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CAREER PROFILES Options and Insights

ROBERT L. BURGER | Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Yale University, robert.burger@yale.edu

Degree: When, where, what, and what in?

My undergraduate degree from Yale was in geology and geophysics in 1993, and after a year off, I earned an MS from Dartmouth in Earth sciences in 1996, with a concentration in hydrogeology. I then worked for a couple of years as a geologist for an environmental consulting firm outside of Boston, but it didn't agree with me, and I returned to grad school in 1998 at The University of Texas at Austin. I earned a PhD in geological sciences in 2002 at UT's Institute for Geophysics, studying marine geophysical data from the Eel River Basin off the coast of northern California.

Did you stay in academia at all, and if so, for how long?

Is this the only job (post-academia) that you've had? If not, what else did you do?

What is your current job? What path did you take to get there?

I left academia following my degree, and then came back to it in more of an administrative role. Immediately after finishing my doctorate, I applied for a job in Washington, DC, at Joint Oceanographic Institutions (JOI), which was a nonprofit company founded by a consortium of the largest academic oceanographic institutions in the United States. It was a good match, as many colleagues I had met and collaborated with through my doctoral work in marine geophysics were involved in the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP), and JOI's primary efforts were in managing the US science community's involvement in ODP (and later, IODP). I was very familiar with the program and the community, which helped me to get the position. It was an interesting job that

kept me involved in the science, but from more of a program management standpoint rather than active research.

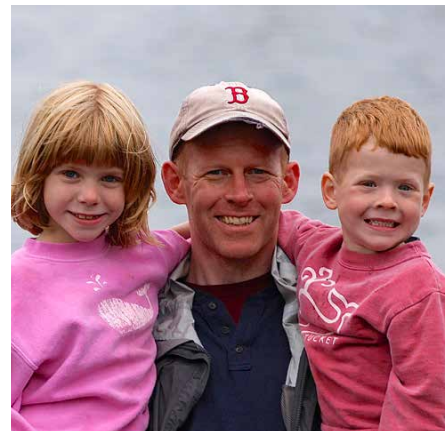
After four years at JOI (and its follow-on organization, the Consortium for Ocean Leadership), I applied for a job at Yale as Assistant Provost for Science and Technology, and have been here since 2006. Again, familiarity with the hiring organization helped me win the position, as I had been an undergraduate here and know the university well. After nearly eight years in the Provost's Office, I recently transitioned into the role of associate dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), one of two associate deans who serve as the first points of contact for the FAS academic departments in matters pertaining to administration, recruitment, policies, budgets, and just about anything else. I am responsible for all of the science, engineering, and social science departments, and the other associate dean covers the humanities.

How did you go about searching for a job outside of the university setting?

Technically, I simply responded to published advertisements (*Eos* for the JOI position, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for the Yale job), but as mentioned above, familiarity with both the communities with which I would be involved and the hiring organizations played a big part in landing each position. I personally hate to network, but it's true that doing so is an important part of any job search.

What did your oceanographic education (or academic career) give you that is useful in your current job?

Each of my positions has required a broad knowledge of science, the scientific process, and the ability to interact with a



wide range of constituencies; my training in Earth sciences and oceanography has certainly provided that. Although more of a generalist now, being able to understand the needs of faculty across the science and engineering fields is critical in my current position, and I firmly believe that a background in Earth sciences was perfect for obtaining that broad perspective.

Is the job satisfying? What aspects of the job do you like best/least?

I find the job very satisfying—it's essentially a front row seat to seeing how a university is run, and the FAS Dean's office is critical to supporting the research endeavors of our faculty. I interact with a wide range of people every day, from department chairs and faculty to business office staff, development officers, grants and contracts administrators, the general counsel, those involved with environmental health and safety, and many others in between. I won't lie, on the flip side there are many dry meetings to sit through, but in general it's interesting, fast paced, and there's no question as to whether it's important work. It's also a very collegial environment, and while everyone is very busy, it allows for healthy work/life balance, as well.

Do you have any recommendations for new grads looking for jobs?

I have the same advice that many of these columns do—cultivate contacts and network through your collaborations and at scientific meetings and other venues, and always keep your eyes open for opportunities, whether they're from word of mouth or through posted positions. Don't be afraid to reach out and ask for details regarding a position that sounds interesting but may not initially seem like an exact match to your background.

Also, although it sounds like very basic advice, I've reviewed enough applications for various positions to feel the need to

include the following: when applying for a position, be absolutely certain that your application is well written, clear, and to the point. Make certain that there are no typos or grammatical errors in your CV and especially in your cover letter. It's astounding to me how many one-page cover letters have glaring errors that reflect a lack of care and will nearly always disqualify any application.

Finally, if you reach the interview stage, go in with the attitude that the job is yours to lose, because, really, it is. Be engaging and interested, and arrive having done your homework on the position. Most importantly, have a very good

answer ready as to why you're interested in the position, because that's one question you're sure to be asked. Being interested and personable are critical to a successful interview—always remember that those interviewing you are not only assessing your qualifications for the position but are also evaluating you as a potential colleague. In my opinion, the key to a successful interview is not only to show why you are the most qualified person for the position but also to come across as someone with whom the interviewers would want to work. 📺

HEATHER M.H. GOLDSTONE | Science Editor, WGBH and WCAI National Public Radio Stations, heather_goldstone@capeandislands.org

Degree: When, where, what, and what in?

