

ISPE Annual Meeting 2013 – A Singaporean Student’s Perspective

By Ng Qin Xiang, National University of Singapore

I did not have the slightest inkling on what was in store for me when I first signed up for the local ISPE student poster competition. On the day of the local competition in Singapore, I presented my poster competing against several postgraduate students, who impressed me with their more complicated and sophisticated PhD projects. I rose to the challenge and embraced the opportunity wholeheartedly. To my pleasant surprise, I was eventually declared the winner of the local competition and awarded an all expenses paid trip to the ISPE Annual Meeting, held in Washington D.C, USA, to compete at the international competition. I set off to attend the international final held during the 2013 ISPE Annual Meeting from 3–6 November in Washington D.C. in high spirits! I was extremely excited to have the chance to visit the the capital of the United States.

After a long and tiring flight (with a roundabout journey from Singapore to Hong Kong, then Chicago before flying in to Washington D.C.), I set foot in Washington D.C. for the first time. The city was extremely beautiful and the autumn hue added a nice touch to everything. It redefined my perception of an urban city: lush greenery, sprawling skylines and brilliant architecture were everywhere. I quickly flagged down a cab and headed straight to the hotel after landing in the Reagan National Airport.



The alluring autumn hue

Washington Marriot Wardman Park hotel was the ideal location for this meeting; it has splendid grand ballrooms, spacious exhibition halls and seminar rooms that were big enough to accommodate all the attendees and the capacity to hold the entire list of events lined up for this meeting. There was a trade exhibition in

the Exhibit Hall of the hotel where exhibitors and industry players from all over the world showcased their products and concurrently, over 40 different seminars and talks lined up every single day at different venues within the hotel, leaving all the participants spoilt for choice. Of these, I chose to participate in the Young Professional Education track and discussions on quality metrics.

One of the first few events I attended was the Young Professionals/Student Luncheon and Orientation. We were greeted with a sumptuous spread of food and the committee planned some exciting teambuilding games and exercises for us to network with the other participants and representatives from different industry players like FDA and other pharmaceutical companies. This was a great opportunity for me to get to know fellow student representatives and how other Student Chapters operate. From conversing with representatives from the other Student Chapters, I learnt that one common problem faced by them was the challenge in retaining their members and the high turnover rate that resulted. Chapter presidents shared advice, problems and even solutions. Being able to be a part of such a discussion was enriching and enlightening.

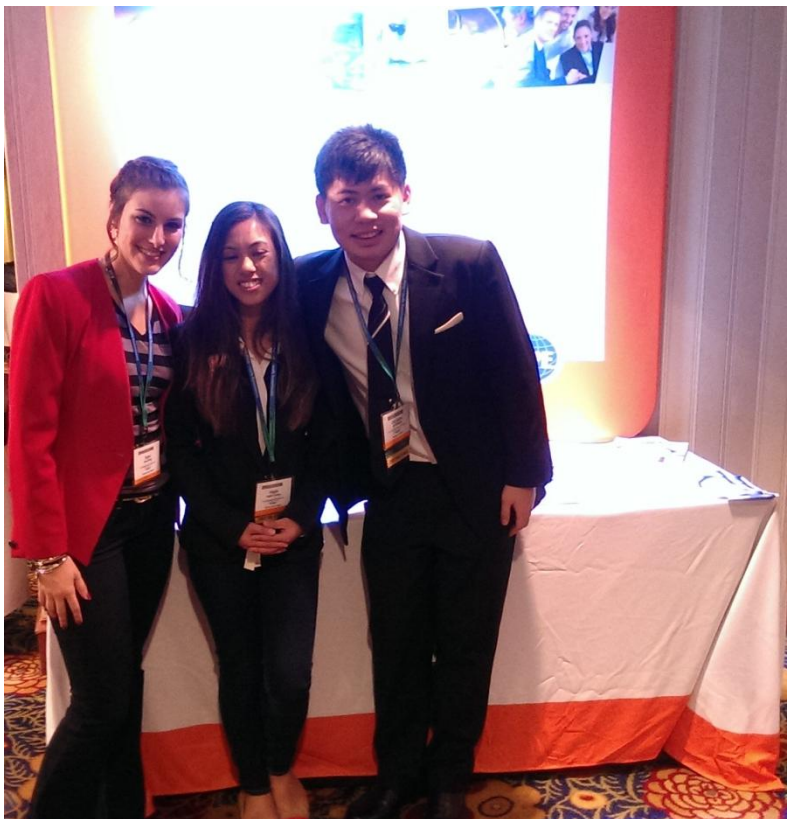


The sumptuous spread of food at the Young Professionals/Student Luncheon and Orientation

With my poster set up, I was all ready for the poster competition. There were a broad range of projects being presented at the competition. The competition provided an opportunity for me to get to meet so many different students with very impressive projects at a single location – this was truly eye-opening and rewarding. The judging went by quickly as each judging session consists of a five-minute presentation given by the competitor plus a five-minute question-and-answer period.

The following day, I attended the Membership Luncheon and Awards ceremony where together with the student poster competition results, other highly prestigious awards were also given out. Miglia Cornejo and Kassi Stein of

Northeastern University won the undergraduate prize. Although I did not win, I was content with my poster and feel extremely blessed and grateful to have been part of such a prestigious event. The opportunity to network with professionals, thought leaders, expert speakers, students and mentors gave me invaluable insights into the pharmaceutical industry. I have had the chance to interact and become friends with Norikazu Eiki, Chairman of Bayer Yakuhin, Ltd., and André Walker, Chairman of the ISPE International Board of Directors 2010-2011 and long-time member and enthusiastic supporter of the Boston Area Chapter. This meeting has provided me with an unparalleled education, new perspectives and fresh knowledge about the pharmaceutical industry.



With Kassi Stein (left) and Miglia Cornejo (right), the winners of the undergraduate category

In conclusion, this has been a very fun and fruitful trip for me and I will never forget this wonderful experience – I greatly cherish the opportunity to meet staff from the US FDA and regulators from Europe, interact with industry players and thought leaders at the amazing Newseum night party and other receptions, and learn about the latest innovations with 150+ exhibitors. My sincere gratitude goes out to ISPE (Singapore Affiliate) for sponsoring my trip to Washington D.C and the affiliate manager, Ms Kathryn van Dal for settling the administrative work for the trip. Also, I wish to acknowledge the dedication of the organizing team for making this annual meeting a success. I thank the organizers for their warm hospitality and kindness throughout the course of the annual meeting. The week has been extremely meaningful for me and I hope it continues to be

successfully organized year after year so future batches of young minds could benefit from this unique and broadening experience.



A photograph with fellow student poster competition participants at the Newseum night party

-END-