Report for the Career Development Workshop

On Tuesday, June 2, 2026, the Career Development Interest Group, led by Dr. Georgia Charkoftaki (Columbia University) and Dr. Erica Forsberg (Bruker), hosted a workshop titled ***"Career Paths Beyond Academia: Industry, Government, and Emerging Opportunities."*** The 75-minute session ran from 5:45 to 7:00 pm in Ballroom 20BC at the ASMS Annual Conference in San Diego, CA. It drew approximately 200 participants, including students, postdocs, and early-career researchers interested in exploring diverse career opportunities in mass spectrometry.

The speakers were:

- Felice de Jong, Founder and CEO of IROA Technologies
- Christopher Anderton, Team leader in Pacific Northwest National Laboratory
- Erica Forsberg, Vice President Metabolomics, Bruker
- Rachel Parise, Sr. Scientist, Merck

Overview

Talks covered various mass spectrometry positions from government national lab, instrument vendor, standards and reference materials provider, pharmaceutical company. Each gave a 20 minute talk about their career path, none of them straightforward and none of them academic in nature. This was to give perspective to the audience that a career path in mass spectrometry is not always leading to a faculty position at a university and that a successful career trajectory can be complex and outside what graduate education tends to indicate. Speakers discussed the importance of perseverance, how not to take things personally, that all roads are cutthroat and that hard work and personal motivation are key to employability. Expertise in mass spectrometry or a niche application they pursued in graduate studies is not always the final role the speakers found themselves in, although in many instances, it was helpful to demonstrate thinking outside the box and gaining new experiences in a variety of roles. For example, Felice's talk on starting a business was particularly compelling as she took her passion in mass spectrometry and had to combine experiences within business, leadership and marketing to make her current position successful. Collaboration was another common theme with all the speakers. Everyone took networking with previous colleagues and friends in the mass spectrometry community as a tool to guide them in larger projects in their current roles. ASMS continues to be a valuable platform to encourage breaking out of the introverted scientist persona and meet new people who can be a future connection for a future position.

During the Q&A session, engagement with audience was very good. After splitting the speakers into smaller groups, the audience was encouraged to ask questions. From a speaker perspective, there were a lot of specific questions regarding personal circumstances, which made it challenging to answer. However, the early career members that attended were eager to hear harsh realities and how we handled our own challenging experiences. Even after the session was over, many of the attendees continued to engage with the speakers and utilize the experience to connect with speakers and other attendees on LinkedIn or email.