Professionalism for Trainees in Biology and Public Health
Looking and Acting the Part: Strategies for Career Success
Nancy Thompson and Kristin Beale

Dates: December 13-16, 2010, 9-11 AM, J Walter Wilson Hall, Room 201

Overall Goal: Recognize and acquire behaviors that promote career success in biology and public health

Learning Objectives:
1. Identify non-disciplinary attributes of successful research professionals
2. Identify and plan useful strategies for professional situations trainees encounter
3. Effectively deconstruct past real-life situations and use new tools to rehearse for future

MODULE CONTENT AND SESSION FORMAT

Session 1 - Monday  Getting Started: Identification of the “phenotypes” of a successful professional

Introduction of module participant- who is here and why?
Brief discussion of rationale and plan for the module. “Rules of engagement” for the module.
What professional situations feel uncomfortable to you?
When is formality important?
What draws attention away from my scientific abilities and progress?

Breakout discussion session: Participants will be asked to break into teams and devise a list of 10 terms and phrases they associate with “professionalism” and whatever they define as its opposite (10 for each). We will share the terms and phrases and discuss the way they enhance how one is perceived.

Who is assessing my professionalism and why does it matter? Discussions of expectations, the importance of first impressions; generational, cultural, gender and other factors that can influence how we are judged.

“Elevator” Self-Introductions: We will discuss what is meant by this and take time in class to compose first draft of these. They will be practiced and refined throughout our module sessions. “Elevator introductions” are particularly important for professional society meetings and interviews.

The Handshake and what it communicates: Nancy and Kristin will play act several handshakes. Observe and take notes. We will then deconstruct what components are effective and what elements detract from making an excellent impression. Consider grip, eye contact, posture, voice characteristics, distracting “ticks”.

Class Exercise:
A. One on one – spontaneous elevator introduction to a colleague you are meeting for the first time.
B. Group of 4: - feedback. Take turns giving your introduction. Colleagues jot down anonymous suggestions for improvement on index cards. Kristin will collect and distribute.

Homework: Go to MyCourses Professionalism module – review materials
For Tuesday: Communication style and professional “persona”. Find a brief profile, YouTube video or other media showcasing someone you feel represents a successful professional or someone who does NOT in your disciplinary field (can include both academic and non-academic careers). Send web links to Nancy and Kristin. They will select some examples for the class to view and lead discussion of these on Tuesday. What are the key traits that make this person a “successful” professional?
For Wednesday: Draft or update your CV or resume (see examples on MyCourses). Bring in 4 hard copies to class and email electronic form to Nancy and Kristin.
Session 2 - Tuesday.

Talking the talk: Interaction and Communication with colleagues.
Participants will be introduced to the best practices in communication and interaction with colleagues in greetings, small talk, by email or by phone. Participants will be presented with examples of proper and improper communications in power point presentation format at the beginning of class.

We will discuss making good introductions of others – preparations, various situations.
The dreaded “Small Talk”
What is too much information? Separation of personal and professional self; use of social media

Walking the walk.: Brief look at dressing for success, communication “arts”, body language, etiquette.
This class will emphasize non-verbal communication practices that also play integral parts in professional development as future professionals in public health and biomedical sciences. Participants will be presented with good and bad examples of “walking the walk” of a professional in writing, or in visual format (power point) and will be asked to critique these examples. Offer suggestions on how the “bad examples” can be improved.

Role playing exercise. In order to further demonstrate the best practices for communication, participants will be assigned different scenarios depicting the proper and improper communications between scientific colleagues. We will act out assigned scenarios. The remainder of class will critique these skits and will be required to focus on proper and improper practices of communication they had witnessed.

Session 3. Wednesday: Attending Scientific Meetings; Dealing with conflict & use of negotiation strategies

Kristin will lead first hour: Attending Scientific Meetings
- Defining your goals in attending the meeting
- Good practices to optimize your educational and professional experiences.
- Advance planning for best use of your time, the “ins and outs” of presenting posters and oral presentations (focusing on how to professionally present one’s work), visiting other researchers’ posters, and networking with other professionals in one’s field.
- topics of organization, preparation and information exchange will be discussed.

Second hour - Nancy: Dealing with Conflict and use of negotiation

Distribution of CVs and resumes – review overnight and bring to class on Thursday.

Session 4 Thursday: CV, Resumes and Cover letters; Interviews

Bring your groups’ CVs or Resumes to class. We will review formats. What is a biosketch, what is a biography and when are they used. Benefits of LinkedIn profile, groups and networking in job seeking. We will critique each other’s materials, offer suggestions for improvement and strategies for keeping these updated.

The Interview: Putting your best foot forward.
Successfully and confidently present oneself at a job interview. We will view some YouTube resources about this and recount personal experiences. Preparing and giving job talks (presenting one’s work to employers), do’s and don’ts of interviewing, and post-interview practices will be covered.

Mock interviews. Volunteers will be assigned a role as interviewee or interviewer. You will be given descriptions of your “characters”. You will either represent good practices or may depict one or more interview don’t’s. Audience members will be asked to provide written critiques of each “interview character”, focusing on what aspects of behavior during the interview was/was not professional. At the end of the exercise, participants will collectively devise a list of 10 do’s and don’ts for interviewing as a summary/ debriefing for the session.