Pallavi Pallerla

Evan Speice

Independent Study Mentorship

15 December 2017

**Interview Assessment #3**

**Name of Professional:** Kenneth Balkus

**Profession/Title:** Department Head of Inorganic and Materials Chemistry

**Business/Company name:** UTD

**Date of Interview:** 15 December 2017

It took me a while since my previous interview to schedule another one. After having this one scheduled a month later, I was excited walking into this interview. Dr. Kenneth Balkus is the Department Head of Inorganic and Materials Chemistry at UTD and is a chemistry professor just like Dr. Bruce Gnade (previous interview). Since they were both chemistry professors at a university, I thought that this interview will be very similar to my previous one. In the 30 minutes, we had a chance to sit down and speak, Dr. Balkus explained in depth of exactly what he does. I appreciate the time Dr. Balkus had set aside for me and I had learned how much passion a person can have for their career.

The interview started off with Dr. Balkus explaining all the things he does in his two-sided career. One side is the Department Head of Chemistry and the other being a chemistry research professor. This showed me how you could have multiple parts to your career. Dr. Balkus mainly focused on his career as a chemistry research professor because that was what most of his career consists of. He explained to me how in the perspective of an academic, there is a lot of freedom to research and motivate students. This allows him to make innovations that help impact society as well as broaden a student's mind while working in a small group. To get to such a high level, I knew immediately that there were many steps Dr. Balkus took to get there. This lead me to ask him what steps did he take to get to that position. To answer this question with clarity, Dr. Balkus described the career path professors usually take. After getting their Ph.D., most individuals do a post-doctorate to gain more experience in their area of interest for five to six years. After this, future professors start to get their ranks and become an assistant professor. This level continues for ten years before they can move on to become an associate professor. Hearing all the year of effort needed to be put in, it portrayed the passion a professor must have to get to a high level. By just explaining this process Dr. Balkus clearly expressed his passion for teaching chemistry. Since Dr. Balkus is very passionate about his academic job, I asked him about his research. He currently is working on different patents at the moment and already completed over thirty of them. One of the patents that caught my attention was the one about mobilizing enzymes. It sparked my interest since it reminded me of my Original Work. After mentioning some of his patents, I asked if any of them have been used to create new technology. He informed me that he got quite a few of them licensed and he started a company for several of them to get them potentially manufactured. Getting a Ph.D. was one of Dr. Balkus’ most successful drives to get where he is with all his work. We talked about how important marketing is for a career since that's is one was to raise awareness. After this, we discussed the passion required to work in a challenging career. The conversation we had motivated me to find a career I am passionate so that I will actually enjoy what I do and make it more meaningful. As I progress in my journey, I believe this interview is one I will look back on to guide me and has given me a great insight on what to look up to.