

*Summary of*

## **2008 CBA Career Development Workshop**

By Yanni Wang, PhD

The 2008 CBA Career Development Workshop was successfully held at Adele H. Stamp Student Union, University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) on November 16, 2008. The workshop attracted more than 80 participants. In addition to students from UMCP and attendants from local research institutions and biotech companies, a number of attendants came from New York and Pennsylvania



**Photo 1: Some of the Workshop Attendants**

The workshop consisted of 3 sessions: presentation, panel discussion, and on-site recruiting. Topics of the presentations included **Current Job Market and Job Hunting**, **Climbing the Professional Advancement Ladder in the Academic World**, **From Academia to Industry to International Business**, **What are the Hot and Alternative Career Opportunities**, and **Setting up Business in US and/or China**. The presentations covered academic, industrial, as well as alternative career path.

Ming Tan, PhD, professor of UM Greenebaum Cancer Center, and Chuxia Deng, PhD, Chief of Mammalian Genetics Section of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Institutes of Health (NIH), discussed how to climb the career advancement ladder in the academic world. In addition to setting up a clear career goal and choosing a right project and research environment, both of the speakers addressed the importance of a right mentor and social and networking skills. As Deng noted, "It is not what you know, but it is who you know" help you succeed.

Patrick Lu, PhD, president and CEO of Sirnaomics Inc., Kai Chen, PhD, MBA, former vice president of business development at Iomai Co., and Dajun Yang, PhD, managing director of Morningside Venture Group, shared knowledge and experience on how to

set up business in the United States and/or China, how to transit from research to management in big companies, as well as how to get funding and support from investment firms. According to Lu, solid IP portfolio, experienced scientific and management team(s), and suitable business model are the three most important factors determining success in the biopharmaceutical industry. For students who wish to enter the industry, Chen encouraged them to do the following: first analyze yourself to find out your skills and corresponding market needs for the skills, identify your short-term and long-term goal (i.e., where you want to be in 5 or 10 years), and finally build a path and work hard to achieve your goal. Yang shared his experience of doing business in China, and provided tips on how to get funding from investment firms. Besides a great project and solid IP portfolio, effective communication with the investment firms is also important, according to Yang.

Following Yang's presentation, Lin Sun-Hoffman, PhD, Esq, senior patent attorney at Applied Biosystems, and Claire Driscoll, MS, director of the Technology Transfer Office at the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), NIH, discussed alternative career paths. Neither doing research nor setting up business is for everybody, said Sun-Hoffman. Fortunately, there are other career paths. For those who would like to change their career, Sun-Hoffman encouraged them to find out their true passion (i.e., what they really would like to do) and then find a way to do it. Driscoll recommended going to school at night while working full-time at daytime. To gain hands-on experience, which is sometimes more important than degrees, both Sun-Hoffman and Driscoll recommended volunteering in professional organizations.

The presentations provoked many questions from the audience. The questions ranged from when is the best time to start a company, what venture capital companies expect from a starting-up company to how to gain experience. According to Chen, setting up a company should be market driven. He said that making the jump only when the market and yourself are BOTH ready. According to Yang, patent and scientific and management team are the first things that venture capital companies look at. Communicating with the investment companies through the right channel is also very important, and online applications generally do not get much attention. With respect to gaining experience, Sun-Hoffman and Driscoll, again, suggested to volunteer in professional organizations or find a mentor who would be kind enough to mentor you.



**The Panelists**

After the panel discussion, Ming Zhang, PhD, hiring manager at MedImmune introduced MedImmune's hiring process and current hiring situation. According to Zhang, despite of the current economic crisis in the US, MedImmune is still hiring. Currently, there are approximately 200 openings at MedImmune and all these positions are real, said Zhang. Zhang also introduced the positions that she is responsible to fill in and encouraged those who are interested in those positions to talk to her after the workshop. In addition to MedImmune, SA Biosciences also had on-site recruiting at the workshop.



**On-site Recruiting**

At the end of the workshop, Shoupeng Lai, PhD, chair of the workshop preparation committee, thanked all the attendees and sponsors for making the workshop successful. The workshop ended at 6:00 PM.



**Workshop Sponsors and Recruiting Companies**