Nick Bielski | Charles River Laboratories

Research & Development Scientist II nick.bielski@crl.com

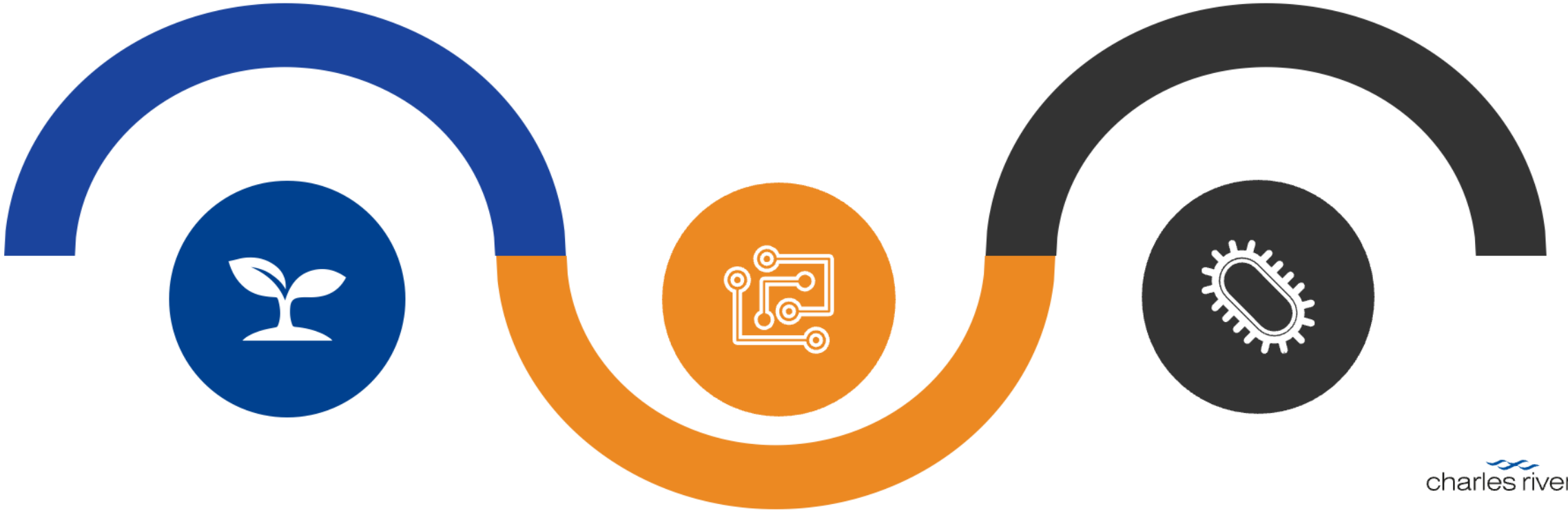
University of Arizona

- PhD in Molecular and Cellular Biology
- Research in evolution of gene families involved in plant growth and reproduction

CRL R&D Scientist I

- Based at CRL Accugenix site in Newark, DE
- Focus on Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) for use in microbial identification and characterization
- Direct support of clients and client projects in addition to role in R&D for new technology within the Manufacturing Division

