

Interview with DS Chair Christopher

1. Tell us about yourself (where are you from? Your studies? Moving to Sweden..)

Answer: I am originally from Germany, where I did my Bachelor and Master program in Chemistry at the University of Marburg, a small medieval town in central Germany. I have been studying abroad both in Denmark and Italy for exchange, so the step moving to Sweden for my PhD was not that scary anymore.

2. What motivated you to join the DS Board?

Answer: I was in the PhD council at K and BIO before and motivated to see how things worked at Chalmers. I also thought that many issues regarding the PhD education should be solved at the Chalmers level instead of every department trying to be their own university.

3. What do you think has been the most interesting and surprising aspect of being DS Boardie?

Answer: Well, Corona has been a surprise and it is both interesting and frustrating to see how this affects all of us.

4. Do you, as a DS Chair, have any specific plans for the year 2020-2021?

Answer: Most things are unfortunately overshadowed by Corona and has brought a lot of challenges to deal with during the last year. We focus on improving the research education, especially when it comes to the quality of supervision and differences between the departments. We also initiate the hiring process of a new DOMB.

5. What do you take back after being a DS Boardie?

Answer: There is great responsibility but also so much potential to develop, both the research education and yourself!

6. What do you like to do when you are not researching?

Answer: I like the nature, its forest, mountains and the sea and outdoor activities. In my free time I enjoy (rock) climbing, hiking and camping. I also like playing board games with friends such as Gloomhaven.

7. How do you handle stress at work (mainly from research)? Does it affect your personal life? How do you overcome this?

Answer: I try to remind myself that this is my education and I am here to learn. A failure on first sight definitely makes you learn and might turn out to be the spark for a great idea. Of course, there are stressful periods, when a lot of deadlines pile up and they do affect my personal life. It is important to take the necessary rest when it gets

calmer. I also try to maintain an active lifestyle, because moving and exercise helps me to unwind and recharge.

8. Do you think your time at DS board will help you to develop your skills (i.e. leadership skills) which will be helpful for your professional career? How?

Answer: I strongly believe so. In a way this year has forced us to adapt also in the DS board quickly to the new situation. It showed me that following up on other boardies work is very difficult if you hardly ever meet in person, but still is very important. I also learn to work with very different personalities in all kinds of positions. It is also important to recognize that you are in a representative role and that you need to act in the interest of the PhD students and not your own benefit. To get our interest and opinions through communication is key.

9. What is the best advice/feedback you have received you think helped you a lot in your career/personal life?

Answer: Firstly, if things get overwhelming take a step back and pause. Try to summarize what has been achieved and let it sink in. This can boost my confidence. Secondly, thinking and learning takes time, but this time is well invested instead of starting to do something that is not thought through.