

Mentor Panel Discussions -

An easy way to get people talking...

Alexandra Jahn¹, Penelope Wagner², Harry Borlase³, Jenny Baeseman⁴

¹National Center for Atmospheric Research, USA; ²University of Delaware, USA;

³University of Akureyri, Iceland; ⁴Association of Polar Early Career Scientists, University of Tromsø, Norway

1. What is the Purpose of a Mentor Panel?

As an international and interdisciplinary organization managed by and for early career researchers, one of APECS' (Association of Polar Early Career Scientists) primary objectives is to help early career scientists and students learn to better interact with their colleagues and with senior scientists. The purpose of mentor panel discussions is to "break the ice" and help generate conversation and collaborations among those who know the field best: experienced scientists and professionals, and those who could benefit most from their experience and perspectives: young researchers and students. Career panels can focus on different topics, like career development or directions of polar research.

2. How do mentor panels work?

The panels generally last 1.5 to 2.5 hours and consist of two to four mentors from various backgrounds who work within the realm of polar science, engineering, education and policy. In the beginning, these mentors introduce themselves and give a short overview over their career path, often guided by questions from the panel organizers, such as:

- What was the biggest hurdle on your career path, and how did you overcome it?
- How do you balance your time between teaching and research?
- What are two pieces of career advice you wish someone would have told you at an early stage of your career?

This initial introduction is then followed by questions from the audience. In many cases, the panel discussion continues at the local pub.



Figure 1: Audience during the APECS panel discussion at MOCA 2009 in Montréal, Canada

3. Where have panels been held?



Figure 2. Locations of APECS Mentor Panels
Blue = past panels, Yellow = future panels

- Over the past 5 years, APECS mentor panels have been held in 45 different cities and on 6 continents (see Figure 2)
- Each panel has benefited between 20-50 early career scientists, and often more, due to audio recording of the panel discussions and the archiving of these podcasts on the APECS Website.

6. Summary

- Mentor panel discussions are a great way for early career scientists to learn about many aspects of polar science from more senior scientists, and to get their difficult questions answered by people outside their institution, discipline, country, giving a new perspective.
- Meeting and talking to senior scientists during APECS panels *breaks the ice* and makes it easier to approach these mentors again later to discuss future science collaborations.
- Panels also offer the chance to meet other early career polar scientists, making conferences more productive and fun.
- People who organize a panel gain excellent leadership skills and meet the senior colleagues they need for future collaboration.

apecsinfo@gmail.com
www.apecs.is

4. Who organizes these panels?

- Panel discussions are initiated and organized by APECS members at various polar-related conferences worldwide.
- APECS can provide advice on what to consider when planning the panel (like how long it should be, how many mentors to invite, who to invite, who to ask for funding, etc).
- Often panels at one conference inspire people to put on panels elsewhere.

5. Where are the future panels?

- SCAR Open Science Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Aug. 2010
- ESOF 2010, Torino, Italy, Jul. 2010
- Antarctica New Zealand Annual Meeting, Christchurch, New Zealand, Jul. 2010
- Northern Research Forum, Oslo, Norway, Oct. 2010
- AGU, San Francisco, CA, USA, Dec. 2010
- ASSW 2011, Seoul, South Korea, Apr. 2011
- IUGG 2011, Melbourne, Australia, Jun. 2011
- 11th ISAES, Edinburgh, Scotland, Aug 2011
- Wherever you want to organize one!

APECS panels have been sponsored by many of our partners. The ones listed here are just a small selection from recent panels. We want to thank all sponsors and mentors who support the APECS panels!

