

Developing Food Safety Professionals

Names of Attendees: Angela Anandappa (Chair), Melody Yu (Vice Chair), Niam Abey Siriwardena, Shahram Ajamian, Elizabeth Andoh-Kesson, Kitty Appels, Andrew Appiah Darkwah, Olivia Arends, Vera Arthur, Charles Bakin, Amelia Ball, Bright Bansah, Sherry Bansal, Richa Bedi Navik, Shannon Bennett, Marivi Carrera, Han Chen, Hanyu Chen, Andrew Clarke, Kayla Crouch, Martin Cutler, Lyndsey Cypriano, Andrew Armaan Das, Vaidehi Dendukuri, Darin Detwiler, Bennett Dzandu, Monijesu Fadamiro, Anthony Flood, Rahul Fnu, Sean Foster, Tia Glave, Alison Griffino, Andrea Griffiths, Jose Guerrero, Alex Hanley, Jennifer Harrington, Melanie Harris, Vannith Hay, Matt Hudkins, Indu Aashritha Idumalla, Melisa Jaramillo Zapata, Lone Jespersen, YeonJin Jung, Karuna Kharel, Sarah Kozak-Weaver, Mark Lebednick, Vanessa Lindstrom, Morgan Madison, Alejandro Mazzotta, Patrick Mies, Razieh Sadat Mirmahdi, Naim Montazeri, Juan Moreira, Amit Morey, Sara Mortimore, David Mugabo, Ben Murphy, James Nasella, Yhuliana Nino Fuerte, Andrew Stiven Ortiz Balsero, Samet Ozturk, Suresh Pillai, Dheeraj Reddy, Mansour Samadpour, Dina Scott, Varsha Shete, Ivy Smith, Sarah Smith-Simpson, Aswathi Soni, Yuan Su, Cassandra Suther, Manuel Trevino, Chelsea Tyus, Angela Valadez, Akhila Vasan, Rory Wang, Tom Weaver, Irit Weiser, Katherine Woo, Weifan Wu, Shuang Yu.

Total Number of Attendees: 79.

Meeting Called to Order: Sunday, July 26, 2026, 10:30 AM

Minutes Recording Secretary:

Old Business:

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 AM by PDG Chairperson Angela Anandappa, who along with Vice Chairperson Melody Yu welcomed the PDG and provided introductions. Pam Wilger of the Executive Board provided announcements from the Executive Board, and the Anti-trust guidelines were reviewed with the group.

New Business:

The annual meeting of the PDG brought together a diverse group of food safety professionals within IAFP to establish strategic initiatives to strengthen professional development, mentorship, leadership, and career readiness for food safety students and early-career professionals. The session focused on identifying actionable programs to bridge the gap between academia and industry while fostering long-term career growth. Four groups held topical discussions to brainstorm ideas that could be developed into Symposia, Roundtables, or Workshops for IAFP 2027, webinars, or other educational content, covering six broad areas.

On the topic of technical expertise alone being insufficient for career longevity, the group noted that professionals must understand how individual work impacts overall business growth, that there is a need for improved communication, professional presentation, and understanding of workplace culture and expectations, and the importance of building resources using curated libraries, video content (e.g., YouTube), and professional networks; recommendations included launching leadership workshops, hosting quarterly leadership meetings, and creating employer expectation guides for onboarding and team collaboration. On bridging the academia and industry gap, the group observed that students often graduate with strong academic knowledge but lack a clear understanding of industry expectations and career pathways, and discussed the transition from academia to industry, entry-level skill requirements, and the need to clarify career tracks across sectors such as Quality Assurance/Control, Regulatory Affairs, Food Law, Manufacturing, Fresh Produce, Meat and Poultry, Seafood, Retail, Supply Chain, and

Operations; the recommendation was to develop visual career roadmaps illustrating progression from entry-level roles to executive leadership. On communication and interview readiness, effective communication was identified as a critical competency for career advancement, with support needed in networking, professional introductions, interviewing, communicating with HR, and delivering difficult news professionally; recommendations included establishing virtual mentoring sessions and dedicated workshops focused on communication, interview preparation, salary negotiation, and first-day workplace transition. On mentorship and alumni engagement, the group discussed expanding structured guidance networks for students and young professionals and the need for targeted support surrounding resume building, fellowship applications, transitioning research to industry, and career coaching; recommendations included expanding the mentor-mentee matching program, integrating personality and career assessments, establishing alumni mentoring, and exploring a long-term online platform. On emerging technologies and continuing education, the group discussed the emerging role of AI in food safety operations and job searching, as well as ongoing education needs for alumni and mid-career professionals regarding regulatory updates and operational shifts; recommendations included developing AI literacy sessions, offering continuing education courses for alumni, and hosting webinars on regulatory updates and supply chain management. On interactive networking initiatives, the group proposed creating a networking marketplace with dedicated career networking booths, five-minute career talks offering rapid-fire insights from industry veterans, and structured exhibitor networking sessions connecting students directly with industry vendors and employers.

The PDG discussed a broad range of ideas to support the growth and development of food safety professionals. Future programming will balance technical knowledge with essential professional skills, including leadership, business acumen, mentorship, communication, and AI literacy. Through structured workshops, visual career mapping, enhanced networking opportunities, and ongoing education, the committee will help members navigate the transition from academia to industry and build successful, sustainable careers. As follow-up actions, the PDG will meet quarterly to maintain momentum and review progress, host monthly webinars on priority professional-development topics, and expand mentor-mentee opportunities while exploring workshops, webinars, and other learning formats focused on business skills, ethics, communication, HR, job expectations, AI education, job searching, networking best practices, and professional development.

Numbered List of Recommendations to the Executive Board:

1. Confirm Angela Anandappa as Chair of the Developing Food Safety Professionals PDG.
2. Confirm Melody Yu as Vice Chair of the Developing Food Safety Professionals PDG.

Next Meeting Date: July 18–21, 2027; Kansas City, MO.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:01 PM.

Chairperson Name: Angela Anandappa.