

One thing that I tell graduate students is to remember that you're competing globally, even if you have no plans to move away, perhaps because of family commitments.

Students are smart and used to being the best of the best, but they do have to be able to articulate what skills they have, as well as to think hard about what they need to do to become more marketable.

They should also acknowledge what they are not good at. We want them to say what they hate doing, which helps them to recognize skills gaps and how to fill them.

My top tip? Develop a broader understanding of yourself, not just your research. Think about how to articulate non-scientific skills, both in written applications and at interview.

MICHAEL MATRONE

Meet with industry contacts

Associate director at the office of career and professional development, University of California, San Francisco.

When someone makes an appointment with our office, they fill in a short questionnaire about their goals and what they want to get out of the first session. That helps me to understand their expectations and to gather resources for them, so that they can leave with something. It could be a worksheet, books to read or a list of useful websites.

I often bring a deck of cards, on which career values are printed, which we sort. We also do a similar skills-based activity using the online career-assessment tool SkillScan.

Experiential learning opportunities are gaining popularity, including short internships that don't take much time away from a student's work in the lab.

I encourage informational interviews. You could read everything available online or from books, but it would only get you so far. You really need to talk to somebody who works in a particular sector. Some people find it difficult to set up these meetings, but I stress that the worst thing the contact can say is no, and it will cost you no more than US\$10 for two coffees. For that, you can get a lot of information and some easy, low-key networking.

My top tip: don't let someone else define your career success. There's a predominant mentality in academia that those who do not pursue faculty careers are failures. Graduate students and postdocs hear this and struggle with it. ■

INTERVIEWS BY DAVID PAYNE

These interviews have been edited for clarity and length.

TURNING POINT

Career developer

In 2015, Briana Konnick left a postdoctoral position at the Scripps Research Institute's Florida campus in Jupiter, where she had earned a PhD in biology the previous year, to become a career adviser. She moved to a similar role at the University of Chicago in Illinois in 2016, and is now associate director of graduate career development there.

How did you get your current role?

The Jupiter campus at Scripps had few career support services for graduate students and postdocs during my PhD, unlike the main campus in California. I helped to form a graduate-student committee, started a mentorship programme and led a local chapter of the Network for Women in Science. Then, I helped to lead the postdoc association, arranging for employers to visit us on campus.

I had the same supervisor for my PhD and postdoc. He was transparent about the realities of the academic career track, and what it was like to deal with budgets and grants. Many faculty members don't typically share this aspect of their positions. I realized that I enjoyed helping to develop programmes for graduate students and postdocs more than I did my laboratory work. In 2015, I was appointed to a full-time post with the Career and Postdoctoral Services Office at Scripps.

A year later, I moved to the University of Chicago, as assistant director of graduate career development. We moved to the greater Chicago area because my husband, who is a research chemist, had an opportunity to found a start-up company based on some of his previous work. My position at Scripps was wonderful, but this opportunity for my husband was too good to pass up. The 'two-body problem' (where one member of a couple gets a job in a new location, requiring the other to relocate, too, and find a job) is a common one.

In October last year, I was promoted to my current role. There are more than 20 people in our office, including 6 career advisers. At Scripps's Florida campus, I was basically an office of one, so moving to a larger office has been fantastic. I specialize in science, technology, engineering and mathematics because of my background, and I have colleagues who serve the social sciences, another who handles the humanities, and so on.

How do you organize your time?

Our busiest time is autumn. Graduate students are starting new programmes, late-stage PhD students and postdocs are applying for faculty positions and employers are hosting recruitment sessions on campus.



The office has a clear mission of equally supporting any career path a graduate student or postdoc is interested in — whether academic, industry, non-profit or government. The career advisers all offer 12 full hours of advising appointments each week. At busy times of the year, I've offered a couple more hours, but that has to be the limit. Otherwise, it's quite easy to burn out and we would not be as productive. There is preparation and follow-up to do with every appointment. Being busy is a great problem to have. We're always hoping that people will come to us more.

What advice would you offer to someone considering a career-development role?

I recommend gaining experience with a range of stakeholders in academic institutions. The more exposure you have to the needs and perspectives of other administrators, academic leaders (say, in the provost's office), faculty members, deans and so on, the better prepared you will be. You need to be able to navigate a variety of situations with diplomacy, effective communication and measured consideration.

Excellent organization and management skills are essential, because a decent amount of the work in this role is purely administrative. As my own story shows, you can take advantage of unpaid opportunities, such as volunteering and committee work.

In my office, I have a quote on the wall that I carry with me to every position I take: "Do what you love, love what you do." Sounds simple, but the message to me is profound. Seeking better alignment between what motivates you internally and the realities of your work will not only lead to great personal satisfaction, but will significantly improve the quality of your work. ■

INTERVIEW BY DAVID PAYNE

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