

To: T. Michael Duncan
From: Daniel J. Hanggi
Re: Sarah Miller (Genentech Inc.) visit to CHEME 3010, March 9, 2015

Summary

Sarah Miller, currently a Master Production Planner at Genentech Inc., visited the CHEME 3010 seminar to discuss her career path since her time at Cornell University, where she graduated in 2007 with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering. While at Cornell University, she was a Merck Fellow, conducted research in the Steen Group, and was a teaching assistant for the Engrl 112 course. At Genentech, she is a graduate of the Process Development Rotational Program, and serves her current role in the Clinical Demand & Supply Planning division. She additionally went on to earned her M.B.A. from Berkeley. Sarah spoke about these experiences and the structure of Genentech, in the scope of advising us on our career paths.

Presentation

Sarah began by describing her envisioned trajectory at the time of her graduation: After having rewarding research experiences at Cornell and Merck, she intended to go into the enter research in industry for a few years, and then earn her Ph.D., after which she would return to industry with greater expertise. However, she quickly realized that this was long-term plan no longer aligned with her interests—she said that while she thought that she liked lab work coming out of Cornell, she soon decided that she wasn't passionate about this line of work, and therefore would not be passionate about earning her Ph.D. Thus, her long-term plan was invalidated, and she discussed how it might similarly be difficult for us to strictly adhere to a planned career trajectory.

For the majority of Sarah's presentation, she spoke of Genentech's history and its structure. She described how Genentech started as a biological company focused on DNA recombination and the industrialized production of human insulin, but is now a diversified company working on products like Tamiflu and cancer-related antibody drug conjugates [ADCs]. She then described various roles in the company, particularly those that have hired Cornell CBE graduates. These roles included researchers in product development, where molecules are studied for their potential market value; purification development, where processes are devised that would allow for the mass production of the commodity drug; and "pharma" development, where components like delivery systems and solution are developed. She then described her division—clinical demand and supply chaining—where she, in part, uses her MBA degree to manage the production plans to meet demand for Genentech's products, either in markets that have approved the drug, or in trials prior to approval.

Sarah lastly shared her perspective on what Genentech has offered her and what lessons she has had, hoping that we would consider these in our pursuit of a desirable career. At Genentech, Sarah appreciates the company culture, particularly the patient-driven atmosphere that is evident at every stage of their business; the global presence as a member of the international Roche Group; the opportunity and perks afforded to her as a member of a successful and talented company; and the location of Genentech in the Bay Area. Related to these benefits, she cites disadvantages, like working "global hours" and being a "little fish" among the talented company base. Still, she reminds us to consider all of these, and ultimately do what's best for us; "what fulfills you might not be what fills your pockets".

reviewed by Brittany Wun

[Excellent memo!](#)