

What's Happening @ BSCP

August 2020 Edition

Fall 2020 Offerings

- **SKILLS WORKSHOP**—Our biennial Skills Workshop has been amended for high school students and their parents/caregivers. The program will be held virtually throughout the fall and will address the needs of high school students and their parents. Subject areas will cover topics addressed during the traditional in-person program and also include information students and parents have indicated they need now. Topics include, but are not limited to: application process for college/graduate/medical/professional schools, crafting the college essay/personal statement, interviewing skills, financial planning, resume writing and internship opportunities.

Stay tuned, schedule and registration information will be available in the near future.

Are there topics not mentioned that you would like to see covered during these sessions?

Let us know at hollie_desilva@hms.harvard.edu

In Case You Missed It

- **VIRTUAL CONNECT**—BSCP's new program, Virtual Connect, started this month and was a huge success! We were able to pair close to 100 college students, post-baccalaureates, and Master's candidates with mentors in their field of interest who answered questions and provided insight into their career paths. Virtual Connect will continue this fall and will include sessions for medical/graduate students and postdocs. If you're interested in being matched with a mentor, please fill out our survey [here](#). *Please note, first priority is being given to students/fellows who were registered for the April 2020 conference.*
- **NEW ENGLAND SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM**—The **NESS Virtual Facilitated Research Discussions** took place on Wednesday, July 22 and Thursday, July 23, 2020. It was a tremendous success! Out of 242 students selected to make poster presentations for the April 2020 New England Science Symposium, 103 students participated in the virtual facilitated research discussions. Each presenter made a 2-3 minute elevator pitch of their research virtually to research advisors and their peers. They received feedback as well as connection and mentoring.

We want to congratulate all the presenters in both the Oral Sessions and Virtual Facilitated Research Discussions!

Abstract submission information for the 2021 NESS will be available this fall at www.NewEnglandScienceSymposium.org

Resources and Highlights

- **ABRCMS COVID-19 Impacts on Minoritized Scientists Series** This is an on-demand series presented by ABRCMS Online. The opportunity is funded by National Institute of General Medical Sciences and managed by American Society for Microbiology. Registration is free.
- **14th annual USAIC BioPharma Summit** will take place virtually on **September 4th**. As a service to the global BioPharma community in these unprecedented times, USAIC is offering complimentary registration. Registration deadline is August 30th. Agenda and Registration can be found at www.usaindiachamber.org
- The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**—The CDC has two fellowship openings that are outlined on the PDF you can find at this link: <https://www.bscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/CDC-Fellowship-Opportunities.pdf>. Application Deadlines: August 30th.
- **Future Founders Bootcamp!** On **September 3rd**, join Susan Hockfield, **MIT President Emerita**, for a virtual fireside chat with Sang-eeta Bhatia, MIT Faculty & Founder: Hepregen and Glympse Bio. Registration link and more information about Future Founders Bootcamp can be found at https://www.bscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/FFB_Fall-Series-Flyer.pdf

Ask an Advisor

Utilizing the Who, What, When, Where, Why & How Method to Enhance Virtual Communication with Advisors and/or STEM Professionals



During the COVID pandemic, it is important for BSCP trainees to communicate clearly through the virtual space, particularly when writing emails for new opportunities or for continuing the relationship with your mentor, as classes and office hours are increasingly held online.

If you are a first generation student of color, it may seem a bit daunting to send an email to a faculty member who is your mentor or to write Directors of STEM programs. I can relate - my parents did not finish high school, and in my family or immediate friend circles, I had no one to advise me on ways to communicate with college mentors. Instead, I had to piece together advice from teachers, guidance counselors, college professors and STEM administrators.

As a college student at Southern University, a Historically Black College/University (HBCU), I asked myself, "Who am I to write this email to elite scientists across the country looking for research opportunities and/or applying for scholarships?" I also wondered why anyone would care. Little did I know, these questions laid the groundwork for writing a clear and compelling email, balancing length and content. In order to achieve this, I suggest you answer the following simple questions in your email, which may help you clearly communicate virtually: *Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How*.

