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# Jeffrey Halpern, Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering, CEPS travels to Ireland

Jeffrey M. Halpern

University of New Hampshire - Main Campus, [jeffrey.halpern@unh.edu](mailto:jeffrey.halpern@unh.edu)

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UNH Global

# Jeffrey Halpern

**Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering, CEPS - Ireland, UK, Germany**

My trip was extremely productive, and I accomplished many items that I hope will significantly improve my scholarly agenda and future international collaborations for UNH. In addition, I had some minor cultural exchanges that were interesting and memorable. This report is structured first on the technical accomplishments, with some cultural exchanges at the end.

## **Metabolomics Conference: Dublin, Ireland**

***Academic Achievements:*** By attending this conference, I was able to accomplish four major items:

First, I learned the proper language to use when speaking to metabolomics groups about my research. I got to learn more about the research community and understand the current Metabolomic research state and the future directions/needs of the community

Second, I was looking for a partner to assist me in my R15 grant. Many attendees were interested in a “fee for service” relationship where I would send samples and pay for the analysis. I was approached by two people who may be interested in a more collaborative/partnership approach. These relationships will be followed up with over the next month to figure out who to include in my R15 grant.

Third, my undergraduate student was interested in working with a specific group in Australia next summer under an International Research Opportunities Program (IROP). She had me approach several researchers on her behalf. All of these researchers are interested in Alexis’s proposal and are currently in contact to hash out details for a potentially strong proposal. The Director of the



Prof. Halpern (l.) with the Director of the Metabolomics Center in Australia and the President of the Metabolomics Society

Metabolomics Center in Australia and the President of the Metabolomics Society (see picture at left) are extremely excited about a prospective IROP student and potential future collaborations.

Fourth, I met one Chemical Engineering professor from Turkey. He is interested in setting up a formal exchange of PhD Students, where he would send a student to UNH for 3-6 months under their own funding. He was also open to discussing UG study abroad programs, but was less interested/excited about these. I will be following up with him in about three weeks.

***Cultural Exploration:*** I found myself in the middle of my first Pride parade of the trip. Dublin hosted 70,000 people, mostly kids, at a public display to accept the LBGT community. Most pride parades in America have the normal “booths” to sign up and learn how various organizations can accept the LBGT community. What made the Pride parade different is these booths didn’t exist, but the light hearted and party/happy atmosphere made all feel welcomed.

Also, I attended a Gaelic Football game while in Dublin. This is played differently than soccer, and is more a combination of soccer/basketball with tackling. The pitch is twice the size of a soccer field and hosts 15 players. This occurred at the famous Croke Park.

My second visit at Croke park was with the Metabolomics Society Banquet. There we were able to meet hurling players, another game exclusive to Ireland and Gaelic communities.

### **Chemical Industry Awards: Liverpool, UK**

My host at University of Chester thought it would be better to take a day off, and instead of visiting Chester on Thursday-Friday, attend the CIA banquet instead. At the banquet, I was introduced to the Executive Chief of Royal



Society of Chemistry, the CEO of Thornton Park Halpern (center) visiting Langley Castle in England at University of Chester, and various other guests.

## **Scotland**

I received an invitation for a tour of the Beatson Institute of Cancer Research. There, my colleague is investigating various proteins for the root of cancer development. They are making significant progress to identify key proteins necessary for the proliferation of cancers.

## **University of Chester**

The meetings with University of Chester were extremely productive. In two days, we were able to outline a publication on Garret Thompson's work (my current IROP student). In addition, we talked about future strategies for the work moving forwards. One strong idea was University of Chester funding a graduate student to be shared between Chester and UNH. This was of high interest to Garfield Southall, who will be looking into this with various administrators. Other exchange opportunities were discussed, specifically additional exchange of undergraduate researchers or the academic exchange of students; however, these showed less interest than the research exchange of a PhD Student. In addition, we outlined two potential grants we can apply for moving forward.



Halpern (center) with Frank and Jin at 3T Analytik

## **3T Analytik – Tuttlingen Germany**

***Academic Achievements:*** I was invited to visit 3T Analytik to give a talk and get additional training on a recently purchased equipment. The talk was attended by six employees, including the chief product specialist and the CEO. During my training, we were able to run some very interesting tests in which we are hoping to publish. In addition, we were able to talk about some other technologies being developed, and we brainstormed an idea for a future

joint NIH grant combining PCR with QCM.

**Cultural Exploration:** I was in Germany when Germany lost to France in the Euro2016. Frank, the CEO of 3T Analytik, took me to a public watching event. It was amazing to watch the game with all of those fans, even if Germany lost.

### **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

The major reason for the visit to Greece was to meet with Dimosthenis (Denis) Sarigiannis, where I sought a future collaboration. Denis was extremely interested in the ideas I posed. The major idea is to submit a HSFP grant centered around separating and diagnosing eating disorders separately from depression. We will be entering a four person collaboration between Thessaloniki, Chester, and one more unnamed collaboration for a March 2017 submission. In addition, Denis is investigating other grants we can apply for in addition to the HSFP.



Halpern (3rd from l.) with Denis and his group in the EnvE Lab

Also during my visit, I gave a departmental seminar. The seminar announcement went out to the entire faculty of Aristotle University, so it was well attended. I met with various faculty members including the Chair of Chemical Engineering. Together, we mapped out a potential exchange program for our Junior Bioengineers to visit Aristotle for 1-2 semesters. This was also the most promising potential for a formal academic exchange program.

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