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

I earned my BA from Middlebury College in 1994, with a double major in geology and as an Independent Scholar in marine science. I then earned my MS in oceanography in 1998 from the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography and a PhD in 2002 from Boston University in Earth science.

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

I was a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University for 18 months before getting my first job at Joint Oceanographic Institutions (JOI, now the Consortium for Ocean Leadership) as the Assistant Director of Ocean Drilling Programs. Even when I started my PhD program, I knew I wanted a career outside of academia—I just didn't know what the options were at the time or how to apply the skills I learned as a researcher to other sectors. My PhD advisor was an amazing mentor who was very supportive of my goal to pursue a career outside of academia (especially since I was his first PhD student). I've never had a single regret about my choice not to pursue an academic career, despite other people questioning my decision. However, now that I have some interesting experiences working at the intersection of science and policy, I am starting to think about teaching a science or environmental policy course on the side.

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

Even though I knew I wanted a job outside of academia, there weren't very many resources to help me figure out how to do that. Thirteen years ago when I was looking for my first job, advice on how to be anything other than a professor was hard

to come by, and available positions weren't advertised on the Internet, so it was much harder to find openings. I scoured the job opportunities section of AGU's *Eos* every week, hoping to see advertisements for positions outside of academia. I actually learned about my first job during a conversation over beers at AGU with the director of Ocean Drilling Programs at JOI. He was looking for an assistant director and asked me if I wanted to apply, which, of course, I did. While luck certainly played a role in helping me find out about my first position, the skills and networks I developed in each subsequent job made it easier to move forward in my career and identify next steps.

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

I have held many positions since finishing my PhD in 2002. In addition to my postdoc and the assistant director job at JOI, I've been Executive Program Associate at the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program—Management International, Program Officer in the Marine Microbiology Initiative at the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, a Congressional Science Fellow with the US Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Energy and Water Advisor for the US Department of State. I also started my own consulting company to help new philanthropic organizations identify their visions, missions, and strategies for greatest impact.

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

I'm currently a Foreign Affairs Officer in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs at the State Department. My path here may appear nonlinear, but each job I've held



served as a stepping-stone to the next. I tend to think about my career by decade. I spent a little more than a decade in school, a little less than a decade supporting science as a program manager, and now I've embarked in what hopefully will be a decade or more in energy and environmental policy. I earned a PhD so that I could work on big environmental challenges, but as I described earlier, it was hard for me to figure out how to do that right out of school. In the interim, I had a suite of really amazing jobs that helped me to develop a set of universally applicable skills like communicating to a wide range of audiences, leading teams, long-range strategic planning, negotiating, and time management under incredibly tight deadlines. These skills are applicable in any professional setting, and many graduate students already have started to develop them as part of their independent research. Even though I loved these jobs, I felt far removed from the decision-making process, so I spent some time conducting informational interviews with scientists working on policy in Washington, DC. Collectively, they all recommended that I apply for an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science and Technology Policy Fellowship. So, that's what I did, and I was fortunate enough to be selected as the Geological

Society of America/US Geological Survey (GSA/USGS) Congressional Fellow for 2011–2012 and then again as a Diplomacy, Security, and Development Fellow at the State Department from 2012 to 2014. One of my roles as a State Department fellow was to support Secretary Kerry's Our Ocean Conference by organizing the ocean acidification panel—one of the three issues the Secretary chose to highlight (the other two were sustainable fisheries and marine pollution). Having the opportunity to contribute to this event was a highlight of my career and led directly to my current position in the Office of Marine Conservation.

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

In each of the positions I've held, the knowledge I gained from my oceanographic education was invaluable. As you all know, oceanography is inherently multidisciplinary, which is advantageous when working across a range of sciences. During the 12 years I spent in school, I worked on a range of research that included marine geology, geophysics, magnetics, atmospheric chemistry, geochemistry, and paleoceanography. This broad exposure helped me immensely while working on implementing the long-range science plan for the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program, which focused on the deep biosphere and the solid Earth—both areas outside of my own expertise—as well as environmental change (my bailiwick). Before I took my current job, I worked on energy policy for 3.5 years. Having a strong academic background as a geoscientist was a huge asset for working on issues ranging from hydraulic fracturing and the energy/water nexus to marine hydrokinetic energy and helium/critical minerals. In my current position, I work on marine policy issues, where my oceanographic education is directly relevant. My portfolio here is fairly broad—I work on

fisheries issues in the Arctic and the South Pacific and the soon-to-be released first World Ocean Assessment, and I support the first US Science Envoy for the Ocean and promote Secretary Kerry's Our Ocean Conference initiatives. Strong science is a critical component that underpins and informs responsible decision making. It's important to have people with strong oceanographic backgrounds as part of the team of those making decisions and defining policies for our shared marine resources.

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

I've held a number of jobs in a number of different sectors (academic, nonprofit, philanthropic, consulting, and government), and my current position is one of my favorites. The work is incredibly interesting and challenging. I recently participated in my first multinational regional fisheries management organization meeting, and I came back very energized and excited about the work that foreign countries are doing together to conserve and manage our shared fisheries resources. The work that I contribute to has tangible outcomes with positive impacts for Americans and citizens of other countries, which is extremely satisfying. I work with people who are committed, passionate, and smart, which makes the job even better. When I first started at the State Department, I was frustrated by the bureaucracy; however, once I learned how "the building" worked, I figured out how to be creative, entrepreneurial, and effective in getting things done while raising awareness of the issues I work on.

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

While not specific to a job search, the following are a couple of thoughts that guide both my personal and professional ethos.

- Take risks and make a few mistakes along the way—it helps you grow and figure out what you're really good at

- Open your mind to new experiences and stay curious
- Challenge yourself
- Observe others—model their strengths
- Take responsibility for your actions

As for job searching itself, here are a couple of tips that I've found helpful:

- **Network.** Find people who have jobs that you think you might want to have someday. Ask them to meet you for coffee (remember, my first job resulted from a conversation over beers). Talk to them about their career paths and ask them for advice and ideas about your next steps.
- **Find people who are good at getting jobs to help you with your resume and cover letter.** I had help from former colleagues and have also hired job coaches, depending on the situation. Every time I submit a job application, I refine my resume to make sure it is aligned with the job description. The same is true for cover letters. This step takes time, but it's critical in demonstrating that you are qualified for the position.
- **Get good at interviewing.** I can't emphasize how important this is. Practice to learn how to find the balance between demonstrating competence and confidence while being concise and without being arrogant. Think about your professional successes, failures, and lessons learned. Construct narratives around these experiences and draw on them when asked a question that requires an example. ☑