology classes (Parasitology, Mycology, Virology and Clinical Microbiology) to junior and senior undergraduates being trained in laboratory science. This is a professional degree and our students move into the hospital during their senior year. As part of the faculty for the graduate program I also serve in several thesis committees. I teach at least one graduate course a semester mostly in the field of advanced molecular diagnostics in the clinical laboratory. Besides my teaching duties, I also visit hospital sites where students are spending their internships and I monitor their progress. I attend recruiting fairs and review admission applications. Lastly, I serve as a consultant to various PI's in the school of medicine as well as to the UMMC hospital when requested.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

The most important skill would have to be the ability to take a very complex scientific idea/material and convey it to several audiences all with different levels of knowledge. Time management is essential as students are always in need for additional lab practices or office meetings.

### **How did you get your current position?**

At the time I applied I was a fellow in the Microbiology laboratory at the Clinical Center, training for a position to become director of a Microbiology laboratory. During the course of my training, I found a deep interest in teaching. I communicated my change of goals to my mentor and when a position opened, the university contacted him and he in turn passed the job listing to me.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I have an Associate degree in Medical laboratory science as well as training in managing and directing a clinical laboratory. As part of my training I often taught or demonstrated techniques to physicians and visiting fellows. Teaching students to become medical laboratory scientists was a natural transition.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Although this is an education path, it requires very specialized training. If interested in teaching, I would recommend board certification in the field of your choice (hematology, Microbiology etc). Locate schools around the area that have the type of program of your interest and offer to teach a class or attend one.

This particular track is not conducive to a high volume of research articles. Because of the heavy load of teaching, research time is almost non-existent. The only alternative I have is to participate in short projects or collaborate with labs around the school.

## ***Lindsey Garver***

Senior Research Scientist  
ClinicalRM/Walter Reed Army Institute of Research  
lindsey.s.garverbaldwin.ctr@mail.mil

**Where is your highest degree from?** Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Molecular Microbiology and Immunology, 2009

### **Other degrees:**

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a ClinicalRM employee supporting the Entomology Branch of the Center for Infectious Disease Research at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). I have responsibilities falling into two major categories. The first is serving as a scientific advisor for clinical trials. I help the department provide entomological support for trials that investigate vaccines, drugs or immune responses against malaria, dengue and other diseases that are vectored by insects and threaten the health of the US military and global populations. I help with trial planning, protocol writing, communicating with study personnel, ensuring volunteer safety and administering infection via mosquito bites. My second role is serving as a scientific advisor and technical expert for primary research projects concerning the transmission of malaria and dengue. In this role, I write grant proposals and papers, interact with funding agencies, mentor students, develop new techniques, and perform laboratory experiments. In both roles, I help the people in WRAIR Entomology establish collaborations with academic, governmental and non-profit partners, communicate our findings, optimize operations and work with many of the military's overseas labs. I also serve on WRAIR's Scientific Review Committee which evaluates in-house human-use protocols.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

- 1) Communication. My job requires me to communicate both technically and persuasively to other scientists, clinicians, non-profit leaders, funding agencies, corporate partners, FDA, QA/QC personnel, support personnel and military leadership. I write emails, funding proposals, animal and human use protocols, budgets, scientific papers and SOPs. I have to give seminars and speak on behalf of the department at meetings. I have to be very aware of tuning my communication style to each purpose and audience.
- 2) Time management. Between research, clinical trials and new endeavors, we have at least 20 different projects going on at the same time. Keeping each project's progress, timeline, staff, goals and resources on track and doing my part to move each project forward takes a lot of discipline and focus.
- 3) Scientific acumen. In a cross-functional environment, people often turn to me for technical advice. It's important to keep up my technical knowledge and maintain a scientific network so I know who to ask if I don't have the answer myself.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I heard about the job from a friend who I met when we were both postdocs at NIH and he recommended me to ClinicalRM and to the department's leadership. I then applied through the ClinicalRM's listing.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

My experience leading and serving on a variety of committees as a postdoc was particularly interesting to my department's leadership and taught me a lot about working with different kinds of people, effectively communicating ideas and getting things done in a government organization. I also took a formal leadership course that helped me integrate into an organization and develop my "EQ" and other "soft skills".

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Jobs like this require both the scientific and non-scientific. A good publication record will always serve you well but you also need accomplishments in inspiring teamwork, leading a group, writing persuasively and contributing to the organization outside of the lab. Start the "soft skill" stuff early so you have evidence of these skills and experience from which to draw.

Grow your network, remembering that your network isn't some CEO to whom you once gave your business card but is made up of people at all career stages who know you are good at something.

Spend some time learning about the mission, culture and values of any potential place of employment, both before you apply/interview and once you have the job. Think about how you, as a scientist, fit into the culture and advance the mission.

## ***Loretta Doan***

Director, Science Policy  
Endocrine Society  
ldoan@endocrine.org

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Louisville, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2004

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I direct a diverse and growing science policy portfolio for an international scientific and medical society. My job is to identify issues and influence policy relevant to the scientific discipline of endocrinology.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Communication skills and political savvy are critical. I must be able to communicate complex scientific and policy issues to a broad range of audiences. I also must bridge communication gaps between different stakeholders and nurture relationships to enhance acceptance and understanding. My scientific background helps by providing not only a deeper understanding of the science behind the issues, but also a framework for logical and critical thinking.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

When I wanted to transition out of the lab, I knew I wanted to pursue science policy due to a longstanding idea that the most knowledgeable and informed individuals should contribute to the development of societal policies. With this goal in mind, I searched job listings with the key words "science policy" and applied to those that appeared interesting. I found my current position through this process.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Before pursuing academic science, I earned a degree in communications. Not only did this look good on my resume, but it provided the groundwork for the communications skills I have further honed in my current career.

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Involve yourself in causes or civil-society groups. For example, become active in your postdoc association. Or start a new group around a particular issue. Practice communicating with a lot of people about your work, not just your peers in science. Have an open mind about opportunities you come across in researching your options.