Who & Where: It is always important to be professional and refrain from writing emails as you would text a friend or family member. It is helpful to address the person by their official title, e.g. Dear Prof., Professor, or Dr., then following the title their last name, unless you have received guidance from them to use their first name. In the first line of each email, it is a good idea to have a pleasantry opening line. In the second sentence, it is important to mention and describe *Who* you are *Where* you are, especially if you are writing to an advisor outside of your home institution. Before you close your email, consider adding another pleasantry along with thanking them. It also may be good to consider adding a Signature Line that contains details of *Who* and *Where* you are. This typically includes your full name, college major and expected graduation date, along with any other scholarly titles that you may have, e.g. BSCP student. The key to clearly communicating virtually is to be specific on *Who* you are and *Where* you are in your academic journey.

What & Why: Conveying the *What* of your email can be accomplished in a sentence or two, and could be considered your *Ask*. Strategic use of the Subject/Header of the email helps describe the *What* of your email. The description in your subject aids the reader to understand the specific topic of your email and summarizes your message in about 3 to 8 words. Very soon after the pleasantry in the opening line and after the sentence or two describing who you are, then the *Ask* or the *What* of your email should be stated. If the *What* of your email is clear and succinct, then the *Why* of your email follows nicely. The key to your *What* and *Why* is to be specific and these could each be summarized within a few sentences in your opening paragraph.

When & How: The *When* allows the reader to know if they need to take action and *How* you propose that they best respond. Could your inquiry be addressed quickly upon receiving your email or should they refer you to someone else who could help you better? The *When* is critical, since if you have an upcoming test in a week or two, then the instructor could provide you with the appropriate information based on the amount of time left before the exam date. If possible, it is good to allow your mentor, instructor, or professor enough time to respond to you. For example, with texting you may assume that you will receive a response minutes after you send your text, while emails may take 24-48 hours or more, for a response. Therefore, the sooner you send your well-crafted email, the sooner you will receive a response.

Let the person know *How* you want them to provide their answer. Does your question require a virtual meeting or solely answer your question(s) via email? If you are interested in meeting with your instructor, then you may want to suggest your preferred virtual conferencing methods. As mentioned previously with the other questions, specificity is the key to the *When* and *How* of your email.

Conclusion: I encourage you to write to your advisors/mentors and professors, asking meaningful and specific questions. You will benefit from being strategic and specific with what you write by asking the following questions: *Who, What, When, Where, Why and How*, which fosters meaningful dialogue through a virtual medium, such as email. I also encourage you to reach out to BSCP for resources and programming to help you get to where you want to go in your biomedical career.

Sample communication template found on next page.

Rafael Luna, PhD

Associate Dean, Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences

Director, Boston College Pre-Health Program

Director, Gateway Scholars Program in STEM

Boston College

BSCP Board Member and Student Advisor - Former BSCP Student

Ask an Advisor

Utilizing the Who, What, When, Where, Why & How Method to Enhance Virtual Communication with Advisors and/or STEM Professionals

Sample email template with all of the components discussed on previous page.

Subject: Advice regarding strategies to prepare for chemistry exam

Dear Dr. Smalley,

I hope this note finds you well. I am a Freshman student in your 9:00 AM General Chemistry section with a strong interest in both biology and chemistry.

I would like to know whether I should study for the exam by reading the chapters and doing the problems at the end of the chapter or should I review the homework problems and quizzes as preparation for the upcoming exam.

I have been studying chemistry each day for 2-3 hours over the past two weeks; however, I am not scoring as well as I would like on the quizzes. Your guidance on the best way to improve would be very helpful for me to learn and master the chemistry topics before the exam.

Do you have time either this week or next to have a conversation over Zoom or Google hangout?'

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience, and thank you for your time and consideration regarding this matter.

*Sincerely,
First Name*

*Full Name
Biology major
Class of 2024
Southern University
BSCP student*

Save The Date

Virtual Skills Workshops

September, October, and November 2020

Virtual Evening of Hope

Monday, October 5, 2020 at 7PM, EST

Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference

Friday, April 9 and Saturday, April 10, 2021

New England Science Symposium

Sunday, April 11, 2021

Stay Connected

Questions/Comments?

hollie_desilva@hms.harvard.edu

www.bscp.org

