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WEINBERG COLLEGE  
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# Development of a Short Course for Collateral Duty Safety Advisors in Academic Research Laboratories

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# About Research Safety Student Initiative (RSSI)

- Started in 2017 following a trip to Dow Chemical Company
- Inspired by UMN JST / other student safety groups



**Chemistry, Chemical Engineering, Materials Science and Engineering, and Interdisciplinary Biological Sciences**

# RSSI Mission

The mission of RSSI is to develop and promote a stronger culture of safety across research laboratories at Northwestern University through an increased awareness of safety hazards and a more positive mindset towards safe laboratory practices. In conjunction with ORS, we aim to encourage university-wide commitment to safety by providing education, resources and training.

# What RSSI Brings to NU Research Safety



# Ensuring Day to Day Research Safety Dependent on Students



# Safety Advisor Roles

- ✓ **Conduct new member safety training**
- ✓ **Assess spaces for hazards**
- ✓ **Enforce safe lab practices**



# Difficulties Experienced by Graduate Student Safety Advisors

- **Inexperience**
- **Conflicting time demands**
- **Overcoming lab / department culture toward safety**
- **Inherent hierarchical structure of academic research**

# RSSI Safety Advisor Panel



- **Organized a panel with support from Materials Research Science and Engineering Center targeting chemistry department**
- **4 panelists**
  - **Third year – post doctoral student**
  - **Inorganic, Organic, Physical, and Biological**
- **17 attendees**

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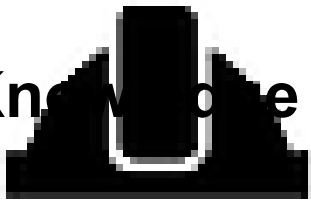
MRSEC  
Materials Research Science  
and Engineering Center



# RSSI Safety Advisor Panel Takeaways:

***An inherent learning curve is present upon assuming safety advisor role due to:***

- Knowledge barrier
- Tension between safety advisors
- Pushback in enforcing lab safety protocols
- Inexperience in lab management procedures



# RSSI and Research Safety Proposed Solution:

*The learning curve for newly appointed safety advisors can be shortened and confidence can be increased by developing a short, online training course.*



# Goals of Training Course:

- Enhance self-confidence of students in their leadership skills
- Serve as a meaningful resource for the duration of their tenure as a safety advisor
- Provide a universal guideline to ensure level playing field for all NU safety advisors



# **SAFETY TRAINING**

CONSORTIUM

# Safety Training Consortium

***The mission of the Safety Training Consortium is to improve researcher safety by developing high quality, engaging and cross-certifiable safety training for the research community.***

**Courses by Universities for Universities**



# Vision of Safety Training Consortium

- ✓ **Standardized courses**
- ✓ **Reduce resource and organizational demands**
- ✓ **Share the “best of the best” independent of commercial interest**
- ✓ **Build a community with interest in improving safety**
- ✓ **Make the future safer**

# Timeline for Creation and Implementation of Safety Advisor Training

**October 2019**

**Second safety  
advisor panel**

**Winter 2019 –  
Spring 2020**

**Content Design and  
Drafting with Safety  
Training Consortium**

**April 2020**

**Course Launch**

# Future Efforts



**Convenient RSSI /  
Research Safety  
App**



**Redesign TA training  
workshops with  
developed simulations**



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- Prof. Omar Farha and Farha Group

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# Contact / Follow RSSI!



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STUDENT INITIATIVE**