

PIPS CONFERENCE 2017 NEWSLETTER

The University of Bath welcomed South West Biosciences Doctoral Training Programme students back for the annual PIPS Conference, now in its 5th year.

With the familiar mix of development sessions, guest speakers, student presentations and Careers Fair, this year's conference saw the addition of a discussion led panel with key members of academia and industry offering their views on 'Brexit: the implications'.

As in previous years Careers Service staff from the Universities of Bath and Bristol were on hand offering CV advice as well as running development sessions.

The conference was opened on Day One by Prof Jonathan Knight, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) at University of Bath, who congratulated SWBio DTP students on being part of a prestigious programme designed to generate future leaders. He identified the need for students to "learn beyond your research during PIPS to give yourself the best possible chance to achieve greatness in the future".

Hearing Julie Sharp, Head of Health & Patient Information at Cancer Research UK, talk about 'Career advice for my 20 year old self' was particularly motivating, talking of her PhD she said "it was the most difficult thing I've ever done but the thing of which I'm most proud". She had many inspiring and stimulating suggestions for her audience which included her top tip of finding "a mentor whose opinion you trust; someone who will give you a push"!

A brief overview of the PIPS process was given by Amanda Harper, PIPS Management Team, and Dawn Hallett, PIPS Administrator from the University of Bath – students were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the PIPS area of the SWBio DTP website (<http://www.swbio.ac.uk/internships/>) paying particular attention to the PIPS Handbook.



An evening meal in the centre of Bath gave students the opportunity for down-time and to enjoy having the whole cohort together in a social context.

The topical debate on Brexit was every bit as engaging as the organisers hoped with panellists invited by Saiyada Fazal, Careers Advisor at the University of Bath, to offer their opinion. Tom Crabbe, UCB & SWBio External Advisor, saw "an opportunity for the future with the UK becoming an independent research centre" and Steve Egan, Vice-President (Implementation) at the University of Bath, felt Brexit offered an "opportunity for other countries to create centres of research excellence with the UK".

The return of the Careers Fair gave students the opportunity to network with employers offering PIPS and/or graduate opportunities over lunch.

Student presentations on Day Two gave an insight into PIPS experiences which varied vastly in roles, organisations and locations. Students spoke with great enthusiasm of skills gained during their PIPS in areas of networking, organisation, communication, team work, writing skills and time management. Alongside these measurable skills students also recognised the experiences they had been given: freedom to develop, seeing the bigger picture, insight into running small business, time to think—all whilst adapting to a different environment.

The conference finished with the presentation of prizes to Bristol students Noriane Simon and Joe Beesley for the most enjoyable and engaging student presentations.

