

BIOSAFETY SA AND FABI HOST WOMEN IN BIOTECH PANEL DISCUSSION

Five women led a discussion at FABI on the challenges faced by women in the biotechnology sector on 29 October. Project Manager at Biosafety SA Dr Liezel Gouws chaired the discussion steered by a panel of five scientists from different institutions, including three from FABI. On the panel were Dr Farhahna Allie of the University of Johannesburg, Dr Sindi Buthelezi of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Dr Nicky Creux, Professor Lucy Moleleki and Prof. Sanushka Naidoo. The aim of the discussion was to engage and empower a new generation of women biotechnologists. The panel spoke of how their passion for science and perseverance had carried them through a number of obstacles and made them determined to let the quality of their science and their records of accomplishment “speak for themselves”.



Dr Allie warned young women to disregard naysayers and to be proactive instead of being reactive to challenges. She encouraged young women scientists to take the first leap in making connections with other scientists around the world and to grab every opportunity to empower themselves. Dr Buthelezi said

young women should never feel that they have to “carry the world on your shoulders”. She stressed the importance of asking others to “share the load”, especially when juggling motherhood and academia. She encouraged young women to take care of their physical and mental health.

Dr Creux said she had looked up to strong, female role models as a student and now enjoys mentoring postgraduate students. She said she “pays it forward” by training the next generation of South African women scientists. Prof Moleleki encouraged young scientists to pursue “good science” even when faced with little resources. Build your research and a track record and success will follow, she emphasised. Prof Naidoo spoke of the benefits of guidance by a supervisor who “will not break you down” but recognised and accommodated women’s unique needs and roles to help them succeed.