

Highlights of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of Professional Science Master's Program Leaders

Over 200 Professional Science Master's (PSM) program directors, graduate deans, association and education administrators, alumni, and federal and state policymakers, gathered in Washington D.C. on November 4-6, 2009 for the Sixth PSM Biennial Meeting: Advancing the Nation's

Competitiveness and Innovation Agenda, hosted by the Council of Graduate Schools with support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The program agenda included the PSM's role in addressing challenges of maintaining U.S. competitiveness in the face of globalization, increased federal and state accountability, increased competition for students, and demographic changes in the composition of graduate students.

Debra Stewart, CGS President, and Don Langenberg, Chair of the CGS PSM Advisory Board and Chancellor Emeritus, University of Maryland, set the stage for the meeting with a welcome and introductory remarks. The first plenary session, titled "Enhancement and Expansion of the PSM: National Perspectives," stressed the role of the PSM in facilitating innovation and the necessity of collaboration among stakeholders—policymakers, universities, and employers. The Honorable David Wu, U.S. House of Representatives, iterated the need to recognize the pivotal role the PSM can play in maintaining our nation's competitiveness. Speakers included Rita Colwell, Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland, College Park and The Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health; Bill Valdez, Director, Office of Workforce Development for Teachers and Sciences, U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science; and Cornelius Kerwin, President, American University.

In a session focused on state perspectives, Nancy Zimpher, Chancellor, State University of New York; Mohammad Qayoumi, President, California State University, East Bay; and Richard Devlin, Senate Majority Leader, Oregon State Legislature, shared their perspectives regarding the PSM as a key component of their states' workforce development strategy, emphasizing the need to enhance competitiveness in the global economy.

David Chapman, University of Utah, and Jung Choi, Georgia Institute of Technology, discussed the topic of "Financial Models for Program Sustainability" in a session moderated by Greg Buck, Virginia Commonwealth University. Strategies such as tuition surcharges and program fees were described.

In a session titled, "Ethics and the PSM," Cliff Chancey and Donna Wood, University of Northern Iowa, and Ching-Hua Wang and Karol Pessin, California State University, Channel Islands, considered what type of ethics instruction can best prepare PSM graduates to cope with the immense pressures associated with professional scientific positions in business and industry and how to introduce this instruction into an



existing program. Julie Funk, Director, Michigan State University, moderated the session.

Linda Strausbaugh, Lee Aggison, and Elaine Mirkin, University of Connecticut, and Saeed Foroudastan, Kristina Hulsey, and Sandra Hollis-Hyde, Middle Tennessee State

University, discussed their approaches to recruiting students and marketing the PSM with a particular emphasis on recruiting underrepresented students. The session was introduced by Ursula Bechert, Oregon State University and National Professional Science Master's Association (NPSMA) President, who presented an overview of how innovations such as the PSM follow a curvilinear path as they are adopted and adapted over time.

The Distinguished Alumni panel was widely regarded as one of the most valuable sessions. Todd Bridgeman, NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps, Sally Sakelaris, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Chris Fennig, Odin Technologies, Inc., Hutch Humphreys, Amylin Pharmaceuticals, and Cheril Lin Abeel, Urban Science, graduates of five different PSM programs, described how the PSM impacted their career pathways. A related session, "PSM Graduates and Those Who Hire Them," was organized by the NPSMA and also featured graduates of PSM programs who discussed how the PSM prepared them for employment, and an employer who highlighted the special skills a PSM graduate brings to the workplace. These two sessions provided real illustrations of how PSM graduates are making valuable contributions to the nation's prosperity through innovation and leadership.

A new feature of the meeting was a best practice poster session with 25 posters selected for presentation. The posters addressed issues such as the internship, external advisory boards, an online mentoring program, guidelines for PSM program recognition, how PSM programs can serve veterans, ethics, state and system-wide initiatives, student perspectives on the PSM, initiatives of NPSMA, and unique features of several PSM programs.

Special guest speaker, Arden Bement, Director, National Science Foundation, closed the meeting by sharing his perspective on the future of the science master's program as well as what he hopes this program will achieve for the nation.

Proceedings of the PSM Biennial will be available early 2010 on www.sciencemasters.com. The complete program can be viewed now at <http://www.sciencemasters.com/PSMBiennialMeeting/tabid/99/Default.aspx>.

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