CRL R&D Scientist II



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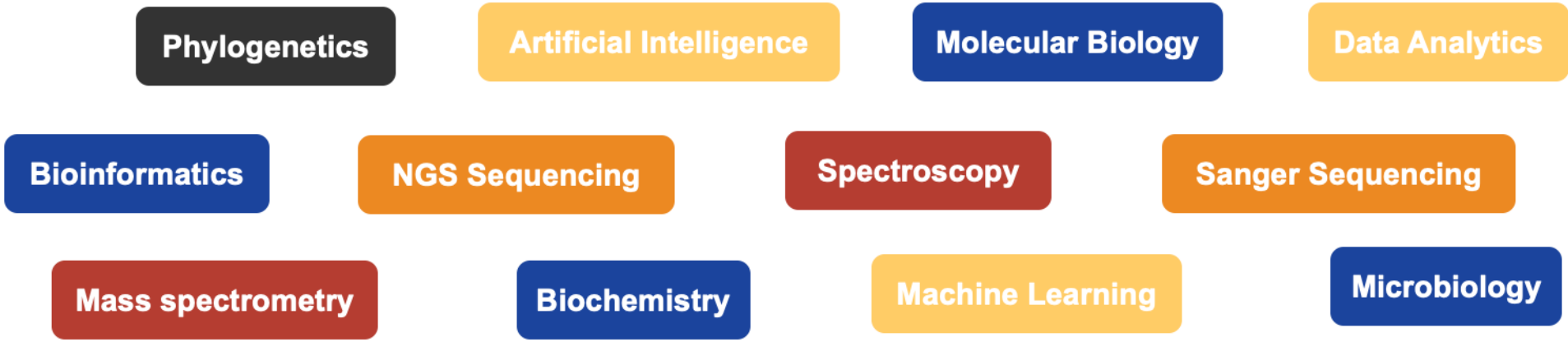
Working for R&D at a CRO

- Started as an R&D Scientist with Charles River Labs in 2023
  - Working within Microbial Solutions and Accugenix in Newark, DE
- Work with clients directly to perform NGS-based custom projects
  - Microbial characterization
  - Strain typing
- R&D within Microbial solutions
  - Develop new wet-lab workflows and bioinformatic pipelines for NGS service offerings
  - Evaluate and develop new technology related to microbial detection and identification



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Advice for current students

- Plan for your goals early and know where you want to go:
  - Familiarize yourself with different companies, what services/products they offer, and who their clients are
  - Research what skills and experiences the roles you want are looking for (read job postings of ideal jobs)
- Work backwards from goals to gain the skills you need along the way:
  - Internships
  - Neighboring labs
  - Courses
- Attend conferences and build your network in industry

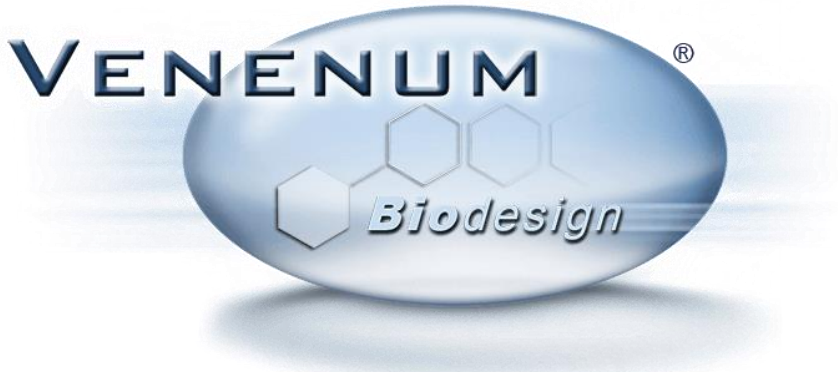
Samantha M. Gromek, Ph.D.

- Research Scientist at Venenum Biodesign
  - Email: gromeksamantha@gmail.com
  - Phone: 908-310-3879

Ph.D. in medicinal chemistry from University of Connecticut

Postdoctoral fellowship in neurosurgery at the University of Pennsylvania

Quality Assurance Manager at Integrated Analytical Solutions



Research scientist at Venenum Biodesign

Responsibilities as a research scientist

- Dual role as a synthetic chemist and analytical chemist
- Perform multistep synthesis of small organic molecules
  - The molecules are evaluated for pharmacological properties
- Participate in a multidisciplinary research team of chemists and biologists to optimize a lead compound
- Carry out bioanalysis and quantification of samples from pharmacokinetic studies and in vivo efficacy studies for various species

Advice for Aspiring Trainees

- **Be a sponge**
  - CROs work with multiple sponsors who all have different systems, software and company cultures. Embrace learning new material/information and show adaptability.
- **Communication**
  - Proactive communication is valued. Escalate issues with solutions.
- **Network internally**
  - Be a reliable, positive person to work with. Assist with the challenging projects. Your reputation with colleagues across departments determines your opportunities.