## ***Marc Adams***

Assistant Professor

Exercise and Wellness Program, School of Nutrition and Health Promotion, Arizona State University

marc.adams@asu.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** UC San Diego, Public Health, 2009

**Other degrees:** MPH(Masters in Public Health), San Diego State University

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I have a research team studying environments and technology for promoting physical activity. Currently, we have two PhD students, two master's students, and four honors undergrads working across several projects. My role is to guide the research and motivate the team to ensure fidelity of our studies. I also teach courses in epidemiology to upper division undergrads and advanced research methods to PhD students in our integrated Physical Activity, Nutrition and Wellness program. I am actively involved in service within and outside our department. This includes being a committee member that develops and grades a progressive exam that our PhD students take after their 1st year. I am also on several masters and PhD thesis committees and am an academic editor at the journal PLoS ONE.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

The ones that really help me to succeed daily are time, project, and email management. I am surprised by how much I am constantly being pulled in different directions by paperwork, students, grants, new projects, manuscripts, and requests to drop everything because something was due yesterday. To succeed it's important to protect time for yourself to write, read, and learn new things each week.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I visited the department about two years prior to applying and met with faculty. It was an informational-type visit. I informed them I was going on the job market soon, wanted to meet faculty with similar interests, and learn about future opportunities.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

My postdoc time with Dr. Jim Sallis at UC San Diego allowed me to develop projects, build new skills, and write manuscripts and grants. Just before entering the job market I received a Beginning Grant in Aid from the American Heart Association. That award helped me get noticed above and beyond many of my successful colleagues.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Two things:

- 1) Time your entry into the job market well. If you're in a fixed-time postdoc position, make sure to have a position waiting at the end or a grant to support yourself. Some postdoc positions don't pay in to unemployment benefits; so check this before you find out too late.
- 2) Your career is important, but so are hobbies and a life outside of work. It helps to escape and rejuvenate.

Arizona State University is doing exciting things under our New American University philosophy!  
Check us out when looking for a position.

## ***Matthew Mulvey***

CEO

BeneVir Biopharm, Inc.

matt@benevir.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** New York University, Microbiology, 2006

**Other degrees:** Wesleyan University - B.A.

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am founder and CEO of an early stage oncology startup developing an immunotherapy for cancer. In my company, everyone wears many hats and we face new challenges and opportunities every day. We recently completed our proof-of-concept animal work and are now focused on raising the capital necessary to bring our lead therapeutic into human trials. I am responsible for charting the company's scientific and product development pathways as well as establishing relationships and collaborations with scientists, academics, regulatory consultants, and business development professionals to ensure we make steady progress executing the plan to grow the company and be the first to reach human trials.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

My work requires multiple skills beyond what one is required to learn in graduate school and as a post-doc. Communication and writing skills are by far the most important skills I've learned and allowed me to feel confident that I could find, fund, and grow a biotech company. Communication skills allow me to network efficiently to find and establish productive collaborations with the right partners and to effectively manage a diverse team. Writing skills, especially grant writing, have been indispensable to securing the seed funding we needed to establish operations and execute our proof-of-concept studies.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I founded the company with two colleagues to spin out a technology I invented in graduate school. Since I knew the most about the technology and market, we agreed I would be CEO until we could grow the company to the point where "adult supervision" could take over.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I worked for an assistant professor during my graduate studies. This allowed me to witness first hand how to start a lab. Furthermore, my graduate school focused very heavily on teaching students how to write grants, and I participated in several R01 submissions with my mentor. Also, I was fortunate enough to skip my post-doc and land a leadership position in a small, but established biotech company right out of graduate school. That company was funded mainly through grants, so I had to quickly secure my own grant funding in order to justify continued employment. Finally, all of the experiences and responsibilities I had at that company as we moved from pre-clinical research into human trials allowed me to witness firsthand how to build a company and lead a diverse team of scientific and business professionals. All of these experiences made me believe I could successfully secure seed funding for my company.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Network, network, network! And, relentlessly promote yourself, your vision, and your team. Finally, focus on what your resume should look like in 5 years and hit those goals.

## **Meredith Fox**

Health Science Policy Analyst  
National Institute of Mental Health, NIH  
meredith.fox@nih.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** American University, Behavioral Neuroscience / Psychology, 2003

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

Creating institute policies (e.g., social media policy); writing for a variety of audiences (public, Congress, institute leadership, etc.); researching and creating resource documents for institute leadership; analyzing and evaluating institute programs/portfolios; updating the institute's strategic plan; creating web content (mental health statistics, institute newsletter, etc.); clearance of documents (e.g., publications, etc.); review and edit reports for other federal agencies; respond to public inquiries; etc., etc.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Writing for a variety of audiences; attention to detail; time management.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

I was involved with many committees, etc. outside of the lab; based on this networking, I was offered a Detail, and then a job once I was on Detail.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Get a variety of experience; volunteer to write for a variety of audiences; edit and review publications for journals; teach and mentor; serve on committees (FARE, NIH Fellows Committee, NIH Ethics Committee; NIMH Retreat Committee, etc.). Network.

## **Michael W. Nestor**

Staff Scientist  
The New York Stem Cell Foundation  
mnestor@nyscf.org

**Where is your highest degree from?** The University of Maryland, School of Medicine, Molecular and Cellular Neuroscience, 2008

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

My general research centered on understanding the physiological role that inducible pluripotent stem cell-derived neurons from Alzheimer's disease patients play in functional or dysfunctional cortical circuits underlying cognition and memory. This ties in well with my graduate and postdoctoral training in electrophysiology, cellular neurobiology, and neural stem cell biology.

I work in a highly dynamic and collaborative team with PIs, postdocs, senior technicians, graduate students, undergraduate interns, automation engineers, project managers, other staff scientists and public relations specialists, and I wear a number of different hats that are contextualized to the team setting I am in.

