Conversations with Scientists 2017: Skills & Strategies for Persistence [1]

Submitted by Mónica Ivelisse Feliú-Mójer [2] on 31 October 2017 - 11:49pm

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During this conversation, panelists shared advice, perspectives and strategies to help graduate students persist through their PhDs and in science careers.

Panelists

Dr. Renetta Garrison Tull is Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Student Development & Postdoctoral Affairs (former Assistant Dean of Graduate Student Development) at UMBC: An Honors University in Maryland (http://www.umbc.edu [3]) and the Founding Director of PROMISE: Maryland's Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) – http://www.umbc.edu/promise. [4] The PROMISE AGEP includes all of the universities within the University System of Maryland [5].

Dr. Tull presents across the U.S. and Puerto Rico on topics ranging from graduate school recruitment, retention, and dissertation completion, to faculty development. She serves as a national coach and mentor for prospective and current graduate students at universities outside of Maryland through STEM conferences such as GEM, NSBE, SACNAS, SHPE, and AISES. She is a former Board Member of the Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools.

Dr. Tull earned the B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Howard University, and both the M.S. in Electrical Engineering and the Ph.D. in Speech Science from Northwestern University. She was an Anna Julia Cooper Postdoctoral Fellow and Assistant Professor of Communicative Disorders at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW), and a researcher in the both the Waisman and Trace Centers (Rehabilitation Engineering) prior to coming to UMBC. In addition to academic experience, she has been involved with entrepreneurship projects and meetings in Silicon Valley, New York, Raleigh, as well as Illinois and Maryland. She has also worked with the Washington DC Technology Council.

Dr. Tull works to increase community and professional development opportunities for graduate students in Maryland through targeted PROMISE programs that include: Professors-in-Training (PROF-it), Dissertation House, the Community Building Retreat, Fall Harvest, Research Symposium, Reflections Health and Wellness Seminars, and others. These programs, along with PROMISE's recruitment efforts and the growing recognition of Maryland's commitment to diversity at the graduate level, have contributed to increases in applications, enrollments, and graduation rates of underrepresented graduate students in STEM fields.

Dr. Erich Jarvis a professor at The Rockefeller University and an investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute who investigates the neurobiology of learned vocal communication in the rare group of animals that have this ability, as a model for the study of how the brain generates, perceives, and learns complex behaviors, such as spoken language. His specific quest is to determine the molecular mechanisms that construct, modify, and maintain neural circuits for vocal learning and then engineer brain circuits to repair and enhance those behaviors.

Days before graduating from the High School of Performing Arts in New York City, Erich Jarvis was invited to audition for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, a renowned African American modern dance company. Instead, he chose pipettes over pirouettes: "I also really loved science, and I thought I could have a bigger impact doing that."

Jarvis grew up in difficult surroundings in Harlem. His family was poor to middle class and his parents were divorced, so he and his siblings were shuttled among various relatives. His father, a science and music enthusiast from whom Jarvis says he learned intellectual openness and creative thinking, suffered from mental illness that culminated in drug addiction, homelessness and, in 1988, his death in an apparently random murder.

Jarvis overcame these hardships and made the sometimes-rocky transition to the demanding world of top-drawer science. After graduation from Hunter College in New York City with a bachelor's degree—and six papers on bacterial molecular genetics in Rivka Rudner's lab—he did graduate and postdoctoral work in the Rockefeller University lab of Fernando Nottebohm, who pioneered research on the neurobiology of song-learning in birds as a model for understanding neural plasticity in the adult brain.

Dr. Kenneth (Kenny) Gibbs, Jr., is a Program Director in the Divisions of Training, Workforce Development and Diversity, and Genetics and Developmental Biology at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS). In this role, Dr. Gibbs leads and administers federal programs that train the next generation of scientists, broaden participation in the research workforce, and promote basic research. Previously, Dr. Gibbs served as a program analyst in the NIGMS Office of Program Planning, Analysis and Evaluation (OPAE) where he led evaluation and innovation efforts of NIGMS TWD programs, and supported trans-NIH strategic and programmatic evaluative efforts.

Prior to joining NIGMS, Dr. Gibbs was a Cancer Prevention Fellow at the National Cancer Institute, and an AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellow at the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR). In these roles, Gibbs developed the "STEM Ph.D. Careers" research project to understand the factors influencing career development of recent Ph.D. graduates.

Dr. Gibbs completed his Ph.D. in the Immunology program at Stanford University, and received his B.S. in biochemistry & molecular biology (summa cum laude) from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County where he was a Meyerhoff, MARC, and HHMI scholar. Dr. Gibbs served on the Board of Directors for the National Postdoctoral Association, and written about scientific training and diversity issues for Science Careers, and Scientific American.

Tags:

- yale ciencia academy [6]
- career development [7]

Links
[1] https://www.cienciapr.org/en/blogs/yale-ciencia-academy/conversations-scientists-2017-skills-strategies-persistence?language=en [2] https://www.cienciapr.org/en/user/moefeliu?language=en [3] http://www.umbc.edu/ [4] http://www.umbc.edu/promise. [5] http://www.usmd.edu/institutions/ [6] https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/yale-ciencia-academy?language=en [7] https://www.cienciapr.org/en/tags/career-development?language=en