Brianna Klein, PhD

Associate Principal Scientist, Structural Biology, Evotec
Brianna.Klein@evotec.com

Pennsylvania State University

Graduate Assistant

- PhD in Structural Biology
- Research in RNA polymerase and transcription factors

University of Colorado

Postdoctoral Fellow,

Research Associate,

Senior Research Associate

University of Colorado **Anschutz**

Department of Pharmacology

School of Medicine

- Postdoctoral fellowship in Structural Biology
- Research in epigenetics and chromatin-associating complexes
- Lab management and support duties (including budget)
- Mentoring and leadership role

Evotec US

Senior Scientist,

Associate Principal Scientist

- Structural Biologist supporting both technical project work and client-facing responsibilities
- Serve as a scientific liaison across internal teams and external partners
- Build and strengthen client relationships and scientific collaborations

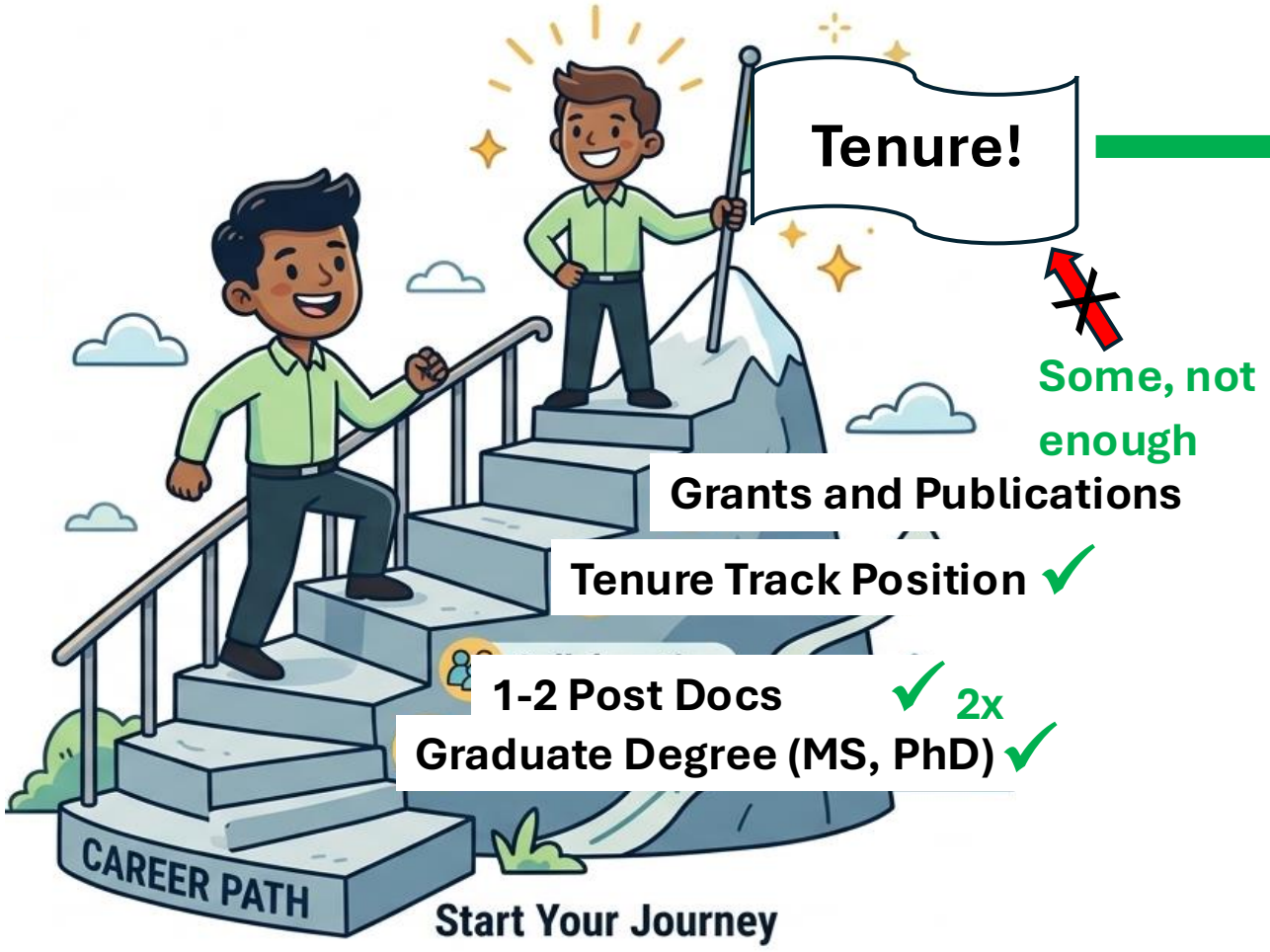
Associate Principal Scientist in Structural Biology at Evotec

