

PROMOTING PARTNERSHIP WITH INDUSTRY

“THINK BIG, HAVE FUN AND FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE”

We were very pleased to have our second Department Research Seminar on the topic of “Promoting Partnership with Industry” on September 29, 2016. We had a fine array of speakers with varying backgrounds and talents and all very knowledgeable in regards to collaborating with industry.

The evening started with a presentation from Dr. Susantha Gomis, Professor, Veterinary Pathology, WCVU. He gave a simple but thoughtful presentation, drawing from his own experiences, on his

own research career and how he leveraged industry funding to increase money for his research program in infectious diseases in poultry. Dr. Gomis emphasized that if you are going to do research that you have to ‘think big’ and think ahead and have a 5 or 10 year plan in mind of what your research will look like down the road. Dr. Gomis also pointed out the benefits of having collaborators (often to add the expertise that you are missing to your team) and he reiterated the value of having fun and the enjoyment of working in different places with people from diverse backgrounds. He stressed the importance of in-kind contributions and not just cash contributions from industry partners, as many funding agencies will also accept in-kind contributions as matching funding. He also pointed out that the size of the cash contribution by the industry partner is less important; even smaller amounts of cash or in-kind support are important as they indicate to the funding agency that *your research has a stamp of approval from industry*. Furthermore, he also outlined how essential it is to train highly qualified personnel (HQP) as most funding agencies look carefully at how many people you currently are training or have trained in the past. Lastly, Dr. Gomis communicated the importance of finding capable people to do the work in the lab and he spoke about how he takes advantage of every available opportunity to get highly qualified students, from the Mitacs Globalink Research Award program¹ to the Emerging Leaders in the Americas Program (ELAP)².

Dr. Gomis’ talk was followed by a talk from Dr. Nael Lemon, Industry Liaison Office on the “Importance of Partnerships”. He talked about his role as a Technology Transfer Officer (Health Sciences) and how he is available to meet with faculty to discuss their research and any technologies that could possibly be commercialized. The first step in the patent process is to fill out a non-disclosure form. The invention can then be checked if it has already been patented, and if not, a search for potential markets can also be done. If the invention is viable and a strong market for the technology exists, a report of invention can be drawn up so that a patent can be filed. Dr. Lemon also gave many great examples of surgery faculty that have patented their technologies in the areas of therapeutics for cell-based therapies (Dr. Ivar Mendez) and cancer (i.e., Dr. Francisco Cayabyab), and in the area of medical devices for monitoring epilepsy (Dr. Jonathan Norton)³.

This talk was followed by a presentation from Frank Nolan, Research and Innovation Development Officer, NSERC Prairies Regional Office. He talked about all the exciting programs that NSERC has to offer for academics to engage with industry including the Connect Grant⁴, a program that can pay researcher expenses to meet with a potential industry partner, the Collaborative Research and



Development (CRD) Grant⁵, a program that can match industry funding dollar for dollar and double the available money for a research project, and the Idea to Innovation (I2I) Grant⁶, a program designed to speed up the development of a promising technology.

The evening ended with a presentation from Dr. Zsuzsanna Papp, Business Development Specialist, Mitacs. She spoke about Mitacs program goals and its core programs. Mitacs Accelerate provides matching funding for collaborations in applied research projects for graduate students or PDFs⁷. Mitacs Elevate provides matching funding for a 2 year PDF project with a professor & industry partner in Canada⁸. Mitacs Step gives free business training workshops for graduate students & PDFs⁹. Mitacs Globalink consists of several incoming and outgoing programs for undergraduate & graduate students as well as professors to travel to another country to do research¹.

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