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

I received a PhD in oceanography from the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography in 2015. The title of my dissertation research was “An Investigation of the Fisheries Ecosystem Dynamics of Rhode Island’s Nearshore Waters.” I sought to answer questions surrounding the potential ecological impacts of offshore wind energy development and to address data needs for ecosystem-based fisheries management. The three major components of my research were: (1) evaluation of the fine-scale spatial structure of the demersal fish and invertebrate community, (2) assessment of the dietary guild structure and the flow of energy through the fisheries food web, and (3) investigation of the relationship between the fish community and benthic habitat. I worked closely with the fishing community during my graduate career, spending hundreds of days conducting research aboard commercial fishing vessels and absorbing fishermen’s ecological and oceanographic insights.

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

I started working in the nonprofit sector while I was in graduate school and transitioned there full time as soon as I graduated. I am still engaged in academia through a variety of research collaborations.

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

While I was in graduate school, I actively pursued experiences outside of the traditional academic setting. I participated in educational outreach, worked with nongovernmental organizations, and developed relationships with the fishing

community. These experiences connected me to organizations that focused on applied oceanographic research, mostly outside of the university setting. I learned about and applied for job opportunities through this network as well a variety of job boards and listservs.

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

Other than being a mother of two young children—a full-time job in itself!—this is the only job that I have had post-academia.

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

I am the executive director of the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation (CFRF; <http://www.cfrfoundation.org>), a nonprofit that focuses on conducting collaborative fisheries research that contributes to sustainable fisheries and vibrant fishing communities. I started working with CFRF while I was in graduate school and expanded my involvement there after I graduated. I became their executive director after the birth of my first child. I am still actively involved in research (from development to implementation), but the goals and approaches of my research are more practical and inclusive than in the traditional academic setting.

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

My oceanographic education provided me with a variety of skills and a foundation of knowledge that have been useful to the advancement of my career in applied fisheries research. During my academic career, I intentionally engaged in coursework and experiences that were diverse,



from fisheries ecology to fluid dynamics to marine policy. Academia often pushes scientists to become hyper-specialized, but I took the opposite route. As a result, I have felt more prepared for the diverse array of research projects (from fishing technology to continental shelf hydrography) that I have engaged with in my professional career. The ability to develop research questions and hypotheses out of informal discussions and observations is a skill that has been critical in my current job. Proficiency with the scientific process, including experimental design and statistical analysis, has been equally essential. I was fortunate to learn about and practice these skills during my graduate education. Finally, communicating the purpose and results of research to a wide audience (fishermen, political representatives, students) is a skill that I honed while in graduate school and rely upon daily in my current job.

***Is there any course or other training you would have liked to have had as part of your graduate education to meet the demands of the job market?***

Learning to develop and administer project budgets is critical in both the nonprofit and academic sectors, but that is not typically a part of graduate education. Identifying and pursuing sources of funding outside of federal programs

is also increasingly important in oceanographic research and, I believe, should be included in graduate curricula. Also, education surrounding the greater human ecosystem that either impacts or is impacted by the ocean should be a part of all graduate programs. Ultimately, our work as scientists is meant to positively impact the world in which we live.

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

I have found working in the nonprofit sector to be both rewarding and challenging. I have enjoyed the freedom of pursuing a wide variety of research and am introduced to new ideas and topics every day, but finding funding for applied research can be difficult. My daily motivation comes from the fact that the research I spearhead directly impacts people and policy. Without the human aspect, my research would feel far less gratifying. I am also endlessly amazed and inspired by the fishermen with whom I work—their curiosity, ideas, knowledge, and passion are unparalleled. Managing time and staff are challenges in every job, but I believe they are especially difficult for working moms.

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

Don't limit your job search to opportunities related directly to your dissertation research. Branch out and be confident in your ability to adapt and learn new topics and techniques. And learn to say no to opportunities that do not serve your passions and goals. 📍