In 2003, I earned my PhD in biological oceanography from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology/Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution Joint Program in Oceanography and Ocean Engineering. My research focused on how—at a molecular level—persistent environmental contaminants disrupt the development of larval fish.

Did you stay in academia at all, and if so, for how long?

Although I was interested in alternative careers, I was concerned about leaving academia, then regretting it and not being able to get back in. So, for four years after finishing my PhD, I explored options outside academia, while continuing with academic postdocs. I also spent six months interning in a lab at a pharmaceutical company.

How did you go about searching for a job outside of the university setting?

I was particularly interested in science communication, and I grew up with National Public Radio (NPR), so that

was the first option that occurred to me. WCAI, the public radio station in Woods Hole, is just two buildings away from the lab where I did my graduate work. Shortly after I defended my thesis, I walked up the street, introduced myself, and inquired whether they'd be interested in having me do some science reporting. What began was essentially a part-time internship that lasted four years. When WCAI got a grant for a twenty-part series about local scientists—what they do, what drives them, what frustrates them—I took the plunge and quit my postdoc. I've never looked back.

Is this the only job (post-academia) that you've had? If not, what else did you do?

Technically, yes. Since leaving academia in 2007, I have only worked for WCAI and our sister station in Boston, WGBH. That said, I've never done the same thing for more than a couple of years. I started with traditional radio reporting, spent a couple of years blogging, then launched a weekly live interview show. I still do news reporting and analysis for a handful of radio shows, and, in the past year, I've



also added regular television appearances. The common threads that run through all of my work are highlighting the science inherent in daily life, explaining complex science and related issues, and telling the personal stories of scientists.

What did your oceanographic education (or academic career) give you that is useful in your current job?

The MIT-WHOI Joint Program requires that students take basic courses in all areas of oceanography, and there is a strong emphasis on drawing connections across disciplines and scales, from sub-cellular to planetary. Although this training sometimes makes it difficult for me to narrow the focus of a story, I think the ability to see any given story in a broader context and find the connections between

Breaking Waves

Breaking Waves provides an outlet for short papers describing novel approaches to multidisciplinary problems in oceanography. These provocative papers will present findings that are synthetic by design, and have the potential to move the field of oceanography forward or in new directions.

Papers should be written in a style that is both concise and accessible to a broad readership. While these papers should be thought-provoking for the professional oceanographer, they should also be written in a manner that is engaging for the educated non-professional. As in other sections of *Oceanography*, we encourage the use of color photographs and figures to help illustrate a paper's main points and add to its aesthetic appeal. Consistent with our effort to publish papers on rapidly advancing topics in oceanography, all submissions to the *Breaking Waves* section will be given a special fast-track in the peer-review and publishing process. Our goal will be to publish papers no more than two issues (i.e., six months) after their submission.

The Associate Editor overseeing *Breaking Waves* manuscripts is Charles H. Greene (chg2@cornell.edu), Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Cornell University. Authors should submit a brief e-mail message to the Associate Editor outlining their ideas for papers prior to actual manuscript preparation. This step will ensure that authors receive appropriate feedback prior to investing their time and energy in preparing manuscripts that may be unsuitable for publication in this forum. Correspondence with the Associate Editor and submission of manuscripts must be done electronically. File formats for text, figures, and photographs must be consistent with existing style guidelines for *Oceanography* (<http://tos.org/oceanography/guidelines.html>).

disparate issues and discoveries is critical in helping the public understand and connect with science.

More broadly, my years in academia give me insight into the process of science—grant writing, peer review, experimental design, incremental progress. That experience enables me to tell science stories from a different perspective, perhaps a more human one, and that is invaluable. My time in academia was *not* wasted when I switched career tracks. On the contrary, it is my greatest asset.

Is the job satisfying? What aspects of the job do you like best/least?

My job is fast-paced, mentally stimulating, and, yes, satisfying. Of course, there is drudgery; transcribing long interviews would fall into that category. But I spend most of my time reading everything I can and picking the brains of some of the most intelligent and interesting people in the country. I believe what I do is important,

and regularly hear from listeners who say I've helped them understand science they thought was too complex or boring to figure out on their own—very gratifying.

Do you have any recommendations for new grads looking for jobs?

If you're interested in a job outside academia, jump in and explore it. Find people who will help you along, who value your interests; don't spend time worrying about those who don't. More specifically, if you're interested in either communication or policy, consider the AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) Fellowships. 📧

NEED TO GET IN TOUCH?



The Oceanography Society's website is your community bulletin board for instant posting of job, fellowship, and funding opportunities, and news and announcements of interest to the oceanographic community.

For more information about posting and to view current announcements, go to:

http://tos.org/jobs_funding.html
and <http://tos.org/news.html>