

NCW 2007: The Many Faces of Chemistry



Alternative Careers in Chemistry: A Panel Discussion

by Richard A. Hermens

“So You Think You Want To Be A Chemist” was the chosen theme for the 62nd Northwest Regional Meeting (NORM), held June 17–20, 2007 in Boise, ID. A main attraction for students at the meeting was a panel discussion on alternative careers for chemists. NORM was co-hosted by the Richland Section and the newly formed Snake River Section. Funds for the meeting were raised from the ACS Local Section Activities Committee through an Innovative Activities Grant. The grant to provide funds for community college students to attend the meeting was matched by several universities. The purpose was to help the students see what chemists do by involving them in the ACS Regional Meeting. 26 students from community colleges and four-year universities attended the meeting.

The invited panelists who participated in the alternative careers discussion were Kimberly Williams (Office of Science, Department of Energy), Abel Mendoza (Dow Chemical Co. retired), Novella Bridges (Pacific Northwest National Laboratory), and Howard Peters (Peters, Verny, Jones and Schmitt, LLP). The diversity among the panelists helped to point out the breadth of occupations from which chemists may select. Each panelist first spoke briefly about his or her formal education and

the demands of his or her present job. The panelists then fielded questions from the audience, such as those below.

- What is a typical day in your job?
- What is the stability of a job in the government?
- Does your employer have flex time so one can accommodate a family?
- What is a typical day for a patent attorney?
- Does one need a four-year college degree to work in various jobs?
- Can a national lab have a policy to review any experiment?
- Who has the patent authorship when one invents a new process?
- What types of salaries can one expect from the employer?

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