In general, I have a highly independent staff scientist position where I oversee my own research, driven by hypotheses that fit with the general mission of the laboratory. In this context I oversee a number of senior technicians, graduate students, and undergraduates. I perform my own laboratory duties that are typical of both a postdoctoral fellow and a PI. I also interact and collaborate with other PIs and write grants, give lab tours, and project manage. I help run the confocal core we have in the lab and train others to use it. In this context, other than the fact that I report to the director of the lab, I work much like a PI with the goal of publishing and writing grants. Because I accepted an INSPIRE fellowship as a postdoc while at The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF), I also teach undergraduates as part of one class during the semester at two local universities, a break from research that I really love!

If you take a step back from that context, I am a small part of a larger team at NYSCF where I perform specific duties based on my skills as an electrophysiologist to assist with large inter- and intra-institutional research projects. In this context, I typically help others obtain recordings from neurons or do live-cell calcium imaging or other standard cell biology. This is to help others advance their own research and so that we can refine proprietary technologies developed in the lab that we hope to market. I report to other staff scientists and automation engineers on the team who have their own expertise in genetics and molecular biology, as well as to a project manager that keeps the larger technology development goals on track.

In the largest context, I am an even smaller part of the entire NYSCF organization-wide team that helps to advance the mission of the institute via public outreach. This is achieved through giving tours of the lab, participating in conferences and seminars, and helping with fundraising events. These are often very exciting ways to interact with the public (something I love to do) and they have been immensely helpful in honing my skills as a lay presenter, and in becoming a better science communicator in general.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Everyone that gets to the staff scientist level has developed good lab skills in terms of being able to do good research at a high level in their chosen field-so I will not really talk about those other than to say, publishing is important but do not put all your weight in trying to

get a C/N/S paper! Showing that you are doing good work, that it is consistent, and that you are the one driving that work is more important than worrying about the impact factor of your publications.

What distinguishes one from the other, and ensures long-term success and ultimately happiness are these skills (in order of my perceived importance based on my experience): communication skills, project/time management, ability to be part of a team, and having good understanding of leadership psychology.

You have to be able to quickly switch from being the wheel to being a cog in the wheel, back to being the wheel again. Getting scientific teams to work together and meet milestones towards a shared goal is a hard, but immensely rewarding task. To that end I was surprised how much having a good understanding of leadership psychology would play in my role. I did not see myself as a leader until I was asked to manage both my own research and simultaneously be a smaller part of others' work. By understanding myself and how I interacted with others, I was able to help effectively communicate to both groups. When that happened, it was pretty amazing how many different people, from scientists to engineers coalesced around shared goals. It is a lot of fun too!

### **How did you get your current position?**

I started at NYSCF as a postdoc, by cold-calling the director of the laboratory and telling him that I had a vision for doing electrophysiology in human stem cells. I felt that having a personal conversation at the same time that he had my CV in hand allowed me to distinguish myself from other candidates, many of whom just email and then wait for a response.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I think that my time as an IRTA Fellow at NIH directly set me up for success in this career path. By being a postdoc at a large governmental lab, I was exposed to thinking about science in a broader and translational context. It was the emphasis on translational research here at the NIH that caused me to start thinking about human stem cell work in the context of neurodegenerative disorders.

Additionally, I started to have an idea that I wanted to do research at an undergraduate research institution as a PI, so while at NIH I taught and organized two FAES courses. This led me directly to the INSPIRE program (which I found out about from OITE), and when I got to NYSCF as a postdoctoral fellow, I called the director of the program at Rutgers and asked if there was a way I could participate-she said yes!

In that sense, the foundation for everything I am doing at this point in my career was inspired by my time at NIH.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

First, build your communication skills! Do not think that presenting a poster or giving a talk does that! You need to find ways to push yourself out of your comfort zone...for example, ask to give a talk to a local interest/advocacy group, or give a lab tour to a high-school science class. These experiences force you to communicate in ways you may have not been trained for. I recently started making YouTube videos about the lab equipment I use for lay-type audiences. You might want to try something like that.

I would also suggest that you try to take a seminar in leadership. At least try to take a test like the Meyers-Briggs. Know thyself! This will help make your communications skills and decision making skills better without even trying.

Finally, stay positive! You are excited about what you do or else you would have not come this far. Show others that positive energy and excitement and it becomes infectious. Others will see that in you and you will be a wanted and welcomed member on any scientific team!

## ***Nicole Lewandowski***

Medical Science Liaison  
Teva Pharmaceuticals  
nicole.lewandowski@tevapharm.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Columbia University, Cellular, Molecular, and Biomedical Studies, 2008-PhD

**Other degrees:** Columbia University- MA & MPhil

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

A few key responsibilities include: establishing and maintaining peer relationships with key opinion leaders (KOLs are clinical/research leaders in the specific therapeutic area you support); maintaining thorough knowledge and staying up to date on literature and data in the therapeutic area; developing slide decks for your KOLs based on current literature or congress meeting updates; act as an educational resource and train internal personnel; evaluate sites for company sponsored trials; present data based on unsolicited and off-label requests; facilitate identification and presentation of research opportunities; be the "go to" expert on recommendations from your region for trial sites, advisory boards, and speaker programs; independently manage a home-based office with extensive travel. Leading consulting on internal initiatives and projects; also completing all the necessary compliance training and always being vigilant of compliance, regulatory, and legal requirements.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Communication skills. The biggest skill is to tailor your communication to be short, concise, and gear it towards the interests of the person you are talking to (understanding your audience is key).

Organization and time management: You are the keeper of your own schedule but you must balance internal and external meetings and responsibilities, and keep up with emails and phone calls.

Presentation skills: Creating a story that flows, translating the science to the clinician, and feeling comfortable presenting (avoid teaching and make it more about the discussion).

Work independently: MUST be self-motivated with the ability to work independently and always be prepared.

