

Opening Doors Event Summary:
Networking and Establishing Collaborations
by Aimee Egger, Ph.D., Villanova University

Now an SFRBM annual meeting tradition, the 2015 Opening Doors Event was held on Thursday, November 19th, and this year's topic was *Networking and Establishing Collaborations*. This workshop is sponsored by the Women in Science (WIS) committee, and all SFRBM members are welcome to attend.

Co-chaired by Maria Clara Franco, Ph.D., University of Central Florida, and Samantha Giordano, Ph.D., University of Alabama at Birmingham, the workshop provided insight and ideas about networking and collaborating in a variety of venues, from academic conferences to industry to social media. This year's speakers were Dr. Eric Kelley, Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh and vice president of SFRBM membership, Dr. Marcie Cole, Assistant Professor at the University of Louisville, Dr. Anne Diers, Principal Scientist of Cancer Biology at Berg, LLC, and Brent Carney, CEO of Carney Communications, the society's communications and public affairs partner.

Eric led off the speakers by sharing a list of top “do's and don'ts” for networking, with a focus on events such as academic society meetings. One piece of advice was to choose target-rich positions for networking—recognizing that time is limited, and therefore taking on, for example, volunteer opportunities that connect you with those you are most interested in networking with. Another nugget of advice was to think of every talk and every poster as a job interview. This means dressing the part, and being prepared to present yourself well, including your research interests and your long-term goals.

Marcie next spoke on academic collaborations—how to choose them wisely, and importantly, to know the terms of the collaboration. Aspects to consider include authorship, mutual goals and timelines, and who is responsible for costs of resources, as well as judging whether there is in fact enough mutual interest to effectively pursue the collaboration.

Anne then brought a perspective many academics are unfamiliar with—how to effectively network and collaborate with industry. The company she works for, Berg, has collaborated with numerous academic labs at institutions including Harvard Medical School and Weill Cornell Medical College. Anne explained the industry perspective on collaborating with academic labs, with goals of: access to unique samples the lab has gathered, opportunities to showcase the company's technology, and recognition in the scientific community in terms of publications, etc. In collaborating with industry she shared it's critical to work from well-defined project scopes, deliverables, timelines, and ownership of data, and to stick to the agreed-upon terms.

Brent's extensive experience in social media solutions for educational institutions, pharma, governments, etc., makes him an expert in advice for using social media to your networking advantage. He discussed the advantages of using social media, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and blogging for one's scientific career. These benefits include creating and maximizing opportunities for networking, promoting your work, being a resource for others, and engaging the public. His main tip on

what to be wary of with social networking, both professional and personal, is that social media is not private. Network with care, and remember to whom you are connected.

In addition to the featured speakers, the event included opportunities for the participants to network, with a fun and informal get to know you game kicking off the event. The event concluded with small group discussions at each table, thinking through various networking scenarios and how one might handle them.

Based on attendee surveys, the event was a huge success, with participants unanimously agreeing that the session was informative and helpful, and that event itself helped them to network with other scientists. We look forward to seeing you at next year's Opening Doors Event. All SFRBM members are invited and encouraged to attend.