

Duke University
Biomaterials Day - April 20, 2012

To distinguish this event from other regional events, such as the North Carolina Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine Society conference (NCTERMS), which is based exclusively on research presentations, Biomaterials Day incorporated both research and career development aspects to its presentations. There were 71 registered attendees, including faculty, post-docs, graduate, and undergraduate students from 4 institutions. Furthermore, the event received sponsorship from the Center for Biomolecular and Tissue Engineering at Duke University, Bose, W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc, and KIYATEC, Inc in addition to the generous support from SFB.

Biomaterials Day began with an insightful and enjoyable keynote address given by Dr. Kristi Anseth during which she described her transition from growing up in North Dakota to her impressive accomplishments at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She gave realistic and sincere advice about how to attain a successful and fulfilling professional life while maintaining personal relationships and interests.

The event featured several presentations of research in biomaterials: Dr. Elizabeth Loba presented her work on biomimetic materials for tissue engineering using human adipose-derived stem cells, Dr. Padma Rajagopalan presented on the design of engineered livers using self-assembled polyelectrolyte multilayers, and Dr. Karen Burg discussed the role of biomaterials in personalized medicine. Presentations were also given by Ph.D.s in industry and government who work in biomaterials-related fields: Dr. Melissa Brown described her role as a Product Specialist with W.L. Gore & Associates, Inc, Dr. Robert Schutte discussed the varied responsibilities of a Ph.D. at Humacyte, a small start-up company, and Dr. John Grimes gave his advice on which factors to consider when selecting the appropriate post-graduate career path.

A poster session held during and immediately following the lunch break gave students the opportunity to learn more about research at nearby institutions and also allowed sponsors and presenters to speak directly and in detail with student presenters. During the afternoon, concurrent panel discussions were held, one for students interested in pursuing careers in academia and one for students interested in industry. Attendees were able to interact further with the panelists, receiving valuable advice about the job application process, how to network effectively, things they wish they'd known when they left graduate school to enter the workforce, and what is expected of them on a day-to-day basis in their careers.

Overall, this event introduced students to the varied types of biomaterials research ongoing in the Triangle area and provided students with information about how to transition from graduate school to careers in both academia and industry. We hope this event serves to foster collaborations between the biomaterials programs of nearby institutions and that other larger events of this type can be held in the future. Praise for this event was primarily for the incorporation of career-focused presentations and panels, as well as for the interactive demonstrations presented by sponsors of the event. The reception at the end of the day was also a fantastic networking opportunity for Biomaterials Day attendees.