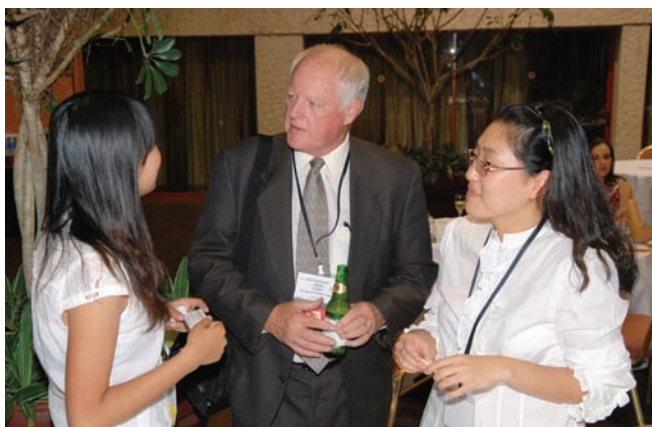


Members Make a Connection Through the Mentoring Program

The AACC International mentoring program was established in 2005 by the Professional Development Panel with the intent to connect younger members of the association with experienced cereal scientists. Now in its fourth year, more than 100 AACC Intl. members have participated in and benefited from this program.



Participants at the Professional Development Panel's 2007 Mentoring Event.

Kim Koch, Northern Crops Institute, North Dakota State University, and Supriya Varma, Rutgers University, made a connection during the 2007 mentoring program. Koch, the mentor, and Varma, the protégé, introduced themselves over e-mail and were able to meet each other while attending a special mentoring event held during the 2007 annual meeting. During the event, they were able to discuss each others' areas of interest and participate in the introductory game, which Varma said "helped to learn a lot about each other in a very short span of time."



Kim Koch



Supriya Varma

Both Koch and Varma agree that the desire to communicate was mutual, and both parties tended to initiate the contacts. Because of the geographical distance between the pair, most of the communication was done via e-mail. Koch and Varma have been active over the past year, discussing professional areas of interest in food science, their career paths, and their common interests in traveling. Both mentor and protégé feel they gained a valuable relationship from the experience.

Koch would advise other mentors and protégés to "make time for one another. Mentors and protégés need to listen. Each (person) brings unique attributes and viewpoints to the relationship." Varma recommends other graduate students and early career professionals take advantage of the program. "It helps you interact with experienced people in your field who can help you in career decisions as well as give you professional/personal advice when you need it," said Varma.

“Mentoring is infectious, and you now have the opportunity to participate, too.”

Asked about their overall thoughts on the mentoring program, both felt the opportunities the program presents are excellent. "It provides two-way communication between now and the future, and lets experiences be shared," said Koch. Stated Varma, "Advice, opinions, and suggestions from the mentors are extremely valuable during this juncture in the lives of early career professionals."

Both Koch and Varma hope to attend the 2008 annual meeting in Hawaii and will have the chance to continue their relationship there.

Bill Atwell, Cargill, Inc., was instrumental in creating the mentoring program and is now the mentoring program chair. Atwell feels that helping to foster careers of others in the industry is an extremely gratifying experience. "I know because I have done it repeatedly, and I'm always signing up to do it again," said Atwell.



Bill Atwell

All AACC Intl. members are invited to sign up for the program online at www.aaccnet.org/membership/mentor/ by July 1. The Professional Development Panel will pair the mentors and protégés. Information about matches will be sent in August. Mentors and protégés are encouraged to introduce themselves by phone or through e-mail. This year, all mentoring program participants, including those from previous years, are invited to a special breakfast during the 2008 annual meeting, Monday, September 22.

Atwell concludes, "Mentoring is infectious, and you now have the opportunity to participate, too. Mentoring is really only maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship. It doesn't take much time and the return on investment is outstanding. Don't hesitate to sign up!"

