

AUDREY M. ROGERSON | Director of Development, The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, arogerson@arnarb.harvard.edu

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

I received my PhD in 1993 from Brown University in applied mathematics. As a graduate student, I was affiliated with the Center for Fluid Mechanics, Turbulence, and Computation—one of several centers within the Division of Applied Mathematics. My thesis was a mathematical and computational investigation of a nonlinear fluid flow that has relevance to oil reservoir engineering, groundwater hydrology, and thin-film manufacturing processes. I entered the field of oceanography upon accepting a post-doctoral fellowship at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI).

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

Yes. After two years as a postdoc at WHOI, I joined the tenure-track faculty there in the Physical Oceanography Department. I was an Assistant Scientist at WHOI from 1995 to 1999. During that time, I did numerical modeling and theoretical work on oceanic and atmospheric flows, looking at problems of mixing, instability, and nonlinear wave phenomena.

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

When I decided to leave academia, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to take some time off and contemplate what I wanted to do career-wise. At first, I thought I might join the corporate world—possibly as a management consultant or a financial quantitative

analyst. However, after a few informal informational interviews, I quickly decided that wasn't what I wanted. After looking into ways that I might volunteer my time during this "exploratory phase" of my life, I got the idea that I wanted to work for a philanthropy. After doing a bit of online research, I wanted to get some first-hand information, so I phoned someone that I knew had personal connections to some philanthropies—John Farrington, who at the time was WHOI's Vice President for Academic Programs and Dean. John didn't hesitate to help connect me with some folks at a few foundations and was very helpful and encouraging overall. In addition to helping me make the connections I was asking for, John offered his own suggestion on my next career move—that I come back to WHOI to work in its fundraising office. This offer came as a complete surprise to me, and, frankly, the idea wasn't very appealing. I had an unfavorable view of fundraisers, based on a weak body of information, and I remember telling John that I didn't think it was the thing for me. But John asked me to follow up on his idea, and I did, out of respect for him, even though I really didn't think it had legs. However, not long afterward, I was recruited back to WHOI to work as a fundraiser.

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

I worked with WHOI's fundraising team for eight years. At first, I was hired to work with individual donors. But after



one year's time, the position of Director of Foundation Relations was vacated, and I was appointed to that position. I felt that this was a good fit for me because the foundation fundraising effort at WHOI is largely focused on garnering support for specific sponsored research projects, for which my scientific background was helpful. I was in this position for seven years, and had the opportunity to work closely with a wide variety of scientists to secure support for instrumentation, postdoctoral positions, and research projects that spanned all of the subdisciplines of oceanography.

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

I am Director of Development for the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, where I lead a small fundraising team to support the Arboretum's programs in scientific research, horticulture, and education and outreach.

I came to my current position by happenstance as well. While I was working at WHOI, I received a call from

a recruitment firm that was working on a search for Harvard's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. They wanted a fundraiser with a PhD in a closely related science, and my background in mathematical physics and mechanical engineering attracted their attention. I wasn't thinking about making a move, but I agreed to look at the ad, as I usually do, and told the recruiter that I would pass it along to colleagues that might be a good fit. The job didn't really interest me, mostly because it was indeed so closely related to what I had studied as a graduate student. And, I was enjoying getting a broader exposure to science that my current job afforded me. However, the posting contained a link for "other jobs at Harvard," and I just casually clicked on it, not thinking too much about it. Attached was a listing for the Arnold Arboretum. Being an enthusiastic gardener, I clicked on the ad and subsequently on the Arboretum's Web pages, mostly out of sheer curiosity about the place, not because of the job opportunity per se. A few days later, however, I began to think about whether it was time for me to try something different. At WHOI, we were just completing a campaign, and the leadership team with which I had been working closely was transitioning out of WHOI; I began to wonder if I should make a transition as well. The idea of working with botanists and horticulturists interested me, and so I ended up making the move "from the sea to land."

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

Having been a researcher is a great advantage to my work as a fundraiser. Generally speaking, it's important to have good research skills in order to (1) quickly comprehend new subjects and understand the purpose and potential impact of a project, (2) learn who else is engaged in similar activities and identify the strengths of those "competitors," and (3) identify possible synergies and partnerships that could enhance the organization's efforts. In short, fundraisers need to quickly get the gist of an issue or project, and understand the arena within which that project lies.

Although I have raised money for a lot of different research projects, none of them have been within my (previous) area of scientific expertise; having expert knowledge of a subject is not critical to being an effective fundraiser. However, my experience as a scientist greatly facilitates my ability to work effectively with other scientists simply because I have a good sense of how scientists go about their work, how they formulate and refine their ideas, and how they communicate with each other. That understanding has enabled me to get the gist of many complex scientific problems that are well outside of my own educational background and research experience.

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

Being a fundraiser at an organization that you care about—one with a mission that is aligned with your own interests—is intellectually stimulating and professionally satisfying. You have the

opportunity to work closely with a wide variety of people within the organization, and, as a result, you gain a broad and diverse perspective on the organization and on the field/arena within which the organization operates. As a fundraiser, you also meet some wonderful philanthropists who are truly inspiring in their dedication and commitment to a variety of causes, which opens your eyes to the role that philanthropy plays in society. And, of course, it's gratifying when you can help advance the organization's mission by raising support for an important initiative. Fundraising is a highly collaborative effort, and that is what makes it interesting as well as challenging. Fundraising is no fun when collaborations are ineffective and/or folks cannot get on (or stay on) the same page.

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

If you're still trying to figure out what you want to do, talk to people about your search—anyone whose opinion you value—and be open-minded. They might share something with you that you haven't yet thought about. Realize that it takes a lot of people to help make the world go 'round. Academia is great, and there are many jobs within academia that enable the work of academic researchers to proceed and be shared; and, of course, there is a big world outside of academia. Don't pigeonhole yourself. Think about what truly floats your boat, talk to people to better understand what opportunities exist, and don't expect to go from point A to point B in one shot. Be flexible and take a few chances!