

FIND *your* FUTURE

Name: Alexandra Spencer

Job title: Membership Development Officer

Current employer: Royal Society of Biology

Course studied at UCL: BSc Human Sciences

What is the core purpose of your role (and typical activities)?

My role is to promote engagement with the activities and membership benefits of the Royal Society of Biology to the professional biosciences community. This was a new role when I joined the Society. I'm largely self-directed, so all of my opportunities are typically generated through my network, networking and Society connections. During my time at the Society, I have delivered talks and seminars at 125+ events at universities, companies and conferences across the UK to thousands of scientists, opened conferences by facilitating networking seminars for the attendees, participated in events in Parliament, delivered several public engagement activities and created a new scheme that turns members into Ambassadors of the Society, to name a few things. I also have a couple of side-projects that are taking shape that aim to support the scientific community.

What kind of person would this role suit?

A self-starter who is confident in directing their work, seeking and creating new opportunities on behalf of the organisation, and is willing to put themselves 'out there' (in particular, directly in front of people!). My biosciences background means that I take a genuine interest in the people I meet, which adds credibility and helps me to understand where I can make the most impact, and my public speaking/debating/improv training all help me to feel comfortable and creative speaking in front of audiences.

What kind of people and clients do you work with?

People in the biosciences arena in varying levels of seniority: school children, undergraduate students, PhD students and Postdocs, Lecturers and Professors, University, charity and company staff, CEOs and senior management, committee members, policy makers, the list goes on...

What aspects of your degree and time at University do you feel were of particular benefit in securing work and in carrying out your current responsibilities?

I followed a very interdisciplinary degree at UCL, encouraging me to look at the human condition from many perspectives, and I continue to look at life, problems and opportunities from many different perspectives

and disciplines. This is a character trait that helps me to see things that perhaps others wouldn't, and to create connections that may otherwise be missed.

Joining AIESEC at University, an international youth-run, non-governmental and Not-for-profit that provides young people with leadership development, cross-cultural internships, and volunteer exchange globalist experiences, opened my eyes to practical experiences and building networks. Universities are a microcosm of opportunities. My first job was organising scientific conferences: I volunteered running conferences for AIESEC, and I had a scientific background through my study!

Do you have any top tips for current students who may be interested in your career area?

There are many different charities in the scientific sector that can benefit from your genuine interest in the discipline. These organisations support and sometimes represent science/scientists, so your insight into what they care about, matters. This is a good resource to get an idea of the types of organisations that exist in this area: <https://www.sciencemediacentre.org/about-us/funding/>

Working for a smaller organisation presents opportunities to get involved in many different aspects of the organisation, and really make a difference, but others may find it a challenge to not be presented with a clear progression pathway. It's lucky that I'm opportunistic by character, and care deeply about the sector that we support! But it's not for everyone. It's helpful to think about where you can be of best service, and how an organisation's structure can offer you stepping-stone opportunities for learning and growth.

Please feel free to connect with me in LinkedIn if you'd like to chat further.

www.linkedin.com/in/spenceralexandra/