People skills: Understand you have a customer facing role and will have to deal with many different personalities.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I applied through the company's website. But then I went the extra mile and did some background research, through networking, to discover who the hiring manager was and then I sent her an email directly which included my interest in the position, why I was the right person for the job, and my resume. She reached out, it moved to the interview process, and I prepared for that interview as if it was my thesis defense. Long story short I left them with no question as to who should get the job.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Every experience I had helped to mold my career in one way or another, but I'd have to say my best move was to take a job in medical communications. I thought I knew what the role of an MSL was as a post-doc but it wasn't until I became a medical director in medcom that I

realized just how clueless I was. Medcom allowed me to work with pharma, biotech, and med device companies in all aspects of communication: promotional/marketing, medical affairs, clinical trials, HEOR, launch products, compliance, legal, grants department, public relations, patient programs; all those experiences helped me to understanding the organization, interworking, and more importantly the language of pharma. Once you speak the language you fit in and it makes the rest much easier.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Look beyond the bench. Research and your education show that you have the ability to think scientifically but it doesn't show that you know how to communicate it effectively to a clinical audience. Try to collaborate with pharmaceutical companies as part of your research. Lean more towards translational/clinical research than basic science. Get involved with nonprofit organizations, technology transfer offices, go to medical conferences (it will help you speak their language). Consider taking an internship or a "stepping-stone" job, which will give you the skills you need to get the job you want (eg, medical communications, regulatory job, managed care role, etc).

The biggest misconception is that an MSL is an extension of the sales force and that is completely inaccurate.

## ***Nina Gray***

Administrative Director  
NYU School of Medicine  
annette.gray@nyumc.org

**Where is your highest degree from?** Brown University, Neuroscience, 2006

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I administer the NYU School of Medicine's Neuroscience Institute. The main objective is to facilitate our mission of establishing a world-class neuroscience research institute, spanning basic and clinical departments, that attracts and trains top young scientists. I oversee faculty affairs, mentoring, and recruitment; a growing graduate program; an extensive grant portfolio for the institute and our faculty, including submission of large-scale grants; external and internal communications from the Institute; and an administrative team of 11 who manage the Institute's finances, human resources, facilities, and research infrastructure.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Project management, including organizational and time management skills; Being able to juggle multiple projects simultaneously and shift focus between them quickly; Good communication skills and being able to manage other people. I am most surprised by the amount of time I spend on finances and budgets.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

When the NYU Neuroscience Institute started, I met with the incoming Director, who I knew from my scientific background, to express interest in working with him.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I invested time helping the graduate program I was in at Brown - coordinating a small seminar series, organizing interview weekends, advising on the curriculum, and serving on the admissions committee. This set the stage for the direction I ended up taking - without me consciously deciding on it at the time.

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Get involved in projects and events that interest you while you are a student or postdoc, even if you don't know immediately how it would fit into your career path. You will gain skills and a different perspective on how organizations work, which can be hard to appreciate from the bench.

## **Omari Bandele**

Toxicology Review Scientist  
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)  
omari.bandele@fda.hhs.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** Vanderbilt University, Biochemistry, 2008

**Other degrees:** Tennessee State University (B.S. in Chemistry)

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

We evaluate the safety of substances in food packaging materials that may migrate into food or contact food during the manufacturing process. These types of compounds are called food contact substances. Some examples include compounds used in plastic beverage bottles, microwave steam bags, meat diapers in supermarket meat packaging, and antimicrobial washes applied to meats and produce in processing plants. We work to ensure that these food contact substances, including its constituents and impurities, are safe for consumers. As technology advances, food packaging materials are also becoming more sophisticated, and the safety of these chemicals must be evaluated.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

The ability to thoroughly search databases, study reports, and published literature to identify the relevant information needed to make an informed safety assessment of a food contact substance, including its constituents and impurities. Writing is another essential skill. The ability to clearly and effectively compose safety assessments with justifications that are supported by the available toxicological information is needed for manufacturers, other reviewers, and the general public to understand the rationale behind our assessments.

### **How did you get your current position?**

As an NIH post-doc and FDA ORISE fellow, I attended seminars on how to submit a competitive application through the USAjobs.gov website, which provided helpful insight. I also reached out to several FDA employees for informational interviews and to request their assistance in my job search. By networking with FDA employees, I was frequently made aware of upcoming job opportunities which I should consider. As an ORISE fellow, I worked on several research projects that were of interest to my current office. This research experience helped me get my foot in the door.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Attending career-related events, especially those sponsored by the NIH OITE, opened my eyes to interesting career paths away from the bench. I didn't realize I wanted to work in regulatory science until I attended a seminar as an NIH post-doc where I learned about the speaker's career in regulatory science. Although it may seem like a sacrifice, I would suggest taking time away from your research to attend career development events and seminars. It can be a valuable investment of your time.

## **Onyi Irrechukwu**

ADME/Tox Scientist  
Hepregen Corporation  
onyiirrec@gmail.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Georgia Institute of Technology, Bioengineering, 2007

**Other degrees:** University of Maryland, Baltimore County; BSc in Chemical & Biochemical Engineering

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

In my current role, I lead efforts in optimizing our current in vitro liver platform by developing novel assays and biomarkers to increase its sensitivity and specificity in detecting drug-induced liver toxicity. I am also involved in designing predictive and mechanistic toxicology studies to support clients' drug development programs. My role involves data analysis and interpretation relevant to pharmacology of clients' pipeline compounds, writing final reports for clients' research projects, identifying funding opportunities and writing grant proposals. I also support business development activities and sales teams by publishing scientific marketing materials and educating the sales teams on our technologies and products.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

I found that my critical thinking skills were necessary to do my job effectively and excellently. Being in a Contract Research Organization, clients expect you to provide the solution to all their problems. You have to constantly think outside the box, providing alternative solutions and approaches to problems. However I was most surprised by the importance of having very good people skills. Egos are easily bruised and it does you no good to have an uncooperative team or a hostile work environment. Being tactful is essential to your success.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

As a postdoc at NIH, I made sure I was involved in research symposiums. I presented often, thus honing my communication skills. This helped a lot during interviews and also at my job, where I was called upon to start a journal club specifically for sales persons.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Network! Network! Network! Most of your current skills and strengths are translatable. Do not focus on your presumed inadequacies. Your training has taught you to think outside the box and distill relevant information from previously unfamiliar material - That is all you need to succeed!

