

Postdoc transitions into career in biopharmaceuticals

By Sheila Yong

Jeremy Weaver, Ph.D., explored many career options during his time as a postdoctoral fellow at NIEHS. He found his perfect match in a position as a process development scientist at Grifols Therapeutics Inc., which he began Jan. 13.

Weaver obtained his Ph.D. in Animal Science from Cornell University, and joined the NIEHS Laboratory of Signal Transduction in November 2010. His research in the [Inositol Signaling Group](#), led by Stephen Shears, Ph.D., focused on enzymes that synthesize inositol pyrophosphates, and how these small signaling molecules regulate cellular processes in response to environmental insults and disease development.

"I was initially interested in careers in academic or government research, because I enjoy both bench science and the opportunity to mentor young scientists," Weaver said. However, upon further research, he discovered other career possibilities in industry that align better with his personal values, while still allowing him to pursue his passion in scientific research and mentoring.

The right training for the job

Weaver's new position is a technically challenging one. It involves purifying candidate protein drugs from various expression systems and blood plasma to be used in clinical trials. For that reason, his work is subject to stringent experimental and quality control.

At NIEHS, Weaver acquired extensive knowledge about protein purification platforms and skills that are transferrable to his new job. Besides learning new skills in the lab, Weaver also received assistance from the staff members at the NIEHS protein expression core facility, who shared their expertise with him and helped broaden his research experience.

Weaver is also grateful to Shears for allowing him the flexibility to pursue his research and career interests. He said that Shears took an active interest in ensuring his success, and was always available to offer advice. "Steve had my best interests at heart, and was actually the one who encouraged me to consider careers in industry," he noted.

Shears considers Weaver a valuable member of his team. "Jeremy was not only fearless at learning techniques in our group that were new to him, but also made significant improvements to them on several occasions," he commented. Shears is confident that Weaver will continue to excel in his future scientific endeavors.

Career development and networking

Apart from his research responsibilities at NIEHS, Weaver also invested effort in building his professional network by attending networking events in the Triangle area, including those at the NC Biotechnology Center and [Triangle Biotech Tuesdays](#). (<http://www.trianglebiotechtuesday.com/>)

He also frequently participated in events within NIEHS, such as the brown bag lunches and coffee hour organized by the NIEHS Trainees Assembly. These events allowed him to interact with professionals and fellow trainees with similar career aspirations. "I learned how to present myself and my research to other scientists, as well as to reflect on my own strengths and weaknesses," Weaver explained. These skills helped him tremendously during his job interview.

Weaver found his job the old-fashioned way - by answering an advertisement. Nevertheless, the career development opportunities at NIEHS gave him an edge over other applicants. He credited Tammy Collins, Ph.D., director of the Office of Fellows' Career Development, for reviewing his resume, as well as various career-related workshops that helped prepare him for the job market.

In particular, he cited the management boot camp and the writing workshop by Duke University Professor George Gopen, J.D., Ph.D., as two of the highlights. "While attending these events was a small time investment on my part, it caught the interviewers' attention," he said.

As a process development scientist at Grifols, Weaver looks forward to participating in the drug development process. "Grifols organizes Patient Day, an annual event which invites patients using medications from the company to visit the site," he



Weaver hopes to return in April, to host the discussion panel on careers in contract research organizations at the NIEHS Biomedical Career Fair. He looks forward to getting together with his former fellow trainees again and sharing his new work experience. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

explained. "Having the drugs I purify go beyond clinical trials and help improve patients' lives would be an absolutely rewarding experience."

(Sheila Yong, Ph.D., is a visiting fellow in the NIEHS Inositol Signaling Group.)

The Environmental Factor is produced monthly by the [National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences \(NIEHS\)](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/)
(<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>)

, Office of Communications and Public Liaison. The content is not copyrighted, and it can be reprinted without permission. If you use parts of Environmental Factor in your publication, we ask that you provide us with a copy for our records. We welcome your [comments and suggestions](#).
(bruskec@niehs.nih.gov)

This page URL: NIEHS website: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>
Email the Web Manager at webmanager@niehs.nih.gov