

TIBBS Career Blitz - January 2012

Career Profile of Program Director: Joshua Hall, PhD

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

Director of UNC PREP (Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program) and Science Outreach - 2 years

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

UNC Chapel Hill - Microbiology and Immunology

Did you do a postdoc? Where?

Yes, UNC Chapel Hill. I was a SPIRE fellow in Virginia Miller's lab.

What are your main daily responsibilities?

Mentoring and advising postbac students and graduate students, planning and teaching professional development workshops for science trainees, working with students and faculty to oversee student development and training, directing and developing science outreach initiatives targeted at K-12 science classrooms. Drinking lots of coffee.

What are the keys to success in your career field?

Ability to listen and problem solve. (Often you are balancing the needs of students, faculty, and administration.) *Organization.* (If you don't keep a calendar now, you will.) *Networking.* (Knowing or finding the best people to help you get things done.) *A mentality of service.* (To be a successful program director, you must be willing to work as hard as you can to help others get where they want to go.)

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

An important requisite for me was the opportunity for direct impact and outcomes. I feel as if the effort I put in truly makes a difference in people's lives. My experiences cultivated an interest in mentoring and fostering the careers of scientists just starting out. After devoting a significant period of time to undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral training, I wanted an opportunity to think creatively and challenge myself in new ways while still utilizing the knowledge and skills I gained during graduate school and my postdoc.

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

During graduate school and your postdoc, *focus on becoming the most effective scientist you can be even if you don't think you want to stay in the lab long-term.* Having first-hand knowledge of how to be a successful researcher is key to directing students who have that aspiration. Take advantage of opportunities to mentor undergraduates, rotation students, etc. Serve on committees. Participate in science outreach. Identify needs in your lab, department, graduate school, etc and figure out ways to meet them. That's really what being a science education administrator is all about.

Links for more information on this career path:

Administrator-Scientist. What it takes to do both.

<http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/cgi-bin/tomprof/posting.php?ID=1040>

Transitioning from Researcher to Outreach

http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2010_04_09/caredit.a1000038

Scientists in Educational Outreach: An Overview

http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2000_04_07/noDOI.11637012915855679387