

RACI NSW initiatives for young chemists

When I joined the RACI a few years ago, I did so with the express intention of giving something back to the next generation of young scientists. So it has been my very great pleasure to work with other members, and most particularly the New South Wales Young Chemists Group (YCG) on a range of initiatives to maximise the value of membership for student and early career members.

Here are some of the ideas that we have been working on in NSW.

NSW mentoring program

Starting in 2015, we have been developing and growing the NSW RACI mentoring program. Through one-on-one mentoring relationships, the aim is to develop the mentees' skills and preparedness for the job search, as well as to help them develop their networks.

According to Graduate Careers surveys (www.graduatecareers.com.au), personal networks are already the greatest source for locating career opportunities, even at the graduate level (and building from there).

In the 2015 pilot, both mentees not only graduated with jobs, but they graduated with their dream jobs. Most of the mentees in the 2016 program already have their jobs lined up, and the program is being expanded in 2017 with the aim of having student members from each of the five main Sydney universities, and hopefully the University of Newcastle as well.

Places will have already been allocated by the time this goes to print, but if you know of any student member who is particularly keen, then they should still contact the NSW Branch office. We'll find some way to be of help.

Lecture series: understanding the job market

Over the course of 2016, I have had the privilege of presenting variations on the 'Understanding the Job Market' lecture series, singly or as part of careers events, at most of the major universities in Sydney and Newcastle, and to an RACI careers event in Brisbane. The lecture series focuses on understanding *how* the job market works, and the specific tips and techniques that a young chemist can employ to distinguish themselves from the crowd.

Finding a good job takes effort, but it is eminently achievable. If you understand the process, you can shave months off your job search.

The full lecture series is freely available on the RACI website, and I invite RACI members from any institution to get in touch with me if you would like me to present (at no charge, of course) to your students. This can be particularly useful towards the beginning of the year, when the students still have months ahead of them to take advantage of the advice on networking.

Networking events

During 2016, the NSW Analytical and Environmental Group arranged a very successful event in conjunction with the YCG. By simply adding a 90-minute networking session to the end of a symposium, we were able to bring together 80 students, researchers and commercial/industrial representatives for a highly successful networking event.

I urge each and every RACI group across Australia to give the idea some consideration. The incremental time and cost in the event organisation was minimal. The incremental value to RACI's young members was outstanding. This should be a regular component of our event preparation.

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These are just three of the initiatives that we have been working on. However, most of these are focused on student members, and we should also be devoting time to encouraging, supporting and engaging early career members. I encourage everyone reading this article to get in contact with your local YCG or me (through the NSW Branch office). We want to hear from you with your ideas, if you want to get involved, and/or if you know of young chemists who could benefit from taking part in the programs.

Dave Sammut FRACI CChem is a member of the NSW Branch committee and the NSW Analytical and Environmental Group committee. His business, DCS Technical, has a dedicated pro bono budget set aside for initiatives to help and support young RACI members.

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