## ***Pablo Morales***

Medical Officer  
FDA Division of Cardiovascular Devices  
Jose.Morales@fda.hhs.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana - Colombia (South America), Medicine and Surgery, 2000

**Other degrees:** Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London-UK, Cleveland Clinic, OH

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

My primary duty, as a Medical Officer in the FDA Division of Cardiovascular Devices, is to review the clinical data submitted by cardiovascular device manufacturers to the agency. Additionally, I assist device manufacturers with the design of clinical trials which are ultimately intended to support a marketing application. I also contribute to various FDA outreach efforts including authorship in peer-reviewed journal publications and delivering presentations at academic meetings, and I participate in device standards committees. I also provide support and leadership for collaborative efforts involving the FDA, medical societies, and device manufacturers to establish mechanisms to collect clinical data on areas where there is an unmet clinical need.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

- Be a team player.
- Interest in life-long learning.
- Willingness to learn and apply regulatory science.
- Ability to read and interpret extensive documents and clinical datasets.
- Written and oral communications skills.
- Prioritization and time management .
- Preferable, but not necessary, to have clinical training and experience with the product area on which my primary duties are.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking while attending a medical conference.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

While doing my training I was also very interested in clinical research. This interest in research gave me the opportunity to work under two Professors, a Professor of Vascular Surgery and a Professor of Interventional Radiology, thus I had the opportunity to publish several manuscripts and co-author book chapters.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

- The work environment at the FDA is really great; we have flexible hours and work at home some days.
- Working at the FDA is a unique opportunity to interact with leading scientists in many different fields, and your co-workers will be some of the best and brightest.
- Working at the FDA you will never be bored as technology is constantly advancing and we have a front row seat (every week brings new challenges).
- Working at the FDA you can have a huge impact as you will have impact over an entire field of products. At a given company, you will be involved in a small number of products.

-Since the mission of the FDA is to protect and promote the public health, you will go home every day energized because you will know that you have made a difference.

The benefits are very good. We have health insurance, retirement, vacation (3 to 5 weeks/year) and sick leave (13 days/year), life insurance and disability.

## **Patrice Held**

Co-Director, Newborn Screening and Biochemical Genetics Laboratories  
Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene  
patrice.held@slh.wisc.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** Oregon Health and Science University, Molecular and Medical Genetics, 2005

**Other degrees:** Certification in Clinical Biochemical Genetics, American Board of Medical Genetics

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

As co-director of the newborn screening and biochemical genetics laboratories, I oversee the clinical laboratory testing, reporting, new assay development, and quality assurance activities within these laboratories. Because all infants born in the state of Wisconsin receive a state-mandated newborn screening, our "high throughput" laboratory tests more than 300 samples each day for 44 disorders.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

One skill that I use daily (that you don't necessarily learn in graduate school) is management of employees. We have a staff of approximately 20 people and it can be challenging to effectively manage their skills with the needs of the laboratory.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I completed a fellowship program in newborn screening through the Association of Public Health Laboratories and the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. After the fellowship, I was offered the position as co-director.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

If you are interested in clinical laboratory testing, try to seek out opportunities to train, work, or observe in this environment.

## ***Paul Duffin***

Assistant Professor of Biology  
Transylvania University  
pduffin@transy.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** Ph.D. from Northwestern University, Molecular microbiology and pathogenesis, 2011

**Other degrees:** B.A. in Biological Chemistry from Grinnell College

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

As an Assistant Professor at a private, small, liberal arts college, my primary responsibilities are to develop and teach undergraduate courses, mentor students, conduct research, and serve on committees. The teaching load at my institution is 3-3-1, which means I typically teach 5 courses plus laboratories/academic year. I have University service obligations of serving on standing academic committees, developing the curriculum, and engaging in campus wide initiatives. My research laboratory is staffed entirely by undergraduate students (and myself) and I typically have 3-6 students in the laboratory year round. My laboratory is supported by a mix of internal grants, and I have sought several external grants for support.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Some skills that surprised me the most include the need to successfully navigate the political structure of my institution, manage the time required for mentoring students, grading, and developing new courses. I am expected to contribute to non-science courses (first-year writing) which have been rewarding, but time consuming to develop.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I answered an ad from the Chronicle of Higher Education.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I completed a teaching certificate program while in graduate school to gain the skills of developing and teaching undergraduate courses. Additionally, I worked to develop research questions that are amenable for undergraduates to undertake. I tailored my cover letter, teaching philosophy, and research statements for the schools with open positions and included specific examples of how I would participate and develop the curriculum, the biology major, and the college.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Small liberal arts colleges value effective and innovative teaching, so work to develop those skills and seek out opportunities to teach at similar institutions. Also think about how to tailor your research questions to involve undergraduate students.

Seek out lots of advice in your first few years as faculty.

## ***Paul Nixon***

Special Agent  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
paul.nixon@ic.fbi.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** Texas A&M University, Biochemistry, 2001

**Other degrees:** University of Texas, Southwestern Medical Center, post doctoral research

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am responsible for the investigation and subsequent prosecution of criminal cases in which the federal government is a party. As part of a prosecutorial team, I have broad discretion in both the direction of the investigations and the evidence collected during the investigation. My job duties include interviewing of witnesses, collection and preservation of forensic and non-forensic evidence, review and compilation of evidence and charts for trial, and the presentation of evidence through testimony in trials and other legal proceedings.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Good interpersonal skills and the ability to work as part of a prosecutorial team are critical in my position. Surprisingly, my scientific training and background have been important to my success in this field as many of the skills used in scientific investigation are beneficial in the criminal investigative process: critical thinking, data analysis, public speaking and the concise presentation of facts.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I was recruited by another FBI Agent, but I was still required to apply and complete the standard hiring process which includes an online application and significant background review and testing.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

The FBI takes a total character approach to the hiring of Agents. Being of good moral character and having personal integrity is one of the most important factors in success in this field.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

The FBI has 56 field offices and every one of them has an applicant coordinator. Find out the identity of your local coordinator and make friends with them as they will be the source of answers to your questions and a guide when you need them.

