

# The University as Nonacademic Employer

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**F**or many Ph.D.'s the best source of satisfying nonacademic employment may be the institution they are most familiar with -- the university.

Maybe you like the campus setting but have decided that a life of teaching and research just isn't for you. Or maybe you struck out on the academic job market, but you're not ready to bolt academe for corporate pastures.

An array of nonfaculty jobs at colleges and universities draw on the interests and skills of Ph.D.'s. Many offer the opportunity to teach a course in your field. Most offer the potential for great job satisfaction. Just listen to Jeremy Sabol, academic-technology specialist for the Center for Teaching and Learning at Stanford University: "The focus on learning changes the character of the workplace in a palpable way. My colleagues generally find their work fascinating and personally rewarding, and do it for that reason. This has not been widely true in my experiences outside the university setting."

None of the positions described here is on the tenure track. Some require teaching experience. Many require a Ph.D., but even where it's not required, having one can help you land the job or enhance your credibility on the job. After all, the university is the one employer that you know values your doctorate.

## Jobs in Teaching Centers

Campus teaching and learning centers are a growing area of job opportunity for Ph.D.'s. An assistant director -- the entry-level position at these centers -- might work with undergraduates, graduate students, faculty members, or all three. Some specific duties include working with undergraduates to boost their study skills and helping graduate students to improve their teaching skills.

For Patricia Armstrong, assistant director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Princeton University, a Ph.D. was a requirement for the job, as was teaching experience. The attraction for Armstrong, who holds a Ph.D. in French from Yale and has been in her position for three years, is clear: "I am encouraged to learn as much as possible about the work I am doing and to try new and innovative approaches to meeting the needs of" faculty members, graduate students, and undergraduates.

Of all the nonacademic opportunities described in this column, the positions in university teaching centers are the most closely tied to the academic life of the institution. When I asked Armstrong and Rosalind Streichler, the director of the Center for Teaching Development at the University of California at San Diego, whether they considered their work to be nonacademic or academic, both replied emphatically "academic."

At many large teaching centers, a range of positions is available, including ones with a focus on technology. At Stanford's teaching center, Jeremy Sabol has the title "academic technology specialist." His duties include helping faculty members use new technology, encouraging sound

pedagogical uses of technology in teaching, and looking for new technologies that would enrich university teaching and learning.

A Ph.D. was not a requirement for the position, although Sabol has one in French from Yale. "So far it has been intellectually stimulating," he says. "This was perhaps my greatest fear in leaving academia. I was very worried about not being in an intellectual community, not continuing to learn and be challenged -- and this has happily not been a problem. I am learning new things, especially about teaching in a research university environment, almost every day."

## Other Career Options

For Ph.D.'s inclined toward science and business, a good source of job opportunities is in technology-transfer offices. The purpose of such offices is to encourage the transfer of faculty inventions to the private sector where they can be further developed for the benefit of society and for profit.

Alan Carr, who has a Ph.D. in molecular biophysics and biochemistry from Yale, is a licensing associate in the cooperative-research office at Yale University. His duties include evaluating invention disclosures of Yale professors, developing patent and commercialization strategies, marketing inventions to appropriate companies, and negotiating license agreements with companies to develop the technology. A Ph.D. was not a requirement for the job, he said, but it's been extremely helpful for understanding the science. In fact, most technology-transfer professionals do have Ph.D.'s, and that degree is required for advancement. It's also helpful and common for people in these positions to have an M.B.A., Carr says.

Large research universities have a multitude of programs and institutes attached to them. Working as a program manager or administrator in one of these programs is another promising career option for Ph.D.'s.

At the University of California at San Diego, Norienne Saign is the coordinator of its McNair Program, a federally financed program that seeks to attract undergraduates who are low-income, first-generation college students, or who are from underrepresented groups, to doctoral study. She meets with students, matches them with faculty members, leads skills programs, writes reports, and tracks alumni. "The job description looked like a good combination of teaching and administration," she says. "I didn't want to go into full-time university teaching but wanted to stay connected with students and the university." Her Ph.D. in literature from UC-San Diego was not a requirement of the job, but Saign feels it definitely helped her get the job.

By now, most major universities offer career services of some sort for their graduate students, and these career centers are another source of potential employment. Although a Ph.D. is seldom a requirement, it provides useful credibility with students and faculty members. For me, as director of career services at Yale, there are many sources of job satisfaction: the range and variety of duties and of relationships you develop inside and outside the university, the very smart and challenging students you serve, the endless variety of life stories you hear, the real help you provide.

