

# B I N T O U C H W I T H B S C P

B I O M E D I C A L S C I E N C E C A R E E R S P R O J E C T

## Good News for Job Seekers

Spring 1997 Volume 3 Number 2

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BY **GEORGE H. KAYE**, VICE PRESIDENT,  
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An article in *Personnel Journal* in November 1996, carried the following message to employers: "Your need for a higher skilled workforce is high, but your labor pool is rapidly drying out." That message brings good news for those of you who will be hitting the job market in the next five years or so.

The United States unemployment rate is at its lowest point in seven years – down from a high of 7.8% in June 1992, to a low of 5.1% in 1996. Some basic skills among potential employees have declined to near-illiterate proportions; demographic shifts have drastically limited the number of available workers; and employers now require more advanced skills than ever – even of the lowest level employees.

If you are worrying about whether there will be a job for you when you graduate and are ready for employment, you should pay attention to some other things. On Sunday, February 16, 1997, the "Help Wanted" section of *The Boston Globe* was 47 pages long – and many of the jobs advertised were in biotechnology and health care. This fact is all the more notable because it was a three-day weekend, a time when help wanted advertising is generally lower than normal because recruiters know many people travel and are less likely to read the ads than they would on a regular weekend.

According to author Shelly Field, who wrote 100 Best Careers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the top careers in the

### FIELD GROWTH (in number of new jobs)

Teacher	606,000
Nurse	473,000
Executive	466,000
Systems Analyst	445,000
Truck Driver	271,000
Social Worker	187,000
Lawyer	183,000
Financial Manager	182,000
Accountant	120,000
Physician	120,000
Marketing Manager	224,000
Physical Therapist	76,000
Paralegal	64,000

year 2000 will include computer technology, health care, fitness/nutrition, geriatrics and communications. This is confirmed by a listing of the 15 fields projected to have the most significant growth between 1994 and 2005.

According to this list, almost 3.5-million jobs will be added to the economy by the year 2005 – and nearly one-third of them are in biomedical science and related fields. Then add the facts that the Baby Boom generation is passing the 50-year mark,

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## Mentor Profile: Jerome Vigil, Ph.D.

For Jerome Vigil, Ph.D., a career in electronics was a natural progression. A Native American and Hispanic person who grew up in Chicago, Vigil recalls, "From an early age, I had a lot of exposure to technological things. My dad had a small, family-run electrical business. One of my uncles was an inventor who invented a lot of parts that are used in electric motors. When we were kids, my brothers and sisters and I would work for them on weekends."

Today, Vigil is President and CEO of Vigil Electric Co., an electrical/consulting firm; and recently started LORALEN Corporation, a digital phone service provider. Before starting LORALEN, Vigil spent four years as a staff scientist and teacher at MIT's Energy Lab. "When I was at MIT, something was telling me to leave," he says. "Being an entrepreneur is in my blood."

In high school, Vigil took a lot of math and science courses. He went on to earn B.S. and M.S. degrees in physics from DePaul University, and a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. "I was lucky, but the luck

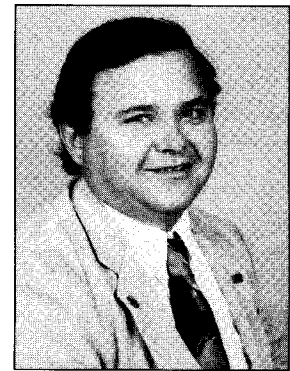
came only after hard work," Vigil says. "Growing up, we were very poor. But my parents always told us that we should excel academically."

For the last 20 years, Vigil has drawn on his own experiences to help other students from backgrounds similar to his achieve their goals. Since 1977, he has been involved with the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS). And for the past three or four years he has been a mentor at the New England Board of Higher Education's (NEBHE) Science and Technology Outreach Career Day.

