



GATES SCHOLARS' ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

**REPORT ON GATES WEBINAR ON
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
PUBLIC INTEREST**

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INTRODUCTION

On 8 October 2011, the first virtual seminar for the year was held on the topic of completion of university study and subsequent career transitions. The webinar brought together alumni with experience in academia, government, and entrepreneurial start-ups. We had an interesting 90 minutes discussion on writing funding proposals, securing funding, shifting to non academic careers and entrepreneurships involving a speaker, four panelists and a dozen of attendees.

OBJECTIVES

TO BRING TOGETHER ALUMNI AND SCHOLARS TO DISCUSS:

- ◆ Funding proposals
- ◆ Networking
- ◆ Managing research in final stage of course
- ◆ Writing funding proposals
- ◆ Academic vs. non-academic careers

ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZERS

- ◆ **Pradipta Biswas** is a Research Associate at the Engineering Design Centre and Trinity Hall of University of Cambridge. He has completed PhD in Computer Science at the University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory in 2010. He is member of the British Computer Society, Royal Society of Medicine, the EU Task Force on Standardization of User Models and a working group coordinator of the ITU-T focus group on Audiovisual Media Accessibility.
- ◆ **Rose Spear** is a Research Associate in Engineering for Life Sciences at the University of Cambridge. She graduated with her PhD in Materials Science and Metallurgy in 2011. Her research focuses on the interface between biological components - cells, proteins, DNA - and materials with nanoscale and microscale dimensions. She is one of the founding members of the Cambridgeshire Branch of the British Science Association and a postdoctoral member of Lucy Cavendish College.
- ◆ **Maja Milicevic** did her PhD at the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics in Cambridge. She is currently a lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the University of Belgrade, in Serbia, specialising in the study of factors that influence the learning of second languages.

- ◆ **Speaker Pat Langdon's** experimental doctoral and post-doctoral research has contributed to cognitive science, artificial intelligence, robotics and psychophysical studies of the human visual system. His experimental PhD researched the psychological reality of certain Artificial Intelligence-based theories of vision and he was employed by an Artificial Intelligence Vision Research Unit at the University of Sheffield working on the area of robotics. Subsequently, he moved into Engineering Design Research at the University of Lancaster EDC, working on the application of user centred design principles to complex engineering design systems.
- ◆ **Panelist Dan Greenfield** completed his PhD from Cambridge University as a Gates Scholar in 2010, where he constructed a theory of locality for computation, and showed that the human brain has similar statistical wiring properties to computer chips. Before his PhD he worked for some years in Silicon Valley architecting and designing computer chips. He obtained his previous degrees from the University of New South Wales, where his Masters developed new algorithms for systems biology. He is currently a director of Fonleap Ltd, a new startup he co-founded in Cambridge.
- ◆ **Panelist Maja Milicevic** did her PhD at the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics in Cambridge. She is currently a lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the University of Belgrade, in Serbia, specialising in the study of factors that influence the learning of second languages.
- ◆ **Panelist Ivy Chia** is currently seconded as a policy officer cum quality assurance assessor at the Council of Private Education which regulates private education in Singapore. She will be seconded back to the Ministry of Education to do research work at the national level. She was interested in a research career. She applied for and was offered a lectureship position at the local public university but decided to join the civil service instead.
- ◆ **Panelist Andrew Robertson** has served as the Chief Policy Officer of BIO Ventures for Global Health (BVGH) since September 2010, where he focuses on innovation policy for neglected disease research. Prior to this, Andrew served as an International Health Officer and Science Policy Advisor at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Secretary, from 2005 to 2007. At HHS, his portfolio included issues concerning global health, biodefense, and biosecurity, with a particular focus on pandemic influenza. Andrew is an alum of the Gates Cambridge Scholarship Program ('01), and co-founder of the Gates Scholars' Council and Gates Scholars' Alumni Association. He holds a Ph.D. in genetics from Cambridge, and a JD from the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (Certificate in Science & Technology Law).

