

The Ties That Thrive

Graduate School alumnus taps his many Stevens connections

Christopher Kulp's connection with Stevens didn't end when he walked away with his master's degree in chemistry back in 1999. Indeed, his professional and personal life have been filled with Stevens connections, some surprising, many inspiring.

Several years ago, an inquiry came in to him at Richman Chemical, Inc., a project management firm in Lower Gwynedd, Pa., where he is manager of new business development. A company named HydroGlobe was looking for help in custom manufacturing for two of its products that remove heavy metals from contaminated drinking water. Kulp discovered that the company was a Stevens incubator company—a program Kulp was familiar with—so he put his product manager on the job.

HydroGlobe would later go on to much success, being acquired by Graver Technologies, with Richman contributing to its success and still maintaining HydroGlobe as a valuable client, Kulp says.

Then, there are the more personal connections.

Kulp came back to campus for the Op Sail/Tall Ships event back in 2000 and brought along his sister-in-law, Jennifer Sipics, then a high schooler. The trip sparked her interest in Stevens, and she ended up graduating with a biomedical engineering degree in 2006—and met her husband, Art Innamorato '06, at Stevens.

“Stevens has been an underlying theme,” Kulp says. “It certainly has made an impact on the path my professional life has taken, and the success of Richman Chemical, as well as influencing the positive growth of my family,” says this energetic father of three.

Staying ‘connected’

Kulp, 33, maintains and has benefited from many Stevens connections. He is a member of the Stevens Alumni Pharmaceutical Club and the Biomedical Products Club.

He also recruited and hired a former Stevens co-op student, Ryan Stellar '06, for Richman, and he is on the look-out for other terrific Stevens interns.

There's also the connection with HydroGlobe and what Kulp hopes may be future business relationships forged through his alumni clubs contacts.

Ironically, the Pennsylvania native knew little about Stevens when he was working as an R&D chemist at National Starch and Chemical in Bridgewater, N.J., back in the late 1990s. He learned more when his company was exploring a possible relationship with the Institute that didn't come to fruition. Kulp says that he was attracted to Stevens' respected polymer research program, so he attended night classes while working full time.

When he moved to Richman, outside of Philadelphia, he ended up having a three-hour, round-trip commute to classes at Stevens. But the long commute was worth it, he says.

“The quality of the teaching was really good,” Kulp says, with solid veteran professors coupled with faculty from industry. “It's like applied science and applied engineering. They teach you things that are useful to you in the real world.”



Christopher Kulp, M.S. '99, displays his Stevens diploma.

So when HydroGlobe first contacted Richman, Kulp says, his Stevens graduate chemistry degree, with a concentration in polymer chemistry, was certainly useful during the initial evaluation process for HydroGlobe.

“However, perhaps more than anything, it was my sensitization toward the Technogenesis® effort being conducted at Stevens that caused me to first realize that such a ‘Technogenesis-borne’ company had a bright future ahead of it,” he says. “As a result, we heavily invested our custom processing efforts into the commercialization of the firm's proposed products.”

Kulp later joined the Pharmaceutical and Medical Device alumni clubs—and has found them to be good places to network, not only for possible new business but also for helpful resources. At one of the INTERPHEX pharmaceutical industry trade shows in New York, which he has attended with the Pharma Club, he met the club's guest speaker, a Food and Drug Administration official, who later ended up assisting Richman.

Kulp plans to continue attending the clubs meetings to both enjoy the good speakers and discussions and to strengthen his contact base, he says.

“I know the opportunities are there, and when you're trying to develop new business, that's the name of the game,” he says.

Kulp says that he has been impressed with the Stevens undergraduates he's met at club meetings, and, in need of a bright intern at Richman, contacted Stevens' Cooperative Education Office. Through Co-op, he hit the jackpot, hiring Ryan Stellar '06 to take on a variety of duties for the fast-paced, small company, from database development to sales and marketing.

“He did a spectacular job for us,” Kulp says.

Today, Stellar is the co-founder of a medical device company, and Kulp says that his experience with Richman helped contribute to this entrepreneurial endeavor.

Kulp, who has worked with Richman for eight years, says his future goals include helping his company continue to grow. His Stevens connections can continue to help in that regard.

He recalls a meeting with one of Richman's biggest clients, someone he'll only identify as a “top-level scientific executive.” The person saw Kulp's Stevens' diploma hanging on his office wall and exclaimed: “Hey, that's where I went.”

“I can't say it hurt the situation—it actually helped,” Kulp says. —Beth Kissinger