

GSCN Mentoring Program

Sounding out career options and sharing experiences

The new GSCN Mentoring Program was launched at the GSCN Conference in Dresden on 7 Oct. 2021 with five mentees, their mentors, and the founders of the "Career development" working group. The goal of the new program is clear: experienced mentors from a range of different institutes are assigned to support young scientists. The mentors are available for confidential conversations to talk about and answer difficult questions relating to personal career planning. Should I go into research? Or into industry? Or something different altogether? And how can I negotiate contracts, establish a laboratory, work out the next steps? Each mentee chooses his own mentor in advance – in the GSCN there was great enthusiasm amongst the PIs about becoming a mentor, as many have had their own valuable experiences with support programs of this nature.

The first GSCN mentees had a wide range of different reasons for applying to the program. Tianliang Sun, for example, is seeking to move from industry back into academic research: "I was doing postdoc research in Novartis but aiming for an academic career. While Novartis provided topnotch resources that I required for my research project, however, some key factors for an academia track such as the teaching experience, grant writing as well as scientific freedom are largely missing in the industrial background. Moreover, it is a big step transiting from postdoc to independent PI as lots of new challenges will occur beyond research." His mentor, Cédric Blanpain, has already given him valuable tips on how to establish a laboratory

and working group. This kind of interaction between mentor and mentee is exactly what the organizers of the program had hoped for. "The GSCN Mentoring emphasizes the idea of creating a network within the community, transfers knowledge from one generation of scientists to the other and supports individuals to grow within their field of expertise and find the right way for their individual skills and talents" is how Karin Höhne, the Equal Opportunity Officer at the Berlin Institute of Health (BIH), describes her vision for the GSCN Mentoring Program. One of the initiators, Germán Camargo Ortega, notes the long-lasting positive impact of the mentoring. "The program can promote the successful development of the next generation of German stem cell scientists. This will have a significant impact in the long term in our society Taking part in this is very exciting and has motivated me to create the program."

The Mentoring Program aims to identify individual pathways for career planning, with the help of the experienced researcher, and to determine the appropriate steps. Mentee Anja Trillhaase is addressing the issue of balance in her professional career: "I chose the program to evaluate my own potential and receive guidance on the balancing act between work and family life, administrative and experimental work as well as being a leader and a team-mate at the same time." In the same manner, mentor Michael Rieger gave his mentee Oumaima Stambouli initial advice in a confidential conversation. "I liked very much the one-to-one meeting with my mentor, I got very valuable tips that I know I would not have gotten if I was not on this program." Michael Rieger also sees this as his obligation to his mentee. "I think it is extremely important, but also appealing, to train the next generation of scientists in the best possible way. This includes not only passing on practical and theoretical knowledge, but also sharing one's own experiences from the everyday life of a scientist and lecturer."

The mentees of the first year 2021/22 Oumaima Stambouli, Anja Trillhaase, Tianliang Sun, Jennifer Steens, Mohamed Mabrouk (from left) with their mentors.



The GSCN Mentoring Program consists of several conversations between the mentees and mentors over the course of a year, which the young scientists prepare and structure themselves. At the beginning and in the middle of the year, there are also workshops for the group of young scientists in which coaches help them to reflect on their communication styles, goals, and ambitions. The mentees are also shown ways of speaking up effectively and for their own interests. Initiators Insa Schröder and Marieke Essers are striving to create a longer-lasting impact for the mentees – a network of young scientists who provide each other with mutual strength and support: “The mentoring program is a unique opportunity to build scientific networks that the entire GSCN will benefit from.”

GSCN Mentoring Program

The one-year GSCN Mentoring Program is preferably available to GSCN members.

Registration deadline:

1 July 2022

Your application should include:

- a letter of motivation
- a resume
- a brief outline of your research
- your choice of mentor from the GSCN mentor list

Notification of application approvals:

22 July 2022

Program launch:

GSCN Conference, 13 – 16 Sept. 2022 in Münster

Program end:

GSCN Conference 2023

Any questions?

E-mail: gscn.office@mdc-berlin.de

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