

naturejobs

**JOBS OF
THE WEEK**

College and graduate-level students need better preparation for jobs in industry — that was a major theme at sessions on the biotech workforce at the Biotechnology Industry Organization's convention in San Diego, California, last week.

Speakers touted various remedies. Sheldon Schuster, president of the Keck Graduate Institute in Claremont, California, pointed to the success of the institute's professional master's programme, which combines science coursework with MBA-level classes in business management and finance. Schuster claimed that 97% of Keck graduates found industry jobs within six months of getting their degree. David Cheresh of the Moores Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego described the UC Discovery Fellowship, which funds positions that facilitate relationships between industry and academia. One recent fellow set up an initiative on his campus to support entrepreneurs with help on consulting, networking and finding seed funding.

Some emphasized the training role that community colleges could play. In the United States, four-year degrees — even from prestigious schools — often do not provide the practical lab skills needed for entry-level industry jobs, according to Elaine Johnson, director of the Bio-Link National Center in San Francisco, which fosters curriculum improvement and professional development at community colleges and elsewhere. Community colleges could fill the breach.

Industry needs to help with on-site initiatives as well. South San Francisco-based Genentech, for example, has 100 postdocs on short-term contracts in-house. There is no promise of a permanent post at the end of their contract, says Genentech's David Chang. The rationale, he explains, is that postdocs who think a job is on the line are more likely to take a conservative approach to their research. Genentech's programme is not entirely altruistic — the company gets an occasional hiring and constructs a network of postdoc alumni. But it, like the above initiatives, recognizes that the success of biotech as a whole has more to do with people and talent than with equipment or buildings. ■

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