

Supplemental Material

CBE—Life Sciences Education

Campbell et al.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Summary of the NEST 2014 MBL Retreat provided by undergraduate participants

Arriving Thursday Night in Woods Hole, MA, we were all excited about attending yet another conference. It was going to be another mini-vacation in the middle of the semester where we would listen to speakers give their usual spiel, we would attempt to network with little success and would leave dreading the assignments we had to make up. Fortunately for us, we were much farther from the truth as the NEST conference lacked all of the vital makings of the large conferences we had grown accustomed to. A small conference for trainees and trainers, in a relaxed environment, surrounded by the dazzling beauty of a small fishing town; why had it taking so long for someone to come up with this?

Overall, the NEST conference was a success. We were able to discuss issues that mattered to us as trainees. We were able to learn that HBCUs, other minority serving institutions as well as traditional colleges all faced similar problems which properly preparing students for the transition from undergraduate education to graduate education. We were able to discuss the challenges of finding the right schools, finding funding sources, meeting requirements and other pertinent issues faced with developing a career in our respective fields. It catered to all majors even those in the applied sciences and those in the social sciences. Unlike the larger conferences where you always end up missing a session you want to learn about, the two sessions per day allowed everyone to attend without having to sacrifice unnecessarily. It was a great opportunity to meet people in a relaxed environment and it was overall intellectually stimulating.

The focus of the conference was on the trainees and it was the major reason for the success of the conference. The trainees were encouraged to speak their minds without fear with allowed for us to discuss a wide range of issues from current issues we face to problems we envision in the future. Things such as accessibility of the PI, lab etiquette and customs, as well as imposter syndrome were all pending issues that we addressed and were a benefit to all. Also the trainers shared their shortcomings with us, of which one of them included imposter syndrome which served as encouragement to us thereby affirming the notion of the continuous learning process. We met a lot of interesting individuals and were able to network efficiently across various levels of academic achievements; an availability which the larger conferences lack.

Overall, the conference was a success and a wonderful learning experience. We got to interact with trainers and trainees in a different dimension than accustomed. It was reassuring to know that trainers were

concerned about our plight as trainees and were willing to address the shortcomings that both sides had. It was a lovely conference and should be continued in the future of which we hope to be a part of.