PostDoc Observer

Postdocs share their research expertise with the NC State community at the 2014 Postdoctoral Research Symposium

Sixty postdocs from 5 different universities presented at the 3rd Annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium on May 13, 2014 in the new Talley Student Union Ballroom. (Photo courtesy of Roger Winstead.)

On May 13, 2014, more than 160 postdocs, faculty, graduate students, and staff gathered in the Talley Student Union Ballroom for the 3rd Annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium. The Symposium, co-sponsored by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the NC State University Postdoctoral Association, was created to feature the research accomplishments of our postdoc scholars. This year, the event showcased 60 research posters, presented by postdocs from more than 30 different departments and 5 different research institutions (NC State University, UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, and NC Central University).

Dr. Tayyaba Hasan was the selected keynote speaker. A Professor of Health Sciences and Technology from Harvard-MIT and founding Director of the Office of for Research Career Development, Dr. Hasan was also the recipient of the National Postdoctoral Association’s Tenth Anniversary Mentor Award. As a mentor of more than 100 graduate students and postdocs, she shared anecdotes from her mentoring experience, and advised the postdocs and graduate students on the importance of professional development and involvement in leadership positions.

Posters were grouped in broad discipline categories and presented in one of two posters sessions. The breadth of research ranged from assessing student learning of flow cytometry to microfluidic devices that measure the hypoxia response in cancer cells to the effects of climate change on ants and the use of mathematical models to study the effect of insulin-mediated ovarian steroid (story cont. on p. 4).

“Postdocs do some of the highest quality research at NCSU. It's great to have a symposium that highlights all of that research from so many disciplines and shares it with the rest of the community.” - Graduate Student

Social Media

Submit your postdoc success stories to Dr. Nisha Cavanaugh, Director of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, at nacavana@ncsu.edu or to Dr. Emily Griffiths, Director of Communications (PDA), at ecgriffi@ncsu.edu.

Save-the-date:
- August 21: Registration opens for Fall 2014 professional development workshops
- September 15-19: National Postdoctoral Appreciation Week
- November 20 (tentative): North Carolina Master’s & PhD Career Fair

For more information, please see the NCSU Post-Doc Events Google Calendar.
Postdoc’s research goes out of this world

*Contributing author: Emily Griffiths, Ph.D., a postdoc in Entomology*

Dr. Clint Penick’s ants are high flyers. Literally. Clint is a postdoc in Dr. Rob Dunn’s group, in the Department of Biological Sciences, studying how thousands of kinds of ant survive in different conditions. His experiments have looked at the effects of climate change, altitude, and urban land surfaces. But what about zerogravity? How well would ants do in space?

NASA sought out a special supply of ants for this space experiment. Clint packaged up members of his pavement ant colony with his science communication colleague and NCSU graduate, Dr. Eleanor Spicer Rice. The ants zoomed off from east Virginia on the Antares rocket on January 9th and now live on the wall of the International Space Station. They’re orbiting earth in six different habitats observed by a camera that will record how the ants communicate to find food in space.

For more information about similar NASA research opportunities, check out [https://www.nssc.nasa.gov/grantstatus](https://www.nssc.nasa.gov/grantstatus).

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Dr. Young shares tips on how to thrive in spite of the Impostor Syndrome

On March 5th, 2014, more than 250 graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty, and staff gathered in the Talley Student Union Mountain Ballroom to hear from Dr. Valerie Young, about how to thrive in spite of the Impostor Syndrome. The concept originates from feeling like an impostor in the world of academic research and fear of being “found out.” Her presentation, “How to Feel as Bright and Capable as They Think You Are – Why Smart People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How You Can Thrive in Spite of it” was co-sponsored by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, *(story cont. on p. 3)*

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At the Impostor Syndrome event on March 5th, 2014 (Photo courtesy of Jennifer Dixon)
As we set out to begin our careers—both academic and non-academic—upon completing our doctorates, there are quite a few things for which we often find ourselves untrained and unprepared. As an undergraduate, I remember being somewhat stunned to hear a professor tell me that they rarely, if ever, receive any training in how to teach. This memory stayed with me as I pursued postgraduate study, preparing for an academic career, and I reminded myself that I would have to seek out opportunities to gain the experience and training I would need to be an effective academic and professional. In spite of this, and like so many other young scholars, I completed a Ph.D. and set out on my career path with virtually no training in or knowledge of how to market myself, build an effective CV and research and teaching statements, and especially—and, oh man, isn’t this so nerve wracking—how to interview. I learned that I was not alone. We were all basically clueless.

