

Conference Report

The 2024 Meet & Greet Event with Alfred Werner Scholars at the Merck Switzerland Biotechnology Development Center in Corsier-sur-Vevey

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For this year's Meet & Greet event, Merck Switzerland invited the Werner Scholars to its newly established Biotechnology Development Center (BDC) in Corsier-sur-Vevey. As in previous years, the Alfred Werner Scholars were invited to present themselves ('Greet') and interact with the host representatives ('Meet') during this one-day event. The Meet&Greet Program, introduced in 2016, was established to connect the Alfred Werner scholars with the companies who support the program.

Most scholars continued their studies in Switzerland, and some are now employed by program supporting companies. Meanwhile there is a body of excellent students who are looking to transition into industry. This also makes the young visitors even more attractive and gives the event greater significance.

On September 4th, twenty-five scholars accepted the invitation from Merck to the 2024 Meet&Greet event. After first glimpses of the modern BDC facilities and enjoying a welcome coffee on a terrace with a wonderful view of Lake Geneva, the hosts introduced themselves and gave more background on the Merck Group. Next, the scholars briefly introduced themselves. Some cast their career onto a single slide, others used 'free speech'. Finally, there were five short presentations of scholars who currently are at an advanced stage of their doctoral studies.

After the lunchbreak, there were presentations by Merck staff with a focus on the career path opportunities chemists have within Merck. Merck representatives, from different departments, illustrated these opportunities, and gave some background on their

careers, *i.e.* 'how they got there', and why they love the work they are doing. For the scholars, this was a rare opportunity to learn about career tracks of chemists in industry, many not much older than the visitors themselves. At the end of these presentations, the scholars had the opportunity to discuss professional and career matters in small groups or even in a person-to-person framework with the Merck staff members.

At the end of the day, the students felt that they made a step forward in the planning of their professional careers. From the discussions with the young talents the hosts felt that the Meet&Greet event allowed them to present Merck as an attractive employer, offering a very broad range of career paths for chemists – besides the classic paths in R&D and manufacturing. We would like to thank Merck for hosting the event at their Biotechnology Development Center.

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Dr. Daniel Weibel sharing thoughts on chemists' opportunities in industry with Werner Scholars. Photo credit, Anastasiia Torga.



The Merck hosts and the visiting Alfred Werner Scholars on the terrace of the BDC Building overlooking Lake Geneva. Photo credit, Anastasiia Torga.