

## FC708 Professional Development Skills

### Panel discussion: Careers in academia

March 30, 2022

Ph.D. trained scientists can use their skills to pursue a host of careers in academia. To learn about some of these careers, Boston University's Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training (BU's BEST) hosted a career panel with Boston University alumni and faculty coming from very different backgrounds and serving in very different roles. The panelists included **Dr. Ruben Dries**, BU School of Medicine (BUSM) Assistant Professor of Medicine; **Dr. Anna Hull** (GRS'02), Chair & Professor, Biology Department, Lincoln University; **Dr. Obi Onochie** (GMS'18), Teacher and Lab Program Manager, Harvard Medical School MEDscience; and **Dr. Joseph Orofino** (GMS'21); BUSM Research Data Analyst III, Neurology Administration. **Dr. Barbara Schreiber** (GRS'81), Associate Professor of Biochemistry hosted the discussion.

A career in academia can focus on teaching, research and/or administration. Dr. Hull has been a professor at Lincoln University for over 17 years and primarily focuses on teaching. Recently she has accepted an administrative role as Chair of the Biology Department. Dr. Orofino's role requires skills including research, teaching, and administration; all afford him the opportunity to work from home. Dr. Dries is focused primarily on research and mentoring. His lab, in the departments of Hematology and Medical Oncology and Computational Biomedicine, uses the latest advances to understand mechanisms of cancer, working at the interface between bench science and spatial and functional genomics. Dr. Onochie's position entails teaching and introducing research and bench science to high school students. Students learn current laboratory techniques used in the biotechnology industry and they're encouraged to pursue STEM fields. A career in academia can be multifaceted, leaving Ph.D. trained scientists with many avenues to explore.

When asked about their career paths, the panelists admitted that they didn't necessarily have an exact path in mind but were open to opportunities as they were presented. Dr. Ruben earned a master's degree in China at Tsinghua University before returning to Belgium to complete his Ph.D. at KULeuven. He performed postdoctoral studies at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute & Harvard Medical School and explored many avenues along the way. Dr. Onochie completed her Ph.D. at BU and followed her passion of teaching STEM in minority communities. While a Ph.D. student, she volunteered for CityLab, a biotech outreach program at BU and she was hired by CityLab upon graduation; this prepared her for her current role with Harvard Medical School MEDscience. Dr. Hull came to the US from Sweden for personal reasons and decided to stay. Dr. Orofino earned his Master's and Ph.D. at BU and he remains here, working with collaborators he established throughout his time at BU. Without being open to opportunities, the panelists wouldn't be in their respected careers that they enjoy today.

The panelists stressed the importance of networking and gaining valuable experience in teaching, publishing, and grant writing as these skills are most coveted by

academia. They emphasized the importance of Ph.D. students taking advantage of the many opportunities to teach and mentor during their doctoral studies as well as writing seminars and presentations. This career panel offered by BU's BEST provided insight into various careers in academia, with practical advice as to how best to prepare for them.

All of the panelists have graciously agreed to distribution of their emails so trainees can follow up with them; Dr. Dries ([rdries@bu.edu](mailto:rdries@bu.edu)), Dr. Hull ([ahull@lincoln.edu](mailto:ahull@lincoln.edu)), Dr. Onochie ([Obi\\_Onochie@hms.harvard.edu](mailto:Obi_Onochie@hms.harvard.edu)) and Dr. Orofino ([jorofino@bu.edu](mailto:jorofino@bu.edu)).

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