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Talent Meets Industry – Industry Meets Talent: The Meet & Greet Event with the Alfred Werner Scholars on Novartis Campus

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The objective of the Alfred Werner Excellence Scholarship Program is to grant outstanding students of chemistry the opportunity to perform their MSc studies at one of the Swiss universities, thus, bringing talent, different cultures and diversity to the Swiss chemistry community. The program is largely supported by industry, but also by two foundations and a small number of private sponsors. Since 2013, the program has granted nearly eighty scholarships to students of chemistry from over thirty different countries around the globe.

To introduce the new students to the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical industry (... and vice versa), each year, one of the program-supporting companies will offer a one-day visit to the Werner scholars (Meet & Greet). Now that two thirds of the scholars continued their careers in Switzerland, most of them as PhD students, we now have a substantial body of talented and well-integrated scholars looking for professional opportunities in industry.

This new circumstance called for an adjustment of the format of these events: In 2022, next to a traditional Meet & Greet event for the new scholars hosted by Givaudan at their Kempththal Innovation Center,^[1] it was decided to offer a similar platform to all scholars. The event, held online, allowed more than forty participants to interact with each other on screen. The meeting, hosted by Novartis, involved all Alfred Werner Scholars, current and alumni, as well as researchers, hiring managers and HR specialists of Novartis.^[2]

Given the success of the 2022 e-Meet & Greet, we decided to offer an in-person meeting on the Novartis Campus open to all scholars, including the alumni.



Hosts and participants in front on Novartis Pavilion.

There were ten short presentations by scholars who are about to finish their doctoral studies. During the breaks, there was plenty of room for personal interaction for the scholars with their Novartis hosts. For the Novartis hosts, as well as for the younger scholars, it was nice to see what these scholars accomplished during their studies in Switzerland. Not just as scientists, but also as individuals.



Kleni Mulliri, University of Bern, taking questions from the chairperson, Michaël Parmentier of Novartis.

Finally, at the Novartis Pavilion, twelve Novartis staff members offered the students the chance to discuss matters such as professional opportunities, including internships, work- and career-issues, all the way to the work–life balance in small groups. Given the nice ambiance of the Pavilion, a very lively exchange developed. These discussions, valued very highly in the scholars' feedback, would have gone on much longer, well beyond the opening hours of the Pavilion.



Discussions about work, career and other, between Novartis staff members and small groups of visitors.

Impressions from Alfred Werner Scholar Participants

“It was exciting to hear and discuss science that other scholars are working on in such clear and dynamic way. Besides that, I enjoyed the end of the day where we had an opportunity to meet Novartis employees in the amiable atmosphere and get insights about the industry-oriented research.”

Jelena Gajic

“I like to learn about what it encompasses to have a certain role in industry, what the day-to-day work looks like and what skills are important to succeed in that role. I use these insights to be able to put myself in that position and understand if it is something I would enjoy doing. And if yes, how do I best prepare for it.”

Alena Budinska

“I learned of the broad range of tasks assigned to the various positions in a large life science company as well as about the different career paths that the employees took, e.g. spending their career within the same company or not. This was very inspiring and gave me a new perspective for my own career plans..”

Leon G. Feld

For more information please see:

<https://foundation.scg.ch/scholarships/werner-scholarship>

<https://foundation.scg.ch/scholarships/e-meet-greet-events>

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[1] M. Gautschi, H.P. Lüthi, *CHIMIA* **2022**, 76, 976.

[2] H.P. Lüthi, F. Gallou, A. Grandeur, *CHIMIA* **2022**, 76, 974.