

## DIA 2013 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting "Advancing Therapeutic Innovation and Regulatory Science" June 23 – 27, 2013 Boston Convention and Exhibition Center Boston, MA

Session 239 – Student Forum: Getting a Job & Developing a Career

Before the *DIA 2013 49th Annual Meeting Student Forum*, I was under the impression that "job" and "career" were interchangeable terms. The *Forum* panelists corrected this misconception: Your job is the 40 hour/week position that will pay your rent, but your career is the continuous track upon which you will progress throughout your professional life. Chaired by Danny A. Benau, PhD (Director, Biomedical Writing Programs, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia), this *Student Forum* provided fundamentals to help students get started on developing a career, including advice on interviewing, fostering mentors and gaining experience.

Kelleen Flaherty, MS (Assistant Professor, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia), shed light on how to interview for the position that could develop into your career. One of the most important components of an interview is your preparation. In particular, have a good sense of the company pipeline and who will be conducting the interview, and fully understand the job description. Most of this information will be available online. In addition, it can be immensely helpful to talk before the interview with others in the field to discuss the company's reputation and solicit interview advice specific to the job type.

It is very important to be early the day of your interview. Remember to bring business cards, your CV or resume, and work samples plus a pad of paper and a pen. First impressions are important; when you first meet someone, remember to smile, maintain eye contact and offer a firm handshake.

During the interview, incorporating the interviewer's points into your responses will show that you are actively listening and are on the same page. Emphasize your experience, and expand on the information provided in the resume. Come prepared to ask intelligent questions that cannot be answered by an internet search. Things NOT to do include trash-talking about previous associates, interrupting or demonstrating nervousness or sarcasm. At the end of the interview, exchange business cards with every contact you met. Use this contact information to email a "thank you" note that refers back to specific information from your interview. This can be the "make or break" point that determines whether you receive a call back.

Amy N. Grant, MS (Director, Global Regulatory Strategy & Science, ViroPharma Inc.), next discussed the importance of having a mentor for your career. One quote that drove home this point: "Mentors shape lives, not just careers." Mentors have been fundamental in Amy's own career and provide a source of guidance and insight especially during critical career crossroads. When determining a mentor, consider someone who displays specific attributes that you wish to emulate (disciplined approach, sound judgment, decision-making for the common good, respected by others, etc.). If you are looking for a mentor, consider exploring the DIA emerging professionals group.

Justin Balint, PharmD (Post-Doctoral Fellow, Oncology Advocacy & Policy, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey), concluded this session by explaining how internships and fellowships can bridge the gap between students seeking employment and an employer seeking candidates with job experience. Job experience is the building block for you to market and emphasize during job interviews. Although it is good to have an idea of where you want to go in the next five years, it is also important to be open to different outcomes. One project during an internship could radically change where you end up.

Attending conferences like the *DIA Annual Meeting* and talking to professionals make connections that may potentially open an internship opportunity, and that internship could be a foothold into your future career. An industry fellowship after graduation is a great way to get hands-on training, network and provide your own competitive edge. Many fellowship programs allow for teaching, research and publication opportunities, too. As for interviews, Justin also strongly encouraged applicants to research your interviewing company, arrive early, bring business cards and dress professionally. His parting advice: Have a plan but be flexible!

*DIA 2013 49th Annual Meeting Student Forum* provided insightful information to help a student to develop a meaningful career and not just grunt through a job! Implementing this advice will help students transition from the classroom to industry and, once in industry, can even help an individual develop their lifelong career.

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