<https://www.fbijobs.gov/>

We hire more than just Special Agents, and there is a large lab at Quantico, VA staffed by some of the best forensic scientists in the world who support the forensic needs of the FBI.

## **Pumtiwitt McCarthy**

Assistant Professor  
Morgan State University  
Pumtiwitt.McCarthy@morgan.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Delaware, Biochemistry, 2009

**Other degrees:** B.S. Rowan University, 2003

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am responsible for teaching Biochemistry courses for the Department at the undergraduate and graduate level. I also run a research lab which studies capsule-producing enzymes from *Neisseria meningitidis*. I currently serve as a mentor for 2 undergraduate students. I also have served on committees at the department and university level.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Time management, multitasking, the ability to interact with many types of personalities. The most surprising skill was the sheer amount of time management that is needed to get everything done and done well.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking and self-searching. I did a search of local universities that seemed to be in need of a biochemist. I found my current university and set up an informational interview with a faculty member. I also sent my academic package to the chair before the position was announced. When it was open, I applied and was offered an interview.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Getting involved in things other than the bench was important. I did a lot: science writing, postdoc associations, a detail.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Mentoring is an important skill that you can never learn too early.

## ***Raed Samara***

Global Product Manager  
QIAGEN  
raed.samara@qiagen.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Georgetown University, Tumor Biology, 2006

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am responsible for go-to-market activities which includes conceptualization of products according to market and customer requirements, and implementation of new products to enable their sale. I am also responsible for launching activities, which include development of sales tools and marketing material for new products. In addition, I manage day-to-day activities to support existing products.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Communication skills are needed to communicate with different teams throughout the company; taking initiative to achieve goals more efficiently; team work to deliver objectives.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking. I networked with a recruiter at QIAGEN as part of my involvement in the NCI CCR fellows and young investigators steering committee. The recruiter referred me to a hiring manager at QIAGEN.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Stepping outside my comfort zone by organizing career seminars through my involvement in FelCom.

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

This is not an entry position for graduate students or postdocs. I advise anyone interested in such a position to take on an entry position first, such as a scientist or project manager, and then transition to product management.

## **Robert Munford**

Senior Clinician

NIAID

[munfordrq@niaid.nih.gov](mailto:munfordrq@niaid.nih.gov)

**Where is your highest degree from?** Harvard Medical School, Medicine, 1970

**Other degrees:** Vanderbilt, Oxford

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

Bench research, protocol review.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

Persistence. Ability to reject one's own pet ideas and move on. Marketing one's research.

**How did you get your current position?**

Not important.

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Having smart colleagues.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Do what you love to do. If you're any good at it, there'll be a way.

There's no requirement to retire!

## **Robert Taylor**

CEO

Sage Analytica

rtaylor@sageanalytica.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** Georgetown University, Chemistry, Ph.D.

**Other degrees:**

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

With a partner, I run a small company specializing in research on infectious diseases, epidemiology and scientific communication.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

Clear writing, organization, ability to understand what one person is saying and explain it to another, perseverance.

**How did you get your current position?**

I founded the company with a partner.

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

After getting my Ph.D., I worked as a science journalist for 15 years. That experience was very useful. In most things I do, I am at heart translating complicated technical ideas between people with different backgrounds. For example, explaining some biological concept to a computer programmer, or understanding what a client really needs to know and explaining that right back.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Be flexible.

## ***Sandra Chapman***

Senior Program Analyst  
QinetiQ North America  
sandra.chapman.ctr@navy.mil

**Where is your highest degree from?** Pennsylvania State University, Molecular Medicine, 2010

### **Other degrees:**

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a contractor supporting the Director of Research at the Office of Naval Research. I work on various program evaluation efforts that include the development of a data collection tool for grant progress reporting, and portfolio analysis.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Patience! Things in the government and particularly the DoD can move very slowly. Just as my immortalization experiments in grad school at the NIH took time, so does a lot of the assignments I have here. The difference is that here the limiting factors are often other people or regulatory hurdles.

### **How did you get your current position?**

A job posting through my AAAS network is how I found the job announcement. I applied, interviewed, and then got a call informing me that I was NOT selected for the position. However, a couple of days later, I got a call back informing me that while they had someone else who was better suited for the position I had responded to, they had realized during my interview they needed someone with my skills set and thus they were creating a new position for me.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Staying positive and creative. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and cynical in this job climate. I had a lot of rejection and a lot of failed possibilities, but, there is also a lot of hidden opportunities. If you are creative and flexible enough, it is possible to craft your own fate.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Get out there! To find the hidden opportunities you really need to get out there and start learning about the expansive network of opportunities that exist in the world of science policy! Set up informational interviews just to expose yourself to some of these organizations.

It is very social. This is a big aspect of the job. In my opinion, it would be hard to succeed if you are not comfortable with introducing yourself to new people and working with people everyday. It is a field highly reliant on teamwork on a very large scale. You have to engage with many, many people; and the more people you engage with, the more successful you will be.

## ***Sarah Rothman***

Sr Scientist In Vivo Pharmacology, Neuroscience  
Merck Research Labs  
sarah.rothman@merck.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Pennsylvania, Bioengineering (PhD), 2009

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I am a receptor pharmacologist on a team of 12 people. I plan and execute studies that bridge in vivo and ex vivo applications. I work closely with disease biologists and behavioral pharmacologists to evaluate compounds in tissue-based assays.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Flexibility, flexibility, flexibility. Organization, diplomacy, optimism.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

I saw a job-listing and used my network to make sure my resume and cover letter went directly to the hiring manager.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Go to conferences with industry presence and meet people. Stay on top of what is interesting in your field from a drug discovery standpoint (not always the same as what is generally interesting in your field). Demonstrate flexibility and cooperativity in concrete ways.

