University Outreach Committee (UOC)

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The UOC committee is excited to report a great year for recruitment. Fellowship Information Day (FID) is quickly approaching and nearly all the University visits are complete. Several additions have been made to our Outreach process. Rutgers will now maintain a successful Candidate database, email students that have expressed interest in the program, and send thank you letters and personal invitations to FID. We have also been able to increase the opportunity for students to ask questions via fellows that have volunteered to represent their discipline.

In particular, the candidate database has been an ongoing and increasingly important effort by the UOC and our recruitment plans. This database not only includes contact information for all students who expressed interest in the program during the university visits but also includes the discipline of interest for each prospective candidate. This new information allows current fellows within a discipline to reach out to the most interested students. This database will allow us to target qualified candidates and send them information periodically about the program. Our goal is to send advanced notification to these candidates of future visits to their university, as well as a personalized invitation to FID.

With respect to our UOC budget, we are happy to announce that Rutgers has optimized the number of schools visited. This effort was a success due to the cooperation of fellows during their university recruitment visits. The increased awareness for the Fellowship program across the country has proven to be successful in recruiting the most qualified and strongest candidates. In addition, we anticipate that the extra efforts made this year will only enhance our recruitment efforts and the quality of candidates.

The committee would like to thank everyone that has volunteered and participated to bring in a great group for 2009.
Life after the Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship
Shalini Vohra, PharmD

Melissa and Stephen Mitchener met each other during their fellowship experience. They were married soon after and now they are about to embark on a journey in their professional careers. Melissa is employed by Roche and Stephen is employed by Novartis. Both have successfully landed positions with their respected companies in Basel and have decided to move overseas for a few years. I was able to interview Melissa and Stephen on the couple’s past, present, and future. Both were kind enough to answer personal as well as professional questions including how the fellowship helped them get to where they are now.

Shalini: What were your fellowships in when beginning this program?
Melissa: My fellowship was completed at Novartis in Clinical Research.
Stephen: My fellowship was completed at Novartis Oncology in Marketing.

Shalini: What year did you begin the program?
Melissa and Stephen: 2003 and completed 2005

Shalini: What were your goals and objectives finishing the program and what did you do to help you attain those?
Melissa: My goals were to understand the dynamics and details behind managing and running a successful clinical trial. During my fellowship, I worked on a hypertension program that included 5 studies and was able to start up and manage my own clinical trial during my second year of the fellowship.
Stephen: My goals were to gain as much experience in pretty much every and any project that was related to the commercial goals of the organization. I was very proactive in constantly asking for more and more strategic projects as my fellowship went on, making sure that I had gained enough experience to make me a strong candidate for a variety of roles upon fellowship completion.

Shalini: What aspect of the fellowship stayed with you the most up until now?
Melissa: The fellowship gave me the opportunity to get hands on experience that has given me the skills to continue to grow and flourish in the pharma industry. I also made life long friendships and met Stephen, my husband during my fellowship.
Stephen: With any fellowship you are learning a brand new skill set, but with that, the relationships you create stay with you throughout your career. To this day I am constantly in touch with co-fellows, preceptors, and colleagues that I have come to know from my early fellowship days.

Shalini: What was your 1st position after the fellowship?
Melissa: Senior Clinical Research Scientist at Novartis in Transplant Medical Affairs
Stephen: Novartis Oncology Sales Representative

Shalini: Describe the transition from a “fellow” to “full employee.” Was this a difficult transition? Did you have more responsibilities?
Melissa: The transition was not difficult since many of the core competencies were learned during my fellowship and I was able to easily translate the skills in my new role as a full time employee.
Stephen: The transition was not very difficult as the skill set I gained during the fellowship was a tremendous benefit in dealing with the responsibilities of my new role. If anything, the accountability from “fellow” to “full employee” does increase significantly.

Shalini: How has your career path changed since the fellowship?
Melissa: My career continues to grow in the Clinical Research arena. After spending 1 year as Senior Clinical Research Scientist in Transplant Medical Affairs, I pursued an opportunity at Hoffmann-LaRoche working in Phase II-III US studies as a Country Study Manager. I now have the opportunity to work abroad at the Roche home office in Basel, Switzerland.

Stephen: My career continues to evolve with each new role. Starting with my fellowship until the present, I have gained experience in market research/business analytics, advertising, US marketing, specialty sales, as well as most recently—product launch experience. With each new opportunity I was able to continue to learn more and more about different aspects of what drives the commercial side of a pharmaceutical organization. In parallel, my career path has changed based on these new experiences.

Shalini: One advice to give to a fellow – what would it be?
Melissa: My 1 advice would be absorb and cherish your time as a fellow. The fellowship is a prime opportunity to gain experience, ask questions, and explore different areas of interest.
Stephen: Take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself and utilize these opportunities to create new ones.
Shalini: What specific advantages did the fellowship provide you compared to an employee with the same number of years experience that did not go through the fellowship?

Melissa: The fellowship gave me the opportunity to gain hands on experience in managing clinical trials. I was able to get a complete experience during my fellowship and was able to obtain a full time position that required a minimum of 5 years experience. The fellowship gave me an opportunity for accelerated career advancement.

