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

I finished my PhD in oceanography at the University of Washington in 2003. I worked with John Baross on the microbial ecology of deep-sea hydrothermal vents and was very happy to visit the sea-floor once in the deep submersible *Alvin*!

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

After graduate school, I spent a year as a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Massachusetts Amherst doing terrestrial microbial ecology research.

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

Through my network of friends, family, and academic advisors (including going back to my undergrad advisor at Brown), I started reaching out to individuals outside of academia. I asked them about their own career paths and about organizations they were aware of that focused on science, such as advocacy and policy organizations. From there, I did a lot of digging online. I bounced names of organizations and programs that struck my interest off of a few trusted individuals who had spent part of their careers outside of academia. I heard about the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science & Technology Policy Fellowships in Washington, DC, through one of these conversations, got the name of a former

fellow, and called him to ask about his experiences. Then I applied for and received one of the fellowships.

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

I've had two positions outside of academia. I spent two years as a AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellow working at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) headquarters in Washington, DC, on bioterrorism and agroterrorism science and policy. The EPA shares much of the responsibility for cleanup after a potential pathogen incident: What do you do with 1,000,000 dead chickens infected with the H5N1 avian flu virus—dump them in the ocean? And how do you clean the farm? The mid-2000s were a very active time for the federal government with such issues, and while it would have never crossed my mind to think about working on bioterrorism policy, I figured it was a good opportunity to learn how the federal government functioned. Since 2007, I have been a program officer at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation in its Marine Microbiology Initiative.

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

I hadn't heard about the Moore Foundation previously because the Marine Microbiology Initiative was created after I left academia and had directed my energies to the EPA. But in



2007, when my AAAS fellowship was wrapping up, several friends forwarded me the program officer job advertisement. The timing was fortuitous for exploring a way to return to microbial oceanography as a funder and strategic planner, as opposed to being an active researcher. This position felt like the right fit for me. My current job includes a continuously changing mix of strategic planning, grant idea development, and grants management activities.

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

First and foremost, of course, my graduate education provided domain expertise and an intuitive understanding of how oceanography is conducted both in the lab and at sea. Plus, it fostered a broad interest in and curiosity about a range of ocean and Earth science topics. Also, my oceanography education taught me how to approach issues from multiple angles, which is inherent in marine interdisciplinary research. More broadly,

the critical thinking (e.g., methodological doubt), organizational, and synthesis skills that come with scientific training have been important as a program officer. At the Moore Foundation, I also have had an opportunity to work on several projects outside of marine microbial ecology, including operating at the interface of science and marine conservation, enabling new citizen science efforts in South America, and managing a state-level science and technology policy fellowship program for PhDs that is based in Sacramento (modeled on the AAAS fellowship program—I'm happy to answer questions about it).

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

My job is deeply rewarding because I have a role in turning scientists' ideas into newly created knowledge of marine ecosystems—and then can see how the new information, scientific approaches, and concepts influence the way others view and understand ocean processes. I also enjoy working with motivated and passionate colleagues at the foundation to support an array of scientific disciplines and a few conservation efforts and to discuss and debate ways to increase the impact of philanthropic funds. I do occasionally miss going to sea, however, and wouldn't mind another dive in *Alvin*!

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

A few thoughts:

1. Become involved in an array of activities, including outside of research.
2. Figure out what gets you up in the morning, and pursue it; take a leadership role in something that you find inspires you.
3. Ask people you meet about their jobs and what they like and dislike.
4. Cultivate mentors, which may include someone other than your lab's PI.
5. Feel free to set up informational interviews with organizations that interest you—you'll be amazed at what you can learn in a half hour. 📷