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

14.00 – 14.20 BST: Welcome note from co-ordinators, explaining objectives, goals, and sorting out any technical issues

14:20 – 14:30: First panelist presentation

14.30 – 15.00: Keynote Speech and question session

15.00 – 15.15: Panelist Discussion

15.15 – 16.00: closing remarks from co-ordinators

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

The webinar was organized using the GoToWebinar system while two attendees and moderators attended it together in a meeting room.

MAIN DISCUSSION

SUMMARY:

The webinar started with co-ordinator Pradipta Biswas' welcome address to participants and he provided an overview of the speaker and panelists. Pradipta's overview was followed by comments from co-ordinators, Rose Spear and Maja Milicevic, who introduced the first panelist, Andrew Robertson. Andrew gave an introduction to his experiences with research, law, and government and welcomed questions from the participants. At this point, the keynote speaker Pat Langdon entered the discussion. Pat provided an overview of his background in the Engineering Design Centre and extensive experience with securing research funding. He mentioned the importance of conveying research ideas in a clear and concise manner when applying for grants. The floor was then opened for questions from the participants. The first question from the participants concerned the strategy for the size of grants that one should apply for at the start of their career. This was followed by Pat's response and a series of questions from the moderators and participants. The discussion transitioned to the panelist presentations and discussions. Andrew Robertson first took questions from participants. Initial questions clarified Andrew's current position and activities and initiated a discussion into entrepreneurship in the UK in the biotech industry incorporating collaborations with India. Andrew highlighted the specificity of patent law between countries and the strength of University technology transfer offices in taking a technological idea from the concept to business stage. The experiences of the second speaker, Daniel Greenfield, in recently founding his company, Fonleap Ltd.,

supported Andrew’s comments on the challenges of the initial stage of technology transfer. He spoke not only of the hard work and long hours, but also of the inspiration from successful companies and the supportive entrepreneurial environment in Cambridge. He emphasized the importance of having support from a business partner, the UK tax credits, visa limitations for students, the patent process, and the increased opportunities to apply for an entrepreneurial visa. The third speaker, Maja Milicevic, provided information on the transition from a developed country to a less-developed country. She mentioned that the transition required a lot of planning and careful review of regulations in the country of interest. She mentioned her person experience that it took six months for her to validate her degree before she could take up her position in Serbia. She further emphasized the importance of networking. After Maja responded to questions, the final panelist provided information about her experience in Singapore, highlighting the stability of government positions compared with contract research in academic positions. Pradipta provided a summary, followed by closing remarks by Rose.

ATTENDEES

The webinar was attended by 19 participants from five different countries including two moderators, one speaker, four panelists and 12 attendees. The table below lists the attendees. We have recorded the discussion and an audio recording will be available on request.

List of attendees

First Name	Last Name	Country	Organization
Orian	Welling	GB	Gates Scholar
Dina	Sirypano	US	Veterans Medical Research Foundation
Rajna	Golubic	GB	St. John's College; MRC Epidemiology Unit
Samir	Khan	GB	Heptares Therapeutics
Diana	Pirjol	GB	Gates Scholar
Emily	Noah	GB	Cambridge University
Cleo	Tung	US	Cambridge - recent graduate
Toby	Norman	GB	Cambridge University
Linda	Gichuyia	KE	BeglinWoods Architects
Luise Marion	Frenkel	GB	Gates Scholar
Mercedes	Galindez	AR	Cambridge university
Willams	Nitin	IN	Cambridge university

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the webinar went well, most participants find it useful and would like to attend in future. There were some technical problems with GoToWebinar system. Unfortunately it was not possible for organizers to solve specific technical problems for all attendees but in future we may give a specification of minimum bandwidth requirement and headphones required to solve that. Future event may also consider running a seminar in parallel to the webinar by organizing it in Gates room and making the video online to remote attendees. However, putting aside a few minor technical glitches we are proud to bring together a high quality of speakers and panelists for the benefit of alumni and scholars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the Gates Trust to support us for this event and also like to thank the participants for their time and valuable discussion.