- Technical Responsibilities
  - Determine structures of drug targets (X-ray crystallography, Cryo-EM)
  - Support structure-based drug design (SBDD)
  - Enable and run fragment-based screening
- Client Interaction & Communication
  - Serve as the primary scientific contact for external clients, providing regular updates, data reviews, and strategic guidance.
  - Translate client drug discovery objectives into actionable experimental plans for internal project teams.
  - Communicate risks, challenges, and proposed solutions proactively to maintain transparency and trust.
  - Track progress, manage timelines, and ensure deliverables meet client-defined quality and regulatory expectations.
- Scientific Leadership & Support
  - Present and advise clients on study design, target construct strategies, assay selection, experiment feasibility, data, including interpretation, impact on project strategy, and next steps.
  - Generate scientific documentation (reports, presentations, data packages) tailored for sponsor needs.
- Relationship & Business Development
  - Build and maintain productive long term client relationships that support project expansion and repeat business.
  - Identify upselling opportunities (additional assays, structural campaigns, screening options) based on client goals.
  - Represent company capabilities professionally during client visits, audits, and technical discussions.

Advice for trainees and what has worked for me

- Obtain hands-on experience early
  - This is helpful for learning what you are interested in (or not)
  - Potential future employers value candidates who have practical lab experience, even if it is through paid research or volunteering
- Stay curious and open to new opportunities
  - Curiosity drives innovation and helps you grow in both skill and confidence
  - Some of the most rewarding career paths come from being willing to explore roles, projects, and fields you may not have originally considered
- Develop a solution-based mindset
  - Think ahead and focus on actionable solutions rather than dwelling on obstacles
  - Showing that you can stay calm, resourceful, and forward-thinking in fast-paced environments makes a strong impression

The Hollywood View of a Career Path in Life Sciences Research (OG Version)



Forks in the Road Aren't Dead Ends

R

Research

Teaching

My Current Role(s)

- Biobank Director
- PI on a major Genetics Contract for NIDA
- Establish Collaborations with Researchers in Many Fields (I get paid to learn and talk about science!)
- Business Development $ (the commercial equivalent of grants)
- Advocate for Science and Sampled
- In hindsight, a business degree would have come in handy…

SAMPLED

The Case for Biobanks

Genomes – Dr. Yang March 5, 2026

Michael Sheldon, Ph.D.
Senior Director, Research Collaborations
michael.sheldon@sampled.com

Adjunct Professor
Department of Genetics

Advice

- Never stop taking a personal inventory: What moves me? Who do I want to be in 5 or 10 years? What are my priorities?
- The road won’t be straight or smooth. View challenges as opportunities, not roadblocks. When you are faced with one, stop, look around and be open to new things
- Always make a point of connecting with people, in many fields. In the age of AI, people skills are more important than ever. Those connections could lead to opportunities you never knew existed
- Do your homework. Learn about science policy, public health, patient advocacy, don’t focus on one narrow field unless you’re passionate about it