

# In the NEWS



*Presented by IFCC Young  
Scientists Task Force*

## **The Secret Ingredients of a Long Lasting and Successful Mentor and Mentee Relationship**

An Interview with Dr. Eleftherios P. Diamandis (Mentor) and Dr. Vathany Kulasingam (Mentee)

Dr. Eleftherios P. Diamandis is the Biochemist-In-Chief at University Health Network and Mount Sinai Hospital, two major teaching hospitals in Toronto. He is also Head of Clinical Biochemistry at the Division of Clinical Biochemistry, Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology, University of Toronto. Dr. Vathany Kulasingam is a Clinical Biochemist at University Health Network and is an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto.

### **How They Met**

Dr. Eleftherios P. Diamandis has been in the education business for over thirty years. He has supervised more than thirty PhDs, twenty Masters in Science, and a hundred Post-Doctoral Fellows and Residents. "I am blessed to have been involved with the mentorship of young professionals for so long," Dr. Diamandis said proudly. One of his best students is Dr. Vathany Kulasingam, who approached him in 2004 and applied for a graduate student position in Dr. Diamandis' research laboratory. In 2008, she completed her PhD and entered the post-doctoral diploma training program at the University of Toronto. She was appointed Clinical Biochemist at University Health Network immediately after graduation in 2010, and is currently an Assistant Professor at the

University of Toronto.

### **The Long, Evolving Relationship and Benefits**

"We have now completed twelve years of interaction at various levels: graduate studies, post-doctoral training program and a professional relationship," said Dr. Diamandis. "It (the relationship) has evolved over the years but the fundamental values remain the same. We are both committed to this mentor-mentee relationship, we invest the necessary time, acknowledge the limitations of each other and use our experiences to now mentor (together) other younger laboratorians," he added.

When asked how this mentorship has impacted her career as a laboratorian, Dr. Kulasingam exclaimed, "Tremendously!" As a graduate student in Dr. Diamandis' research laboratory, she witnessed first-hand his role as a clinical biochemist and how he helped build and shape the clinical biochemistry laboratories in the downtown Toronto hospitals. "Now, as a professional myself, he continues to support my academic ambitions to conduct research and teach, while providing clinical services. (His) support comes in many forms, including providing the infrastructure to conduct the research, resources in terms of personnel, instruments, etc...and having an open-door policy to always welcome a friendly discussion."

# Mentorship INTERVIEW

"In order to be a good mentor, you first need to have a genuine interest in helping the young individuals achieve their goals. It is important that the mentor has the ability to listen carefully and understand the aspirations and goals of the mentee, and also realize the talents and abilities of these individuals."

Dr. Eleftherios P. Diamandis

As the mentor, Dr Diamandis has a different perspective on how this relationship has impacted him. "The most valuable aspect is the respect and trust that we have between us, as professionals and human beings in general. Each one of us understands the capabilities and limitations of the other. Our relationship is bidirectional. I learn from the mentee and the mentee learns from me."

## Advice to Build a Successful Career

As a mentor who has built a distinguished scientific career in Clinical Biochemistry, Dr Diamandis's advice is invaluable. "It has been my own experience that those who distinguish themselves have access to a lot more opportunities than those who are members of a crowd. So, hard work, persistence and the pursuit of excellence are vital for the future success. To put it differently, why would somebody offer a job to a mediocre individual? On the other hand, those who are distinguished are usually offered a lot more positions than the ones they need. So, escape from the crowd, become distinguished and show your abilities to those who are hiring young scientists."

## How to be a Good Mentor and Maintain a Good Mentorship Relationship

"... the whole idea of mentorship is to use the experience of the mentor to solve the problems of the mentee," said Dr. Diamandis. "In order to be a good mentor, you first need to have a genuine interest in helping the young individuals achieve their goals. It is important that the mentor has the ability to listen carefully and understand the aspirations and goals of the mentee, and also realize the talents and abilities of these individuals. Then, the mentor will try to engineer a relationship which takes into account the capabilities of the mentee and their expectations for professional and personal success. A good mentoring relationship is maintained if the mentor continues to be genuinely interested about the well-being of the mentee, and provide constant guidance as the mentee goes through their professional and personal life."

## How to Seek Out a Mentor

Dr. Diamandis explains, "Mentees should study very carefully the availability of mentors and select one with whom they have matching 'chemistry' - and one that has experience and good reputation in their professional life. If there is a formal mentor/mentee relationship, this should be carefully constructed, otherwise the dissolution of the relationship may be troublesome to both parties. So, I advise the mentees, before committing to any mentor, to do their homework and to ask others who have experience with their mentor to understand their capabilities, experience and general behavior."

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