RAMP Annual Meeting Hobart 2015

The joint DAAD-AAvHF Research Ambassadors and Mentoring Program (RAMP) annual meeting was held on Thursday, 19th and Friday, 20th November 2015 in the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies Building (IMAS) on the beautiful Hobart waterfront. The primary aim of these meetings is to enable program participants to meet each other, to interest new participants in the program, to generate new mentoring pairs and to provide an opportunity to further develop and refine our program. The forty attendees included registered mentors and mentees as well as others interested in finding out what the program is about. While many of our mentees and mentors are associated with the DAAD or AAvHF, we also welcome those who do not hold such associations but would like some independent career advice or are interested in providing mentoring to young researchers.

Following a lively drinks function at the cosy Jack Greene bar on Salamanca Square on the Thursday night, the main meeting was held on the Friday at IMAS. The meeting was opened by Associate Professor Kay Double who heads the RAMP Management Committee. We then heard from Kerrie Thornton who joined the program in early 2015 as the RAMP Coordinator. Kerrie updated us on the number of registered RAMP participants (currently 52 mentors, 44 mentees, 28 research ambassadors and 9 associates), and the number of currently active mentoring pairs in the program (10 at Nov 2015), as well as discussing other achievements and challenges in her role. During the day, young researchers involved as mentees in the program gave short presentations on their research and it was wonderful to hear about the wide variety of high quality and important research being achieved by these young people. We also discussed the role of mentoring in career development and heard a fantastic presentation by Dr Julie Preston, Director of the Career Mentor Program at the University of Tasmania who spoke about "Best Practice in Mentoring". Dr Preston's presentation can be viewed here. Another presentation enjoyed by the audience was given by Associate Professor Erik Wapstra (University of Tasmania) whose talk on "Research Project Management" (view his presentation here) provided plenty of useful and thoughtful advice on how to choose the research that you do, how to manage your research and how to balance a research career with "real life".

One of the best received sessions of the day were the two presentations given by active mentoring pairs. These were presented by Dr Judith Reinhard and Elizabeth Lowe in the area of science, and Diane Busuttil and Yiorgo Zafiriou in the area of the arts. Both mentoring pairs spoke about the positive nature of their mentoring relationships and it was clear from these presentations that both mentor and mentee benefited from, and enjoyed, this relationship.

The meeting finished with a general audience discussion on how the program could be developed and improved, the role of the Research Ambassadors and future meetings of the group. The full meeting program can be viewed here. Following the meeting, a number of attendees who were also registered for the biennial meeting of the AAvHF attended the opening reception of this meeting, while the remainder got together at a local Vietnamese restaurant for an informal dinner.

Following the meeting eight new mentoring pairs were established or are in the making. Feedback indicated that attendees found the meeting highly enjoyable and very useful in making valuable new academic contacts and learning practical ways to enhance their career development via either mentoring or improved management of research projects.

RAMP meeting organisers

Associate Professor Kay Double, University of Sydney
Elisabeth Meister, DAAD
Kerrie Thornton, RAMP Coordinator

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