

TIBBS Career Blitz - January 2012

Career Profile of Science Outreach Specialist: Amanda Marvelle, PhD

What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?

Education Director and High School Development Project Manager for the Contemporary Science Center, a science education non-profit. I worked as a contractor from October 2010 until July 2011 when I was brought on-board full-time.

Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (8/2004-5/2010)
Ph.D., Curriculum in Genetics and Molecular Biology
Advisor: Dr. Karen Mohlke
Dissertation Title: Genetics of Obesity-related Traits and Lipoproteins in Filipino Women

Did you do a postdoc?

I did not do a postdoc

What are your main daily responsibilities?

The great thing about my job is that my day-to-day responsibilities vary. Some days I teach day-long inquiry-based field studies developed around ongoing research projects at local biotech and pharmaceutical companies. Additionally, I coordinate and manage many aspects of opening a new STEM charter high school in RTP, Research Triangle High School, slated to open in the fall of 2012.

What are the keys to success in your career field?

The key to succeeding in such an entrepreneurial field like science education and outreach is being flexible, resourceful, and a jack-of-all-trades. While I love science, I spend many days doing things that you might not think relate directly to my Ph.D., but the skills I learned while in graduate school are used daily. For example, I am often asked to do things that I have never done before, so I put my researching skills to the test and either find someone to help me or learn how to do it myself.

What were the most important factors in choosing your career path?

I have always known that I wanted a career where I could bridge the gap between science and the public. However, I knew that I could not be successful without a degree and an extensive background in science. So I applied to graduate school, and during my PhD I took advantage of many opportunities to explore different career

paths. I realized that I had a passion for science education and outreach. I loved teaching, but also wanted a job that would evolve over time.

What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?

My advice for landing any job would be to cultivate as many contacts as possible in variety of fields. Additionally it never hurts to develop your leadership skills. For a science education job, I would advise you to take advantage of all the teaching opportunities that you can. Since the job requirements are so diverse, I would suggest that you develop a variety of skills, but hone in on your passions.