

Collagen Gordon Research Conference

The Gordon Research Conference (GRC) “The Collagen Superfamily: From Genes to Organism Physiology” was held together with the Gordon Research Seminar (GRS) “The Collagen Superfamily: Lessons from Biochemistry, Development and Inflammation” in July 2015 in New London, NH. As it was the first participation in GRS/GRC for me, I want to summarize my impressions and experiences here briefly.

I think for PhD candidates and young post docs, there is no better way to start in a GRC than participating in the GRS as well. These two days before the GRC are an excellent chance for young scientists to present their work to other researchers of the same age and to senior scientists, who participate at each GRS as discussion leaders and keynote speakers. Due to the small number of 30-40 students/post docs, the GRS offers a great chance, especially for young scientists, who attend for the first time, to get in contact with other participants easily and to be welcomed as a new member of this research “family”. I really liked the friendly and open-minded atmosphere during the oral presentations and the poster session, because it helped to ask own questions and to participate in discussions even if the scientific content was not directly linked to the own research field.

A special experience for me has been the short talk session on Sunday afternoon, which was held by chance due to a cancellation of an oral presentation. To fill the gap in the schedule five poster presentations were selected for a 5 min oral presentation. It turned out that not only the speakers appreciated this possibility to present their work, but also the feedback from the audience to this form of presentation was very positive. I can strongly recommend this 5 min presentations as an inherent part for future meetings as it really helped to increase comprehension for other topics. Collectively, I can say that I appreciated these two days of GRS a lot and that the GRS helped me to exploit the whole value of the subsequent GRC. Therefore I wanted to thank Jessica Trombetta-Esilva and Pauline Nauroy one more time for organizing this weekend.

The GRC, which followed the GRS, was coined by state-of-the-art research, excellent talks and an impressively broad spectrum of collagen-linked scientific questions during the poster sessions. This year, the conference was chaired by Sergey Leikin and Florence Ruggiero, who did an excellent job. Although it is beyond doubt that the scientific presentations are the most important part of the conference, the small things in between are the reason for the unique character, which separates the GRC from other research conferences. The location at Colby-Sawyer College allows a constant exchange during breakfast, lunch and dinner and during every meal you will meet new people. If there are still people left, you have not met before, there is a good chance that you get in contact with them during one of the well-organized exciting afternoon events. Be it hiking, canoeing, swimming or participating in the legendary soccer match USA-Rest of the world, there are numerous possibilities to establish new contacts. For me, it was nice to see that over the whole week there were no hierarchical structures at all making it possible to discuss your own ideas with leaders on the research field and getting inspiring feedback immediately. In summary I can recommend the participation in GRS/GRC every student in the research field. Once you have been there for the first time, you do not want to miss any other meeting.

Tobias Kühn, University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany