

Entry-level Mentoring Panel Proposal

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Objective

Women making the transition from graduate school to an industry or government research lab face many challenges adapting to the expectations and demands of a new environment. The objective of this panel is to bring together a small group of women who have recently made this transition successfully, and have them share strategies for succeeding in this environment. We expect that the panel will raise awareness of the issues and challenges women face when transitioning from academic research to corporate/governmental research, as well as some of the benefits and drawbacks to choosing a research lab over an academic position.

This panel is intended to be part of the Non-Academic Researcher Track, described in a separate proposal.

Audience

The panel will be open to a general audience. However, we expect the panel to be particularly of interest to women interested in pursuing a career in a research lab, students who are exploring their career options, and women currently in research labs who are looking for others to share their experience.

Format

The proposed panel length is 2 hours. We will have four panelists from a range of industry and government labs. Each panelist will speak for 20 minutes on their background, their experience transitioning from academia to a lab, and tips for success. During the remainder of the time, we will have an open discussion session, fielding questions from the audience.

Topics

Panelists will share their insights on a range of topics targeted at women just getting started in industry or government research labs. These challenges include:

- **Identifying what contributions are valued.** Publishing, patents, products, or presentations? Researchers have a wide array of potential means for having an impact in their organization. Which of these are most valued by the organization? How do you identify the right way to sell your work to make it aligned with the organization's goals?

- **Dealing with funding sources.** A fact of life is the need to secure funding for the work you want to do. Some organizations expect researchers to seek external grants; some have internal funding programs that connect research with other parts of the company. How do you learn to navigate the funding model and find a way to do the research you want to do?
- **Building a professional network.** Researchers starting out in a research lab are at risk of becoming isolated from research colleagues in the field. Constraints such as security clearances or intellectual property restrictions may prevent a researcher from discussing her work with others in the field. Moreover, the social culture at some organizations may reinforce this isolation, if interaction among different research groups is not encouraged. How do you maintain and grow a professional network (both internal and external) despite these challenges?
- **Contributing to a research project.** Researchers may be involved in anything from a single-person project to a many-person effort, and must find a way to contribute. Challenges here include defining your role in the project (individual contributor versus project leader), learning to work with a team of diverse personalities, aligning your own research agenda with that of the project, and thought leadership (how to lead technically without a position of authority).
- **Work/life balance and time management.** The transition from graduate school to the workforce makes the question of work/life balance critical, and researchers must learn to manage their time. What are strategies for handling the multiple demands placed by colleagues, management, and family?

Panelists

Four panelists have agreed to serve on this panel. They have all recently graduated from a graduate program and have made the transition to an industry or government research lab. They will share tips for managing that transition and strategies they have discovered for succeeding in the research lab environment.

Sung-Eun Choi, Los Alamos National Laboratory
Sung-Eun Choi is a researcher at Los Alamos National Lab-

oratory. She completed her Ph.D. in computer science at the University of Washington in 1998.

Tina Eliassi-Rad, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

Tina Eliassi-Rad earned her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2001. Since then, she has been employed as a Computer Scientist in the Center for Applied Scientific Computing (CASC) at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). Her background is in machine learning, artificial intelligence, and mathematical statistics. In particular, her dissertation was about intelligent agents that learn to categorize and extract textual information. Currently, she works on scalable algorithms for statistical modeling of large scientific data sets and heuristic searching of large semantic graphs.

Tessa Lau, IBM T.J. Watson Research Center

Tessa Lau is a Research Staff Member at IBM's T.J. Watson Research Center. She completed her Ph.D. in computer science at the University of Washington in 2001. Her primary research interest is intelligent user interfaces: using artificial intelligence to improve human-computer interaction by building tools that adapt and learn from human use. She is a leading member of the Watson Women's Network, a diversity group dedicated to attracting and supporting women at IBM Research.

Nuria Oliver, Microsoft Research

Nuria Oliver is a researcher in the Adaptive Systems and Interaction group at Microsoft Research. She completed her Ph.D. in Media Arts and Sciences at the MIT Media Lab in 2000. Her research interests include machine learning, perceptual intelligence, human behavior modelling, action understanding, event perception, human-computer interaction, intelligent interfaces, intelligence augmentation, object tracking, perceptual organization, human motion analysis, biological vision, racing, e-markets, and the implications of technology in education and health.