## ***Sarah Teter***

Technical Services Scientist  
Promega Corporation  
sarah.teter@promega.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Wisconsin-Madison, Biochemistry, 2013

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I work on a team that provides technical support for Promega's products by phone, email and chat. The fundamental goal of our team is to help customers understand Promega's products and how to apply these products to their diverse research projects. Our team advises customers on choosing the product(s) that best suit their projects, and we offer troubleshooting assistance for any difficulties customers might experience while using our products.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

The most challenging aspect of transitioning from the lab to product support was shifting my focus from a very narrow field to thinking about many different fields of science in a single day. One needs to be able to quickly understand research from many different research fields, which involves knowing how to ask the "right" questions, listening, and isolating the relevant information. A lot of the skills come from on-the-job experience, but key traits that one should bring to the job are adaptability, multi-tasking, and the ability to find information quickly.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

I applied for the position on the Promega employment webpage, but I am certain that having the recommendation from a Promega employee in my network helped me to get the initial interview.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

I would recommend that you take the opportunity to present your research as often as possible through talks and posters. This helps to develop your skills for discussing science in an articulate and logical manner.

## ***Stefano Costanzi***

Assistant Professor  
American University  
costanzi@american.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Camerino (Italy), Medicinal Chemistry, 2000

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I teach courses related to biochemistry and conduct research in the field of molecular modeling and biochemical pharmacology. I am most interested in the study of G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) and the identification of molecules that modulate their activity.

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Scientific creativity, effective writing, engaging teaching, interpersonal skills, time management.

#### **How did you get your current position?**

I sent an application packet to American University in response to an advertisement for an open faculty position in the field of Biochemistry and successfully completed the interviewing and negotiation process.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Practice teaching, perhaps as an adjunct professor.

## ***Susan Shurin***

Deputy Director  
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, NIH  
shurinsb@nhlbi.nih.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** Johns Hopkins, Medicine, 1971

**Other degrees:** BA, Harvard Radcliffe

**What is your current role/responsibility?**

Senior scientific administration - overseeing scientific investments, management and personnel.

**What skills make you successful in this job?**

Scientific expertise.  
Ability to manage money, other resources and people.  
Political and strategic skills.

**How did you get your current position?**

I was approached by people at the Institute.

**Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Long career in academic medicine and senior university administration.

**What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Develop fundamental content expertise, relationships and establish reputation.

## ***Sylvia Hsu-Chen Yip***

Technical Advisor  
Oblon Spivak McClelland Maier and Neustadt LLP  
sylviahc.yip@gmail.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** The Australian National University, Chemistry, 2010

**Other degrees:** B.S. in Biochemistry from the National University of Malaysia

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

Prosecute U.S. and international patent applications. This includes evaluating invention disclosures, drafting patent applications, communicating with inventors, drafting responses to Office Actions received from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office as well as other foreign patent offices (write amendments, appeal briefs, reply briefs, etc.)

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Strong and creative technical and legal writing skills, cognizance of technology and innovation, excellent communication and interpersonal skills, versatility (able to understand diverse technologies), time management and love of deadlines, ability to learn and understand new technologies fast.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Job-listing and recruiter.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Internship at Emory University Office of Technology Transfer, networking, LinkedIn.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Find out as much as you can about a career path - the good as well as the bad. Understand why you choose it and why you're suited for it and why it suits you. Focus on professional development or even revolutionizing your professional image, rather than just landing a job in the new chosen career path. You need to tell a convincing story when speaking to a potential employer.

For those with their education background in life sciences, chemists are a lot more sought after than bio people.

## ***Tyrone Spady***

Director of Legislative and Public Affairs  
American Society of Plant Biologists  
tspady@aspb.org

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of New Hampshire, Evolutionary Biology/Genetics, 2006

**Other degrees:** B.S. from University of Maryland Baltimore County

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I lead the legislative and science policy-related activities of ASPB in support of plant science research.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Writing is tremendously important. Interpersonal skills are also key to this professional space.

### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking and job-listing.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

While still a postdoc at NIH, I arranged a three month detail at the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. This turned into my first job.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Talk to people who are doing what you want to do, as well as your colleagues pursuing similar trajectories.

## **Unni Jensen**

Senior Scientific Manager  
Thomson Reuters / Scientific & Scholarly Research  
unni.jensen@thomsonreuters.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Iowa, PhD in Neuroscience, 2008

**Other degrees:** PMP Certified

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

My group works on research evaluation. For example, we help NIH or NSF evaluate if the grant programs in the extramural offices are making an impact on research and ultimately on disease or science findings. We also help universities understand how faculty in a department, such as biology, compare to similar departments in other local, USA or world departments.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

We use a wide range of tools/skills such as:

- data mining
- programing
- analysis
- visualizations
- logic models
- technical writing
- project management
- proposal development
- business development

### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I worked in finance at Goldman Sachs, went on to get a PhD in Neuroscience, then to NIH before coming to TR.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

I often see CVs and resumes from students in academia when they try to move into a business job. Instead of highlighting their business skills they highlight their science skills such as western blotting, which is of no use in most businesses. The students fail to realize that skills such a data handling or time management are very important to a business. Even basic things like showing up in a suit and thank you notes are often forgotten.

We are hiring. At Thomson Reuters, we believe what we do matters. We are passionate about our work and inspired by the impact it has on our business and our customers. As a team, we believe in winning as one - collaborating to reach shared goals, and developing through challenging and meaningful experiences. With over 60,000 employees in more than 100 countries, we work flexibly across boundaries and realize innovations that help shape industries around the world. Making this happen is a dynamic, evolving process, and we count on each employee to be a catalyst in driving our performance - and their own.

