



Newsletter 2: Feb 25, 2019

Feb 1st 2019: SPE Mentoring Program Introduction Event

presented by Society of Plastics Engineers at San Jose State University



The start of February was not just the beginning of the **Year of the Pig** but also the second iteration of the **SPE-GGS Mentoring Program**. The program began last year upon recognizing a need to foster strong connection between the younger generation and those who had been in the industry for years.

The program kicked off in Feb 2018, when 13 industry mentors were paired with 13 students and young professionals. The purpose of the program was to provide career guidance that would help students as they transitioned into the workforce. In addition, it's a way to create strong inter-generational communities. The matching was performed based on shared technical and career interests. For example, some students were interested in polymer synthesis or polymer characterization, while others wanted to learn what additives were used in automotive paints or how polymers play a vital role in recyclability and processability.

Upcoming Events	
March 1	Mentor-Mentee pairings announced
March 9	Mentoring Program Kick Off Event at SJSU
March 23	3D printing workshop at SJSU
April 20	Education Expo

But the true value of having a mentor vastly outweighs having shared interests. Indeed, building relationships between the mentee and mentor is absolutely critical. According to Mentoring Program alum **Crystal Pereira**, the program helped her become more comfortable with the plastics industry and the process of the job search. As a first-generation college student who had started out as a business major, she was unfamiliar with what made a good technical resume, so she reached out to her mentor, **Dr. Yanika Schneider** for guidance. As Crystal and Yanika spent time checking in and answering questions, they developed a strong connection. Now Crystal is equipped with a career roadmap to help her figure out her path as well as a mentor who will support her long after the mentoring program has ended.



Mentor Dr. Yanika Schneider and mentee Crystal Pereira

The Mentoring program has also left a great impression on the mentors as well. **Dr. Jennifer Hoffman** decided to join the program because she wanted to give back to the community. At the 2019 Introduction event, Dr. Hoffman stated that almost all industry professionals can look back and find someone who has influenced them in some shape or form. “We’ve been where you are right now. What you are experiencing is not unique. Mentors have stories and experiences to share, and can provide insight to help you navigate projects, internships, first jobs, grad school, etc.”

One mentor that participated in the program also signed himself up to be a mentee. At the Introduction event, **Dr. Prasad Raut** shared his experience about the importance of being a lifelong learner. As a recent graduate and transitioning to the work world, Dr. Raut decided to both mentor a student and receive guidance from an industry leader, **Dr. Allan Griff**. In this manner, Dr. Raut was able support a student going through the same application process he had just experienced when applying to grad schools, while also getting advice about later career state politics from a seasoned veteran.



Some of last year's mentors, left to right – Drs. Jennifer Hoffman, Bruce Prime, Yanika Schneider, Alfonso Lopez, Prasad Raut.

At the end of the day, the purpose of building and cultivating a mentee-mentor relationship has to be organic. The purpose of this program is to not make a relationship simply for the sake of a transactional “Here’s an internship, thanks” sort of agreement. The mentor may be able to provide indirect leads to internships and jobs due to their own vast networks, but the true value in having a mentor is having someone who students can ask questions they cannot ask anyone else. **The purpose of this program is to build relationships between students just starting their career with industry professionals who have practical experience, who can provide advice and guidance. At the end of the day, this is a relationship, and just like any other relationship, you get what you put into it.**

The program is slated to kick off the beginning of March. We are still accepting mentor applications until March 1st. Please fill out this [form](#) if you'd like to participate as a mentor.

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