

WM2015 Conference Panel Report

PANEL SESSION 039: Young Professionals in Nuclear Science and Engineering and the Role of Mentorship and Knowledge Transfer

Session Co-Chairs: **Robert Berry**, *Foxfire Scientific, Inc*
Leonel E. Lagos, *Applied Research Center at Florida International University*

Panel Reporter: **Leonel E. Lagos**, *Applied Research Center at Florida International University*

Panelists:

- **Felix Meissner** - *President, North America Young Generation Network*
- **Yadira Bonilla-Cuevas** – *Process Engineer, Savannah River Site*
- **Vasileios Anagnostopoulos** – *Post Doctoral Fellow, Applied Research Center at Florida International University*
- **Hilary Emerson** - *Post Doctoral Student, Clemson University*

More than 30 people attended this session that focused on the prospective of mentorship and knowledge transfer from multiple viewpoints. An informal roundtable-style format composed of the future leaders of our industry sitting together with senior representatives from the federal government and industry. The panel members shared ideas and points of views with the audience as well as with the other panel members. The panel members was composed of an “operating warfighter” new hire, and early career professional from industry, research and academia. The audience asked the speakers questions at the end of each speaker’s presentation and at the end of the panel session. Members of the audience include government representatives, DOE national labs, students and a member of the WM Board of Directors.

The following summary includes the main points addressed by the panel members:

At this year’s Waste Management Symposia (WM 2015), young professionals, government and industry and students had the opportunities to share their views and exchange ideas and concerns about early career professionals and the workforce. This forum provided a great opportunity for our young colleagues to understand the future waste management employment landscape and challenges of this industry.

At Session #39, “Young Professionals in Nuclear Science and Engineering and the Role of Mentorship and Knowledge Transfer,” panel members described their experience with mentoring and knowledge transfer encountered/experienced during the first few years of their early careers:

Felix Meissner During his presentation Felix showcased his experience as a member and president of the North America Young Generation Network (NAYGN). Some of the mentoring and knowledge transfer activities by NAYGN include visit to nuclear power plants and participation of “Green Day” in Washington, DC. He also showed an “Aging Workforce” graph that described the age range vs employees. He also presented the KT&R (Knowledge Transfer and Retention) approach and explained it elements including (Informal mentoring, professional

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communities, technical training, and procedures). He made a comment of one of his early mentors (Bob) and pointed out that his mentored used a “1 way dialog” approach to transfer his knowledge. He also talked about NAYGN – HUB platform where KT&R, Mentorship, and other knowledge transfer and mentoring methodologies can be found.

Yadira Bonilla – Cuevas Yadira talked about her present job at Savannah River Site and described her role as part of SRS’s SWPF construction project. She presented a detailed description of the environmental restoration and challenges faced by the workforce at SRS. She also presented her previous experience as a “warfighter” and her service to this country as part of the US Army. She served for a total of 12 years and she transition to industry a couple of year ago. She discussed some of the mentoring and knowledge transfer she obtained while she was in the military. She shared with the audience some of the things needed to achieve success as a young professional in private industry. Some of her advised included: 1) be organized, 2) stick to schedule, 3) have confidence, 4) expand your network, and 5) keep growing personally and professionally.

Vasileios Anagnostopoulos Vasileios presented his journey as a young scientist. He started by providing his background as a PhD student in his native country (Greece) and his exposure in research projects conducted for the IAEA. He also presented his research work performed in Spain as well as Greece. Vasileios encouraged the young audience to stay in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) especially in areas related to the nuclear industry such as radiochemistry. Vasileios also presented his research work at FIU’s Applied Research Center where he is currently a Post-Doctoral Fellow working in environmental restoration research in support of US Department of Energy’s Office of Environmental Management.

Hilary Emerson Hilary presented her experience at Clemson University where she was a NRC Fellow performing environmental remediation research. She described her experience as a PhD student as well as a Post-Doctoral student which have included participation in conference, research, and outreach efforts including the interaction and knowledge transfer to young K-12 students. She also mentioned that “mentoring” was a deciding factor for her in choosing a career in the nuclear industry. She told the audience that although the field is aging, there is a great desire to train young people.