CEO Viewpoint

At the time of writing, the Society was due to run its first hybrid event, The Dynamic Cell III, held jointly with the British Society for Cell Biology. The meeting welcomed ‘virtual’ delegates in addition to over 200 people attending in person at the Manchester Conference Centre, allowing them to watch presentations, ask questions of speakers, and even network with other remote delegates – all online. This is an exciting initiative through which the Society hopes to expand access to its events programme, and we will continue to pilot hybrid events throughout 2018.

Following a successful event in 2015, the Biochemical Society participated in a repeat Athena SWAN Best Practice Workshop on 7 March at Charles Darwin House. The event, in collaboration with the Royal Society of Biology, the British Pharmacological Society, the Society for Applied Microbiology, and The Physiological Society, focused on sharing tips for bioscience departments in higher education institutions to achieve an Athena SWAN award.

Monday 12 March marked the first time the Society participated in STEM for Britain. Run by the Parliamentary Science and Technology Committee, this poster competition provides early career scientists an opportunity to present their research in parliament. This was a great opportunity for early career scientists to gain experience of communicating their work to a unique, non-expert audience of MPs and key policy makers. The competition is judged by representatives from the participating learned societies, including Mark Roberts, who is a member of both the Society’s Policy Advisory Panel and Education, Training and Public Engagement Committee.

On Tuesday 13 March, we returned to Westminster for the annual Voice of the Future event, an event organized by the Royal Society of Biology on behalf of the STEM community. The event reverses the roles of a Parliamentary Select Committee, providing 6 of our early career members a unique opportunity to quiz senior figures from Parliament and Government on a range of contemporary science policy issues.

Earlier in February, the Society held a day long workshop, in collaboration with Central Saint Martins, exploring the similarities and differences between how artists and scientists approach their work. Nine members of the Society met with nine artists on Central Saint Martin’s MA Art and Science to discuss how art can be used as a vehicle to communicate research. You can read a report of how the day went on The Biochemist Blog (wp.me/p8Ctqr-1Y3).

We have been developing a new module of our popular Sciberbrain resource, focusing on pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. The website provides free materials to equip school and A-level teachers for discussions around controversial topics in science (other modules include stem cells, genetic engineering, brain chemistry, evolution, clinical trials and vaccinations). Look out for this – and access our existing resources – on the Sciberbrain website: www.sciberbrain.org.

As you may know from previous issues, last year the Society launched its new online training portal. We have already successfully translated our popular ‘R for biochemists 101’ training course from the classroom to online, and in March we also made this online course available for paying non-member delegates for the first time. For more information about our next run in May, open to both members and non-members, please visit our website (bit.ly/2FmAleA). The portal is also being put to use for staff training, with all Biochemical Society and Portland Press staff using the portal to complete training on the new General Data Protection Regulation, for which we are currently preparing.

Looking forward, our training event in collaboration with the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS), ‘Evolving molecular bioscience education’ takes place on 12–13 April at the University of Chester. This is aimed at anyone teaching or supporting teaching in Higher Education – from early career researchers to seasoned professors – and will include a range of activities to help share best practice and novel ideas with HE educators.

In April, we also look forward to seeing many of our members at the Experimental Biology conference in San Diego (21–25 April 2018).

Finally, for the budding science communicators among our student members, there is still time to enter the Society’s popular Science Communication Competition, open to all our undergraduates and postgraduates. Each year, we are delighted by the creativity and enthusiasm the participants show for communicating their work in both the written and video categories. Submit your entry here (bit.ly/1kxt8EH) by 16 April for a chance to win a cash prize, as well as a mentoring session with professional science communicators.