

APPRENTICESHIP

STEM Apprenticeship Creates Opportunities in the Food Manufacturing Industry

Rosemarie Christopher

President and CEO, Rx Research Services

The Rx Research Services (RXRS) apprenticeship journey began six years ago in response to a real need of graduates in food science, culinary and bioscience for entry level STEM positions for the implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), a 2011 Law. The need was for trained consultants to write plans required by the Food and Drug Administration for the successful execution of the FSMA law around safety, compliance and yearly training of all company employees.



Karina Rodriguez

For the food industry, a STEM apprenticeship prepares graduates to qualify for roles where they ensure proper branding, safety and compliance of the food supply chain. These jobs are the backbone of the industry. Since one of the provisions of the FSMA law is to require yearly safety training of all employees and management, it has had the effect of creating a new career opportunity for food science graduates and a pathway for longer-term employees to advance their careers and earning power.

This past June, RXRS STEM celebrated the anniversary of placing their first STEM apprentice, Karina Rodriguez, at a mid-sized food manufacturing company in Southern California. We are pleased to report that she has become a true ambassador of compliance, quality and safety. With her BA in integral liberal arts, along with culinary school training and an MS in food science, Karina has gained 4 major food, quality and safety certifications and recognized in the food industry as essential.

The eldest of three children of Mexican immigrants, Karina learned to emulate the values embodied in her parents struggle to capture their 'American Dream.' Fluently bilingual, Karina worked her way through higher education, earning culinary expertise along the way. Diligence, focused work and education were her guiding lights as she embarked on her journey.

Now that the pandemic has the FDA redoubling its food safety mission, Karina provides several essential services to food manufacturers. She writes the documentation plans

required by the FSMA law, and prepares clients for yearly 3rd party audits. Using online technology Karina delivers the micro courses of the RXRS Foundation's online Food Academy, including COVID safety training to ensure the safety of apprentices, food workers and the food supply.