## ***Valerie Fremont***

Director of Product Development  
Trophogen, Inc.  
vfremont@trophogen.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Provence, Marseille, France, Ph. D. in Biochemistry

**Other degrees:** Master in Biochemistry from University of Sciences, Montpellier, France

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

My responsibility is to translate ideas and concepts into data and products. I manage, supervise and coordinate all scientific programs, and align priorities with management and business.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

In addition to a good understanding of current scientific techniques and methodologies, communication and planning are skills I had to develop over the years. Supervising several programs at the same time requires planning, and managing a team, collaborators and contracts. Research organizations demand constant communication.

### **How did you get your current position?**

When my supervisor decided to leave the University where I was a post-doc, he offered me a job in the biotech company he and a venture fund were starting. I jumped at the opportunity.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I joined Women In Bio just after it was launched. Being one of the original members gave me the opportunity to be involved in building and growing a non profit organization with a focus on life sciences. This opportunity has given me more experience and confidence in my abilities to lead a team and manage programs.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

If it sounds intriguing, challenging, exciting, or inspiring, try it.

## **Zandrea Ambrose**

Assistant Professor of Medicine  
University of Pittsburgh  
zaa4@pitt.edu

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Washington, Pathobiology, 2001

**Other degrees:** Ohio Wesleyan University

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I have a lab studying HIV-1 transmission, drug resistance, and persistence. I have a technician, three students, an MD fellow, and a postdoctoral fellow. I supervise their projects and write grants for new funding for the lab. I also do some teaching for graduate and medical school courses.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

Writing is very important for a PI. Both for publishing work and applying for grants. You need to know how to convey information to others well. I was surprised at how many business skills are required to run a lab, such as preparing and managing budget, hiring employees, and managing employees.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I applied for this job and similar jobs. My current boss knew me and my work very well and my area of interest complimented other research in the division.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I was lucky enough to have networked at many local, national, and international meetings during my postdoc. I also had multiple mentors who all shaped my science knowledge and practices.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Pick research that excites you! This job can be challenging, so you want to be doing something that you like and are passionate about. Also, it helps to create a niche for yourself. This could be developing a novel technology or using a model or technique that is not commonly used. This allows you to work with others who compliment your work. This makes it both easier to obtain funding and addresses scientific problems more comprehensively.

## ***Katherine Bricceno***

Communications Manager

AABB

kbricceno@gmail.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** The George Washington University, Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics, 2013

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

I write and edit content for communications vehicles, including newsletters, magazines and websites, for a nonprofit organization representing professionals working in transfusion medicine and cellular therapies.

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

I must have strong writing and editing skills. I also need to manage multiple projects and meet tight deadlines. I often work with staff from across the organization so I need good communication skills.

### **How did you get your current position?**

I applied through a posting on LinkedIn.

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

While at NIH, I wrote newsletters and blogs to gain writing experience beyond scientific papers. I also did details in communications and policy offices. These experiences helped strengthen my skills at writing for a non-scientific audience and gave me experience working in an office environment.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

I would recommend getting experience writing about different subjects for a variety of audiences. Initially, you just want to gain experience and determine the type of writing you enjoy. Once you know these things, try to write for publications or sites that have a formal editing process. You will learn a great deal and have published pieces to submit with job applications. Most employers will expect you to have writing samples other than peer-reviewed journal articles.

## ***Jamie Stacey***

Vice President and Science Product Leader  
Kelly Services  
jamie.stacey@kellyservices.com

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Wisconsin-Madison, Chemistry, 1995

### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

Responsible for the scientific product strategy which ensures that Kelly delivers the world's best scientific workforce solutions to its customers

### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

A background in science is essential for this job as well as understanding scientific talent. I need to know how scientists want to work as well as how companies want to hire that talent.

### **How did you get your current position?**

LinkedIn and an Executive Recruiter

### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

Undergraduate research helped me set my graduate path. My graduate studies helped me to find my first job at the bench in industry. And being open to different ways to use my science background led me to my career in Recruiting.

### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

Talk to as many people in your target industry as possible. The opportunities are endless.

## **David Schneeweis**

Deputy Scientific Director, NEI/NIH  
National Eye Institute (NEI)  
david.schneeweis@nih.gov

**Where is your highest degree from?** University of Michigan, Biomedical Engineering, 1991

### **Other degrees:**

#### **What is your current role/responsibility?**

- Administer the day-to-day activities of the NEI Intramural Research Program
- Manage budget and personnel
- Oversee training in the NEI (postbaccs, grad students, postdocs)

#### **What skills make you successful in this job?**

- Ability to manage time, prioritize tasks, and plan ahead
- Ability to problem solve (a skill, but also an attitude that makes people want to work with you)
- Ability to manage expectations (that others have of you). Don't over promise.
- Ability to work level-headed under pressure and respond to unexpected demands
- Flexibility (to adapt to new rules, new people, new circumstances)
- Ability to delegate effectively
- Ability to communicate effectively and efficiently (in writing and verbally)
- Ability to work effectively with a large range of colleagues "above" and "below" my level. Be able to park your ego. Engender authentic respect.
- Ability to empathize and see multiple perspectives of an issue
- Ability to read people (in order to work with them effectively)
- Patience (to work in government!)

#### **How did you get your current position?**

Networking.

#### **Any other experiences that led to your success?**

I think it is important to identify and work toward your strengths. Also, always look for opportunities that allow you to fill a niche, make yourself valuable, or learn a skill. Step up.

#### **What advice would you give to someone who was interested in your career path?**

This position involves a lot of administration and working with different kinds of people. Start collecting these kinds of experiences early.

My position (and similar ones) exists in all or most of the different NIH institutes. It was surprising to me that individuals in these positions do not always have a scientific background directly related to the work of the institute. (That said, my research background IS relevant to the NEI, and I think it helped me to get the position.)