

2014  
**SUPERFUND  
RESEARCH PROGRAM**  
*Annual Meeting*

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES FOR SPEAKERS  
IN THE TRAINEE SESSIONS



**UC BERKELEY**  
**SUPERFUND**  
RESEARCH PROGRAM  
SCIENCE FOR A SAFER WORLD



National Institute of  
Environmental Health Sciences  
*Superfund Research Program*

## CAREER PANEL

**Ben Gerhardstein** is a Public Health Advisor with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR's) San Francisco office. In his current role, Ben helps to protect people from exposure to pollutants from hazardous waste sites in the Pacific Southwest. He has worked on a range of environmental public health issues at CDC and ATSDR, including community design, bicycle and pedestrian safety, environmental justice, food systems, and chemical policy. Ben received his B.A. from Brown University and his M.P.H. from Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health. An adventurous soul, Ben enjoys rock climbing, backpacking, and bicycling, especially with his wife and two children.

**Michele La Merrill** has a PhD in Toxicology from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a MPH from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Toxicology at University of California at Davis. She conducts epidemiological and experimental research on environmental chemicals that contribute to risk of obesity and diabetes.

**Dr. Kristin Robrock** is a Senior Engineer at Exponent in Oakland, California. Dr. Robrock is an environmental engineer and microbiologist who specializes in biodegradation and the fate and transport of chemicals in the environment. She works largely on environmental forensics cases, determining timing and locating sources of contaminant releases, quantifying contaminant releases, conducting historical site reconstructions, and identifying other potential sources of contamination. In addition, she is a California licensed civil engineer. Dr. Robrock completed her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, in the Civil & Environmental Engineering Department studying the biodegradation of the flame retardants polybrominated diphenyl ethers. Prior to attending graduate school, she worked as a consultant at Hart Crowder in Jersey City, New Jersey mainly on projects related to dredging PCB-contaminated sediment.

**Jay James Ph.D.** is CEO of Picoyune, a company focused on instrumentation for chemical analysis. Their first instrument is a plasmonic sensor for mercury. Jay began his research on this topic at UC Berkeley under funding from the Superfund Research Program. Since starting in 2013, Picoyune has been awarded an SBIR grant from NIEHS, and won awards at several business plan competitions including first place in UC Berkeley's Launch Energy and Cleantech competition. Jay earned a B.S. in mechanical engineering from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley.

## COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP SESSION

*The Science of Communication: A PhD's Guide to Selling Your Skills and Yourself*

### Description:

Many PhDs believe that their technical work and publications are the main modes by which they will build their reputation and advance their careers either in or outside academia. And most PhDs are taught that "selling" involves slick manipulation of facts and tiresome schmoozing. In this interactive workshop, Dr. Peter S. Fiske examines the underlying science of persuasion, and reveals how some of the most important communication you do may be more effective when you appreciate things from the listener's perspective. The workshop includes a discussion of the power of self-assessment as a means of developing an authentic personal narrative, and the

ways in which your Ph.D. background can be framed as a highly valuable asset in the world outside of academia.

Speaker:

**Dr. Peter S. Fiske** is a nationally-recognized author and lecturer on the subject of leadership and career development for scientists and engineers. He is the author of numerous articles on the subject of careers and career development and writes a regular column in the journal *Nature*. He is the author of: *To Boldly Go: A Practical Career Guide for Scientists* (AGU - 1997) and its second edition: *Put Your Science to WORK!* (AGU - 2001). He has presented *Put Your Science to WORK* workshops to over 17,000 early career scientists and engineers in the US, Europe and the Middle East.