Global Health Career Panel

EVENT SUMMARY

Where: Recessions Bar & Grill, 1823 L Street NW, Washington, DC
When: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 | 5:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Moderator
Kris Panico, MSPH | Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCV), Kyrgyzstan ‘13, Ukraine ‘14

Speakers
Julie Becker, MSc | Senior Vice President, Global Health Division, Chemonics International
Cristine Betters | Managing Director, International Development Division, Abt Associates
Farley Cleghorn, MD, MPH | Global Head, Health Practice, Palladium
Loyce Pace | President and Executive Director, Global Health Council (GHC)
Julie Wallace, MPH | Malaria Division Chief, Global Health Bureau, USAID

To see event photos, please click here.
Event Description

SID-Washington’s Young Professionals in Development Network (YPN) and the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Washington, D.C. (RCPV/W) hosted a career panel featuring RPCVs and career professionals working in Global Health. The panelists spoke about their career paths in this sector and shared tips for job seekers. This event was hosted at Recessions Bar & Grill.

Key Takeaways

1. Desirable Skills for Employment in Global Health

As job markets become increasingly competitive, potential candidates are always looking for ways to get ahead. Loyce Pace (Global Health Council) stated that she looks for a strong work ethic matched with strong interpersonal and communications skills in a potential employee. Pace highlighted the importance of intuition and feels strongly that an employee should not only be able to think critically, but should look at issues broadly to analyze how projects may be connected. Julie Wallace (USAID) feels strongly that technical skills can be learned in any position through training and practice, but that social and personal skills – more often referred to as “soft skills” – are the most desirable. Wallace stated that the art of communication, the ability to listen, and the willingness to participate and collaborate are often just as impressive, if not more impressive, than advanced technical skills. Christine Betters (Abt Associates) emphasized the importance of proficient language skills, mentioning French specifically. Betters has used French in almost all aspects of her career, and she stated that her ability to speak a second language elevated her to senior-level management positions. Betters added that strong writing abilities are a must; she highlighted the difference between writing a two-sentence Instagram post versus drafting a 25-page summary and encouraged the crowd to focus on enhancing their writing across all formats and assignments. Julie Becker (Chemonics) discussed the importance of field work, and the ability to “get your hands dirty.” To Becker, experience is everything when it comes to the field of global health. In her opinion, if a candidate presents themselves for an opportunity with little to no field experience, they are much less likely to be offered a position.

2. Networking for Introverts: Advice, Tips, and Tricks

Networking can be intimidating and stressful for many, especially those who consider themselves introverts. The panelists shared their thoughts on networking for introverts and provided ways in which individuals can feel more confident networking with professionals in their respective fields. Betters shared the importance of utilizing professional and alumni connections and emphasized reaching out to them to see what opportunities they may provide.

3. Best Foot Forward: Interview Advice and Skills

Wallace shared that getting ahead in the global health sector requires commitment and research during the interview process. According to Wallace, she interviews many qualified candidates for positions, but some fall short when they fail to explain the details of the desired position. Wallace underscored the importance of doing basic research at a minimum before an interview so that candidates can accurately describe the details of the position. Farley Cleghorn (Palladium) stated that job searches are about competition and that standing out from other applicants. He described how more individuals are graduating from MPH graduate programs today and are entering the workforce with an inadequate amount of job experience. Cleghorn emphasized that he is looking for employees who are personable, hirable, and have the potential to grow into leadership positions.