

**Alliance for Career Advancement (ACA) Event**  
**Transforming research into a successful biotech company**

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On August 8<sup>th</sup> 2017, the Alliance for Career Advancement hosted Dr. Michael Johnson, founder and CEO of Visikol Inc. The event was well attended by Ph.D. students and postdoctoral fellows. Dr.

Johnson spoke about his journey from starting small entrepreneurial ventures in graduate school to co-founding a biotechnology company named Visikol. He left us speechless by opening the talk with examples of his unsuccessful ventures that strengthened his understanding about the necessities and steps required for transitioning



a novel idea into a successful business. He demonstrated that in everything from making biofuel from algae to using duckweed to decontaminate water, every unsuccessful venture strengthened his understanding about the necessities and steps required for transitioning a novel idea into a successful business venture. Visikol was born out of the need for a less tedious clearing agent to study plant biology. Visikol Inc. has successfully used this idea and extended its applications from plant biology to 3D imaging of complex tissues and organs and even to diagnostic applications in tumor imaging. Dr. Johnson stated how he and his team were able to secure a 500,000 dollars investment in the state of New Jersey. He exposed an academic graduate audience to different types of funding opportunities for business ideas such as equity, debt, convertible debt and venture capital investment. He had no qualms about moving to the white board and explaining in detail the projected growth curve and the criteria involved in determining the net worth of your idea and company.

The passion that drives him and his team is infectious and Visikol comes across truly as a biotechnology company with a vision- a company focused on making a difference. Dr. Johnson made it to the Forbes “30 under 30”: Science list in 2017. He taught us—no age is too young, no idea is a failure and no venture is too small; as long as you persevere – and find investors to invest in your company. This ACA event was motivational to all young scientists who aspire to venture beyond the status-quo.