This is the story of how relieved I was to learn of the resources and services provided by the NCSU Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) and the services offered by its very thoughtful and helpful director, Dr. Nisha Cavanaugh. These resources and services are invaluable; the OPA website hosts a number of video tutorials on professional development, including “How to Handle a Phone Interview” (always a challenge) and “Preparing for the Job Interview,” “Writing an Effective Cover Letter,” and “Introduction to the Teaching Portfolio.” Additionally, the OPA frequently organizes workshops on such topics as preparing for tenure track and interview preparation and the websites offers a number of additional resources for professional development and career advancement.

As is often the case, nothing prepares you so much as practice in professional development. This is why I was genuinely thrilled when I casually mentioned to Nisha that I was actively on the job search and she offered to review my application materials and to help me prepare for the interview. When I was invited for a campus interview, I scheduled a mock interview with Nisha. I expected a review of standard questions and topics; instead, Nisha asked me to send over the job announcement and my CV and cover letter so that she could tailor interview questions based specifically on the job. Days later, during my mock interview, Nisha took me through the questions I could expect from the search committee, other faculty, and university administrators, taking time to meaningfully draw upon the job description and my application package. As I stammered through each of my half-thought-out responses, Nisha took the time to carefully guide me through the kinds of things each interviewer is looking for with their lines of questions and the strengths and weaknesses of my responses and presentation. I left our mock interview with a sense of confidence and clarity I would not have otherwise possessed. When I arrived for my actual campus interview the following week, I felt prepared and assured. It went better than I could have possibly hoped. I owe a great deal of this to Nisha and the OPA.

I am happy to announce that I got the gig. Do yourself a favor and take advantage of what OPA has to offer. It can only help.” —AJ Faas, Ph.D.

Dr. Young shares tips cont. Dr. Young shares tips cont. Dr. Young shares tips cont. Dr. Young shares tips cont.

the Graduate School’s Preparing Future Leaders (PFL) program, and the University Graduate Student Association (UGSA). Workshop participants identified and discussed ways to overcome their fears: Our fear of being inadequate pales in comparison to our fear of being extra-ordinary.” Young emphasized that impostors must “reframe what it means to be competent” and learn to normalize those impostor feelings. As one student commented on the PFL Twitter site: everyone loses when bright people play small. For more about the impostor syndrome and Dr. Valerie Young, visit www.impostorsyndrome.com.
Postdocs share their research expertise cont.

production on ovulation. As one graduate student commented: *Postdocs do some of the highest quality research at NCSU. It’s great to have a symposium that highlights all of that research from so many disciplines and shares it with the rest of the NCSU community.* For a list of all of the poster presenters and their areas of expertise, see go.ncsu.edu/postdocsymp.

New to the Symposium this year, postdocs were given the opportunity to participate in a poster competition and potentially win one of three poster presentation awards. The postdoc presenters were evaluated on their ability to communicate their research to a broader audience and effectively explain the significance of their work. The poster competition winners and their respective poster titles are listed below.

NC State University Postdoctoral Association President, Kyle Grant, Ph.D., summed up the event nicely: *This symposium represents the growing strength of the postdoctoral community at NC State University. The fact that we have five different institutions participating shows how well respected this event has become.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd Annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium Poster Competition Winners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Place:</strong> Pandiyarajan Chinnayan Kannan, Ph.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemical &amp; Biomolecular Engineering, NC State University</td>
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<td>Dr. Jan Genzer’s group</td>
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<td>“Gradient hydrogel coatings for medical applications”</td>
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<td><strong>Second Place:</strong> Ellen Glista-Baker, Ph.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Environmental Medicine, Asthma, and Lung Biology, UNC-Chapel Hill</td>
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<td>Dr. Ilona Jaspers’ group</td>
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<td>“Sulforaphane Protects Against Influenza Virus Infection in the Nasal Mucosa of Smokers”</td>
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<td><strong>Third Place:</strong> Liliana Mellor, Ph.D.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering, North Carolina State University and UNC-Chapel Hill</td>
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<td>Dr. Elizabeth Loboa’s group</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The Effects of Reduced Gravity on Subchondral Bone and Articular Cartilage: Are They Good Neighbors?”</td>
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