If you want a job where you can continue to hone specific skills you developed through graduate school, such as data analysis or writing, the university has several relevant areas. Institutional research offices look for Ph.D.'s, usually in the social sciences, to prepare and analyze data about the university and to apply that analysis to institutional problems and issues. Public-affairs offices, internal and external newsletters and magazines, and the communications and foundations arms of development offices are all likely sources of opportunities for Ph.D.'s with strong writing skills. And there are positions that call for high-level writing and analytical skills scattered in offices across the university.



As a general rule, entry-level salaries for these nonacademic positions are in tune with the salary range for assistant professors on the campus. For instance, a university at the high end of the pay scale for assistant professors might start an assistant director or counselor in career services at a salary between \$42,000 and \$52,000. But at a college where the pay range for new assistant professors is in the middle of the pack, the starting salary for an assistant director of a teaching center might be \$35,000 to \$45,000. For positions in technology and business, salaries are more typically tied to industry.

## Moving Around

It's hard enough to move up within a particular office of the university, but what about moving from one area to another very different one? If you start in a teaching center, are you stuck there?

I talked to Robin Wagner at the University of Chicago about her move from being a counselor in the university's career-services center to a position in the office of student affairs as assistant dean of students for operations and strategic planning. It was a lateral move without a pay raise, but it got Wagner what she wanted -- to be more involved with how the university works.

In the new job, Wagner worked on special projects -- for the university as a whole -- putting together committees on major issues, thinking about questions for benchmarking, and engaging in quantitative analysis on a variety of issues. Just recently, after 10 months in the job, Wagner won a promotion -- and a pay raise -- to associate dean of students for health affairs and strategic planning.

Her research skills as a Ph.D. are directly useful in her new role, but she probably wouldn't have had the chance to use these skills had she not laid the groundwork when she was in career services. Back then, Wagner made a point of asking her supervisor for opportunities to gain experience in areas where she knew she was lacking -- working with budgets and university committees, for example. Now she is in a position where she gets constant exposure to core issues regarding how a university is run.

## Getting Ready

Susie Brubaker-Cole moved directly from graduate school with a Ph.D. in French literature to a position as assistant vice provost for undergraduate education at Stanford University. She directs its honors and undergraduate research programs, and advises students applying for national fellowships, scholarships, and Ph.D. admissions.

Her job, she says, includes "overseeing a budget of about \$3.5-million, two residential programs with over 300 students, and a staff of six (including two associate directors with Ph.D.'s); serving as the liaison to the development office for a \$1-billion campaign to endow the programs I oversee. While my staff does most of the work with students, I serve as the primary liaison to departments and faculty campuswide." What she likes about the job: "I love being able to work on the big picture of undergraduate education -- I was always dissatisfied with the narrowness of my work as a scholar in French."

How did Brubaker-Cole get there directly from graduate school? By seeking out administrative and leadership experience in graduate school in addition to having the required Ph.D. and several years of teaching experience. When she knew she didn't want to follow the traditional professional track, she served as coordinator of a peer teacher-training program and as an officer of the graduate student senate and gained valuable exposure to higher-education administration.

If you're starting to think that a faculty career is not in your future, don't wait until you're out of graduate school to get some experience in the general direction of the career you think you might want. I know of a graduate student who created for herself an internship in her university career-services office, liked the work, got the experience, and now works as a counselor in the career office of another



university. Alan Carr says that his part-time work as a researcher for venture capital and equity investment firms, while he was still searching for a full-time job, gave him some familiarity with biotech and pharmaceutical companies. This counted as business experience and is now helpful for pairing inventions with companies.

## Moving Forward

If you found one or two jobs described here that interest you, now what? Here are some next steps to get you closer to the job you want:

- Go to The Chronicle's listing of academic administrative positions. It gives a wonderful overview of the nonfaculty opportunities, and you may even find a job you want to apply for.
- Zero in on the geographic location you want, look up the colleges and universities in the area, and check the online listings of their human-resources offices.
- Call or e-mail friends, and friends of friends, from your university who have nonacademic jobs at other universities. And get more contacts from them. (Several people mentioned here found out about the position they now have through friends from their graduate-school programs.)

And if you want to stay put, look carefully in your own back yard -- find out about all the offices and institutes and programs, learn who does what, and in what division or area of the university. Talk to everyone about what you want.