"High technology is so prevalent today, yet across genders and races, there is a 60% drop-out rate in sciences and engineering," Vigil notes. "The U.S. has had an open door policy, allowing foreign scientists and engineers to come into the country, and it's had a negative impact on a lot of the talented Americans. It's a big concern."

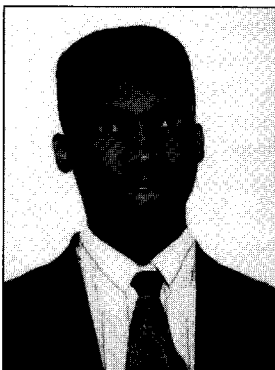
In his role as mentor and adviser, Vigil urges all young people interested in the sciences to focus on their education, much as his parents

urged him to do. "I think it's very important that students don't lose hope," he says. "At the recent annual Junior Science and Humanities Symposium, I saw lots of talented kids. Many of them had parents who are driving them to excel." But many didn't. Vigil says he can't stress enough how important it is for all students – whether they have family support or not – to keep themselves focused on their dreams and ambitions. Fortunately, there are people like Vigil to help them. ♦



**Jerome Vigil**

## From the Mailbox: Letters from Students



**Chukwuka Okafor**

... I am writing to inform you of how the Biomedical Science Careers Project has helped me.... My life has turned around since the February 3, 1996, Environmental Sciences and Public Health Confer-

ence. During the conference, I met Dr. Judy Gwathmey, who is now my mentor.... She let me work in her Cardiovascular Disease lab at HMS [Harvard Medical School]. There I learned a lot about research, and I was also able to do some research work.... The work I did in her lab gave me the experience for which I was accepted for summer research at MIT. At MIT, I developed a protocol for total protein separation from *E. coli* culture. After the

summer fellowship, the MIT faculty I worked with offered me another research position for this fall. So, presently I am working at MIT.

... all I achieved was only made possible by your conference.... It is the best thing that ever happened to me.... It has really helped to shape my life and my future aspirations, because as a result of the research I did at HMS, I decided that I will do anything I can to be a Harvard Medical Student.

# Informational Interviews and Networking

BY **AMY R. HUDSPETH, J.D., M.B.A.** ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL, MASSACHUSETTS ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

Whether you are an undergraduate, graduate student or between jobs, there are two kinds of preparation that can assist you greatly in developing your career—informational interviewing and networking.

## What is informational interviewing?

Informational interviewing is a way for you to learn about different career paths and prospective employers. In an informational interview, you are the interviewer. Informational interviewing is especially helpful if you are uncertain as to what career is best for you. It also helps you build a network.

The first step is for you to identify individuals you want to interview. Write a letter to each of them, seeking an informational interview. The letter should be no longer than one page. In it you should tell how you got the person's name (i.e., through a professor or a newspaper article); briefly mention your background; explain why you want to meet with him or her; and ask

for an appointment. Include your telephone number and times when you will be available. **Do not include your resume.**

### Some good basic questions to ask are:

■ **Tell me about your career path; how did you get into [name the interviewee's career]?**

■ **What are your greatest challenges in this job?**

■ **What do you like best and least about this job?**

■ **What advice can you give me about entering the field?**

Once you have been granted an interview, you should prepare a list of questions. After the interview, be sure to send a thank you note.

## Networking

Networking can help you get a job, keep a job, and meet individuals in

similar careers. It can also introduce you to potential mentors.

Once you get a job, let your informational interviewees know where you are working. They can become part of your network. Know what is happening in your field, so you can pass information on to others. Read professional trade journals, as well as local and national newspapers. A great source of information on the health care industry is *Modern Healthcare*.

You should also join a student chapter of a professional association and attend meetings regularly. Introduce yourself and make your interests and career aspirations known. Some organizations that have student member rates include: National Health Lawyers Association, American College of Health Care Executives, National Association of Health Services Executives, Health Care Financial Management Association and the American, Massachusetts and Boston Bar Associations Health Law Section.