Stephen: I flat-out would not be even close to having the positions that I have had or will have without the benefit of the fellowship. The opportunity to experience and produce in roles that typically take years to get have allowed me to accelerate my career significantly. Since the fellowship, I have spent time as an Oncology Sales Representative (typically need 5-7+ years of primary sales experience before getting a job), have had product launch experience (typically need ~ 5+ years of marketing experience to be eligible), and with my new role (Global Strategic Marketing)—most candidates have 10+ years of commercial experience within pharma.

Stephen: I wish I had spent more time focusing on the things I could influence and change, versus those that I couldn’t. Knowing the difference between the two will only help make you more productive.

Shalini: More about the positions in Basel?

Melissa: I will be managing a Phase I global study working in the Oncology franchise. My title is Global Study Operations Manager.

Stephen: I will be working in the Global Strategic Marketing Group, responsible for BD&L (Business Development and Licensing), New Product Commercialization, and Disease Area Strategy initiatives.

Shalini: Given the current market and the overseas status – what do you see as a challenge in Basel, if any?

Melissa: I do not foresee any major challenges given the current market and overseas status. The economic environment continues to change but Roche continues to be a strong leader in the pharma industry.

Stephen: The market is the market and will always have its ups and downs. Luckily both Melissa and I work for 2 large companies with diverse portfolios and pipelines that can withstand the constant ebb and flow.

Shalini: Where would you like to be in 5 years? 10 years?

Melissa: I would like to continue my career in clinical research and work towards a strategic role where I can utilize my experience and continue to be challenged on a day to day basis.

Stephen: I would like to continue broadening my horizons on the commercial side of the organization. Over the next 5 years I would like to continue to develop my skills while managing people. In the next 10 years I’d like to be a business unit head or comparable general manager type role.

Shalini: If there is anything you can change about how you spent the fellowship – what would it be?

Melissa: Nothing

Stephen: I wish I had spent more time focusing on the things I could influence and change, versus those that I couldn’t. Knowing the difference between the two will only help make you more productive.

Our Fellow Fellows at their best.....
Community Development Committee Activities
Camaraderie, Adventure, Charity and Web 2.0

The first half of the 2008-09 Fellowship year has gotten off to a strong start. As fellows have begun their transition to the pharmaceutical industry, the Community Development Committee (CDC) has been present to assist in the formation and support of the fellow community. Our annual canoe trip down the mighty Delaware river was just the first of several events aimed at fostering relationships and providing networking opportunities.

The first annual New York City Photo Scavenger Hunt proved to be a memorable outing for many fellows. On an overcast Saturday morning, small groups of fellows were unleashed in midtown Manhattan in search of famous NYC landmarks. The outcome from this adventure was a plethora of photos highlighting the creative antics of PharmD’s armed with digital cameras!

Several weeks later a more daring (and perhaps crazier) bunch of fellows attempted to “soar ever higher,” luckily they brought along parachutes! Although they never reached their goal, the group was able to practice stress management techniques while overcoming the fear of jumping out of a perfectly good airplane at 10,000 feet. No worries, all fellows have been accounted for!

In addition to our various adventures, we still take time out of our busy schedules to support charitable causes. Our team had another successful year at the Susan G. Komen Race for the cure in Central Park. This event was co-led by Nina Gutman and Maria Berkhin. A total of 47 participants from RPIF helped “run breast cancer out of town” and raised more than $2,300 for the foundation. Additionally, during a recent professional development day (PDD), we were able

Linked In

We are pleased to announce a new professional networking initiative designed to promote connectivity among all 500 Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship (RPIF) Program alumni, as well as our current fellows. About 300 of you have already developed a professional profile on the popular professional networking site, “LinkedIn,” which now has 25 million users worldwide. We have created a group called the “Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship Program Network” through this site, and are pleased to invite and encourage you to become a group member.

Our goal is to enroll all of our alumni in this Group, which will replace the current “alumni database” on the Program website and become a self-sustaining way for everyone to stay current and connected through LinkedIn.

By joining this group, you will enjoy the following benefits:

- Quickly reconnect with friends and colleagues in the Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship Program community
- Easily create connections with alumni and current fellows to build a network that can be utilized to maximize employment and other opportunities
- Conveniently maintain an updated record of your professional experience

If you are new to LinkedIn, please visit http://www.linkedin.com/ to create a professional profile with your most current information.

Once you have created a profile, please join our RPIF Program Network group. All RPIF alumni have been pre-approved for enrollment and an automatic invitation has been emailed requesting you to join. If you have not received this invitation, please click on the following link and follow the directions provided: http://www.linkedin.com/e/gis/48770/6291B07C9A61

We would like to thank graduating fellows Jein Song and Eric Jen for their help in organizing this initiative. We are pleased to be able to

Facebook

The UOC committee is excited to announce that it is exploring new mediums to spread awareness about the RPIF program. Our newest avenue is our group page on Facebook.com. The group is open to past and current fellows and also interested candidates. The UOC committee plans to post materials such as our company brochures and recruitment videos. We will also be using the site to send outbound messages to interested candidates and direct them to the RPIF website for further information. Please remember to advertise this new medium on all your recruitment visits! If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions on the Facebook page, please email me at bond.vo@roche.com or contact any other UOC committee chair.