

Chemical Engineering Leadership Seminar Series

A CHEMICAL ENGINEER'S PATH TO BECOMING A PATENT ATTORNEY

Michael Vrbanac

PhD 1989

Senior Counsel @ Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt

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Lecture: 2:30-3:30 p.m., PAA A110

Reception at 3:30 p.m. in Benson Lobby

Abstract

As with a career as a practicing engineer, a career as a patent attorney may include a myriad of options. For both careers, the available options, and success in a chosen option, may depend upon a number of common factors. A common factor may be the depth and breadth of a technical degree, which is provided by a degree in chemical engineering. Some factors may be more important initially in a career, while other factors may become more important as a career progresses. Although there is clearly overlap of factors, a career as a practicing engineer or scientist is quite different from a career as a patent attorney. Accordingly, this presentation will provide (i) general advice regarding having a successful career, (ii) a perspective on advantages of a chemical engineering degree, and (iii) a comparison and contrast of a career as a chemical engineer and a patent attorney.

Speaker Biography

Michael Vrbanac received his B.S. degree in chemical engineering in 1981 from the University of Michigan. After graduating, he worked at Chevron Research Company in Richmond, California. In 1984, he left Chevron to attend graduate school at the University of Washington and graduated with a Ph.D. in chemical engineering in 1989. During graduate school, he spent a summer working at 3M Company in St. Paul, Minnesota. After graduating from UW, he worked at Weyerhaeuser Company in Federal Way, Washington until 2003. In 2001 while at working at Weyerhaeuser, he enrolled in Seattle University School of Law's evening program. He graduated with a J.D. from Seattle University in 2004. During law school, he worked as a summer legal intern at Experience Music Project in Seattle. Additionally, he worked as a legal intern at CombiMatrix Corporation in Mukilteo, Washington during law school. After graduating from Seattle University, he continued to work at CombiMatrix as a patent attorney and eventually became the company's general counsel. After CombiMatrix closed its office in Mukilteo in 2010, he had his own private law practice until 2011. In 2011, he accepted a position at Maxim Integrated Products, Inc., San Jose, California, as Intellectual Property Counsel. In 2013, he transitioned back into private law practice as Of Counsel in a Palo Alto, California IP boutique, and then in 2014, he joined Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt in Seattle as Senior Counsel.