Most important, **RECIPRO-CATE**. When given the opportunity to help those who have helped you, **return the favor!** ♦

## Students continued from page 2

Saturday, February 22, 1997, I had the opportunity to attend and participate as a panelist in the Business of Health Care Career Conference. This conference was designed to expose current undergraduate and graduate students to some of the opportunities available with the business aspect of health care.

I am currently employed as an

executive intern at Brigham and Women's Hospital and am a graduate student at Boston College's Wallace Carroll School of Management, pursuing a career in Hospital Administration... As a panelist, I tried to illustrate the importance of taking risks, identifying and utilizing a mentor, seizing opportunities and recognizing the value an aspiring minority brings to an institution....

As a whole, this conference gave me an opportunity to reflect as an

aspiring minority professional. I was able to see what has positively affected my path and convey my experiences to help others identify what they could try to do to further progress in their own careers. ♦



**Anthony Cunningham**

## Academic Opportunities

### Westinghouse Science Talent Search

For more than 50 years, the Westinghouse Science Talent Search (STS) has identified and rewarded top students and encouraged thousands of others to pursue careers in science, engineering and mathematics. Each year, about 1,600 high-school seniors complete independent research projects and submit written reports on their findings. The projects typically are in the fields of physical sciences, behavioral and social sciences, engineering, mathematics or biological sciences.

A team of judges selects 300 "honors" or semifinalists. Another panel picks 40 national finalists who spend five days in Washington, DC. Entry materials for 1998 awards will be available in August 1997. All applications must be in by early December 1997. For more information, or to obtain entry materials, call Science Services, Inc. at (202) 785-2255.

### CityLab Academy

CityLab Academy is a nine-month, full-time post-secondary program specializing in biotechnology. A link between CityLab and the Biomedical Laboratory and Clinical Sciences Program at Boston University School of Medicine, it is geared for graduating high-school seniors (and GED equivalents) who seek a career and education in biotechnology but are unable to pay for college.

Students who qualify may earn 12 **Boston University credits, free of charge**, taking courses in biology, computers, medical terminology and laboratory skills. The next Academy session will begin September 2, 1997. Applications are due May 31, 1997. For more information, or an application, call the CityLab office at (617) 638-5664. ♦

### Save These Dates

SAT	PSAT
June 7, 1997	October 14, 1997
October 4, 1997	October 18, 1997
November 1, 1997	
December 6, 1997	
MCAT	GRE
August 16, 1997	November 1, 1997

For registration and location information for the SAT and PSAT, call (617) 890-9150; for the MCAT, call (319) 337-1357; and for the GRE, call (609) 921-9000.

### Conferences

#### MEETING OF THE SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING ACADEMIC SUPPORT NETWORK

New England Board of Higher Education  
October 4, 1997  
For information, call (617) 357-9620.

#### BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE CAREERS PROJECT NEW ENGLAND-WIDE STUDENT CONFERENCE FOR HIGH-SCHOOL TO POST-DOCTORATE STUDENTS BSCP

February 28, 1998  
For information, call (617) 432-0552.

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will be the dominant market for health care in the early years of the 21st century and will demand state-of-the-art health treatment, and you have a very promising employment picture.

One thing that is not hard to imagine is another period of labor shortages. The difference between now and 1945, however, is that the shortages are predicted to be greater than ever.

Recruitment for experienced medical and surgical nurses in Boston is already difficult, and it is becoming even more so.

In early March, Southern Methodist University's Job Center

announced that their research showed that the job market was the tightest it had been in a long time. This means that the graduates of this year, as well as the next several years, will have more abundant opportunities to find the jobs they want.

After spending 30 years in human resource management, my advice to students these days is: *Do not worry about the job market or whether there will be jobs when you graduate. Instead, focus on continuing to perfect the skills you already have, so when you hit the job market you will be in a position to choose where you want to work.* ♦