

YS pre-conference Event at the 26th SSB+RM Annual Meeting

On the morning before the start of the 26th annual meeting of the SSB+RM, we got the opportunity to hold a pre-conference event as a kind of warm-up for the three-day conference. For this 2-hour event, we set ourselves the ambitious goal of “How to become a successful group leader in 120 minutes”. To assist us in this task, we had invited three such successful group leaders to share their wisdom with our 50 participants in a roundtable discussion: Prof. Priscilla Briquez and Prof. Wilfried Weber from the University of Freiburg, Germany and Prof. Bart Deplancke from the EPFL, Switzerland. After a brief introduction, we then started the discussions with the first session on the importance of mobility. Two of the speakers (Priscilla and Bart) had been in the U.S. at some point during their career whereas Wilfried had stayed in Europe though still moving between different institutions here. All of them agreed that mobility is extremely important and that one should pick the locations strategically. Going to the U.S. is certainly not mandatory but still highly recognized if one wants to get a faculty position. With regard to how to choose the right lab for one’s PhD or postdoc, all speakers strongly agreed that the PhD was “one’s playground to explore and find out what you like and what you don’t” whereas postdoc positions should be chosen more strategically. “When you apply for a faculty position, no one asks you about your PhD research but only your postdoc(s).” In the second session, we then discussed the biggest struggles that our guests had encountered (or are still encountering) during their career. This was a great session with a very lively discussion and lots of questions from the audience with the take-home message being that even established professors still have many struggles and that persistence is an absolute must-have if one wants to pursue such a career path. On the other hand, the “highs” are also very high and all three of them radiated a lot of joy and enthusiasm for the work they were doing!

In summary, this was a very successful event and a great start to the SSB+RM conference! We are very grateful to Prof. Martin Ehrbar and the rest of the SSB+RM executive committee for giving us this opportunity as well as of course Professors Priscilla Briquez, Wilfried Weber and Bart Deplancke for being on our panel and sharing their stories with the audience!

