

Career fair to focus on the dynamic nature of biomedical careers

By Ashley Godfrey

The 16th annual NIEHS career fair will once again be held at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Research Triangle Park, N.C., campus on Friday, April 26.

This year's event features a keynote address, "A Crook in the Road: A Real World Path in Bioscience Entrepreneurship," by Patricia Beckmann, Ph.D., former executive director of the Oregon Translational Research and Development Institute and founder of the consulting company BioStrategy, LLC. One of the central themes for this year's fair is that today's biomedical science careers are more likely to follow a zigzagging path to success.

"This is something that I hope Dr. Beckmann will emphasize and will be highlighted by a career transitions panel with scientists who have successfully made moves between academia and industry. There will also be workshops focused on leadership skills and recognizing and articulating transferable skills that are useful across career types," explained Staton Wade, Ph.D., one of two co-chairs in charge of planning this year's event.

Beckmann brings nearly 25 years' experience in biotech that includes postdoctoral experiences as a Fulbright scholar and a visiting scientist at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), many dozens of published papers and patents, and a long list of jobs from drug, law, and venture capital firms, to state economic development organizations.

Paving the road to success

The career fair is organized and run by a committee of NIEHS and EPA trainees, and is one of the area's most highly attended career fairs, drawing young scientists from many of the surrounding universities. The goal is to provide workshops and panel sessions, to give these young scientists the skills and connections they need for career satisfaction and success.

Reflecting the ever-changing climate in bioscience careers today, this year's panels lean toward many nontraditional, nonbench careers, and are focused on a particular type of job or interest area, such as science policy, public health, heading up a lab, and education. The planning committee added more workshops this year, and put panels and workshops together running concurrently in one-hour sessions. Workshops include a variety of career skills from setting career goals and preparing for an interview, to management and leadership skills for scientists.

The planning committee worked very hard to make changes to this year's fair, based on prior years' feedback. "We have tried to incorporate epidemiologists on the panels, especially in the areas of science policy and public health, and we have expanded the popular CV/resume reviews to about twice as many slots as last year," explained Wade.

Registration (<http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/careerfair/index.cfm?do=registration.participant>) opened on March 18th and will close once the event is full. Interested trainees should secure their spot, as soon as possible, for a day focused on helping build a path to success. For more information about the career fair, go to <http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/careerfair/index.cfm>. (<http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/careerfair/index.cfm>)

(Ashley Godfrey, Ph.D., is a postdoctoral fellow in the Molecular and Genetic Epidemiology Group in the NIEHS Laboratory of Molecular Carcinogenesis.)



Wade is a postdoctoral fellow in the Chromatin and Gene Expression Group in the NIEHS Laboratory of Molecular Carcinogenesis. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Co-chair responsibility is shared by Kymberly Gowdy, Ph.D., a postdoctoral fellow in the Clinical Investigation of Host Defense Group in the NIEHS Laboratory of Respiratory Biology. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Trainees get to meet and greet people from other institutions, catch up with former colleagues who have made the big transition, and gain a new perspective on the job market. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



The career fairs consistently draw a capacity audience of young scientists eager to network and learn. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



This year's fair will host a number of local companies and organizations eager to interact with young scientists. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



Much of the Biomedical Career Fair is devoted to sector- and profession-focused panels where representatives give brief presentations and answer questions. NIH Human Resources specialist Angela Davis, above, participated in a panel on federal government employment. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

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