Envisioning Yourself Outside of Academia: The First Steps for Graduate Students and Postdocs

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Where Can You Go For Help With Your Career?

• Workshops and Events
  Graduate School Program Chart
  CCS Event Calendar
  CCNet

• Websites
  Cornell Career Services
  College career office

• Career Offices
Career Services:
Research Master’s and PhD students

Agriculture and Life Sciences: 140 Roberts
Engineering: 201 Carpenter
University-Wide: 103 Barnes
Hotel: 180 Statler
ILR: 201 Ives

Professional master’s students: Contact your program’s office
Career Services: 
Postdocs

Graduate Students Interested in a Postdoc

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Academic jobs

Educational Institution:
• A faculty position, typically involving teaching and research

Non-Academic jobs

Educational Institution:
• Alumni office
• Grants and contracts
• Public relations

Business and Industry:
• Consulting companies
• Manufacturing
• Financial institutions
• Media outlets

Not-for-profit organization:
• Libraries
• Museums
• Professional societies

Government:
• Federal
• State
• Local
Non-academic jobs: Doctoral students

Non-academic jobs: Doctoral students

Academe

Industry/business

Government/not-for-profit/other/unknown

Overall

Humanities

Engineering

Non-academic jobs: Doctoral students

Careers in Academia

**Positives**

- Intellectual freedom
- Flexible hours
- Interactions with students
- Access to resources (libraries, museums)
- Familiar setting, clear career path
- Job security
- You can “use” your graduate degree

**Negatives**

- Low pay
- Long hours
- Interactions with students
- Politics and hierarchy
- Living in undesirable locations
- Stressful working environment
- Pressure to publish
- Isolation
- Difficult funding environment
## Careers Outside Academia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positives</th>
<th>Negatives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Faster-paced working environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Good salaries</td>
<td>• Corporate culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Health insurance</td>
<td>• Graduate degree may not be valued</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Work-life balance</td>
<td>• Less intellectual freedom</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More social impact</td>
<td>• Deadline- or product-driven environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Less geographical restrictions</td>
<td>• May have less flexible schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explore new career areas and use skills in different ways</td>
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<td>• Shorter-term projects</td>
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Reasons to Stay in Academia (Even If You Don’t Want To!)

- Your graduate degree will be “wasted”
- Your advisor won’t support you if you leave academia
- You’re a failure if you leave academia
- Your personal beliefs conflict with the corporate world
- You don’t know what’s out there
- You’re afraid of making a career change
- You don’t have any transferable skills
- Nobody will hire a PhD anyway
- You don’t have time to look for a job
- You’re over- and under-qualified for non-academic jobs
How Can You Overcome These Challenges?
How Can You Overcome These Challenges?

Treat your career exploration as another research project
Your Graduate/Postdoctoral Experience Already Taught You How To:

• Define a topic of interest by reading extensively
• Formulate a hypothesis or question
• Figure out what you know and don’t know
• Identify resources (books, websites, databases)
• Talk to experts intelligently
• Question your assumptions

Why not use this same approach to discover how you fit into the world outside academia?
Your Career Exploration Research Project

1. Conduct background research to identify topics of interest
2. Develop a hypothesis or question
3. Gather information to test your hypothesis or answer your question
4. Evaluate your findings
5. Articulate your results and publicize
Your Career Exploration Research Project

1. Conduct background research to identify topics of interest
   - Identify your skills and what is important to you in your career

2. Develop a hypothesis or question

3. Gather information to test your hypothesis or answer your question

4. Evaluate your findings

5. Articulate your results and publicize
Your Career Exploration Research Project

1. Conduct background research to identify topics of interest
2. Develop a hypothesis or question
   - E.g. “I would like to use negotiation skills in my future career” or “Is consulting a good match for my skills and interests?”
3. Gather information to test your hypothesis or answer your question
4. Evaluate your findings
5. Articulate your results and publicize
Your Career Exploration Research Project

1. Conduct background research to identify topics of interest
2. Develop a hypothesis or question
3. Gather information to test your hypothesis or answer your question
   - Locate resources, read, and speak to experts to learn about careers in which you could use certain skills and fulfill your priorities
4. Evaluate your findings
5. Articulate your results and publicize
Your Career Exploration Research Project

1. Conduct background research to identify topics of interest
2. Develop a hypothesis or question
3. Gather information to test your hypothesis or answer your question
4. Evaluate your findings
   - Prove your hypothesis or answer your question by processing the information you found. Are any careers a good fit for your skills, interests, and values?
5. Articulate your results and publicize
Your Career Exploration Research Project

1. Conduct background research to identify topics of interest
2. Develop a hypothesis or question
3. Gather information to test your hypothesis or answer your question
4. Evaluate your findings
5. Articulate your results and publicize

Apply for jobs!
Redefining Yourself

**Academia:**
- Job title (Professor)
- Subjects (American history)

**Outside of Academia**
- What you’ve done and could do (transferable skills)

This may be why you feel as though you don’t fit anywhere but in academia.
Why Do You Have to Redefine Yourself?

% of people in US over age 25 with...

- High school degree: 87.6%
- Bachelor’s degree: 30.9%
- Master’s degree: 8.0%
- Professional degree (MD, JD, DDS) degree: 1.5%
- Doctoral degree: 1.6%

http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2012/tables.html
Redefining Yourself

I am getting my PhD in cell biology.
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- Tenure-track or adjunct professor
- High-school teacher
- Industry researcher
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I am skilled at writing, researching a wide variety of topics, reading and synthesizing large amounts of information, and working independently in high-pressure environments.
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- Tenure-track or adjunct professor
- High-school teacher
- Industry researcher
- Journalism
- Grant officer
- Editor
- Government job: patent reviewer, speech writer, foreign service officer

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Strategies to Find Others Who Have Redefined Themselves

• The Versatile PhD

• Google search with keywords: LinkedIn
  “PhD (or MS, MA, etc), your graduate field”
  A skill, career area, company
How Can You Redefine Yourself?
Three Skill Types

Transferable/Functional Skills
- Actions used to perform a task and are transferable to different positions
- Examples: organize, promote, analyze, write

Knowledge-Based Skills
- Specific areas of knowledge needed to perform a task, procedure, process
- Acquired through education, training and on-the-job experience.
- Examples: accounting, synthetic chemistry techniques

Personal Qualities
- Personal characteristics that contribute to performing work activities.
- Developed in childhood and through life experience
- Examples: patient, diplomatic, results-oriented, independent
Identifying Your Transferable Skills

1) Using the skills handout, check off all of the skills in which you are highly or moderately proficient
Note: If you possess skills not listed, add them to the list.

2) Put a check next to those highly proficient or moderately proficient skills you **enjoy** using the most.
A Resource for Skills and Job Descriptions

O*NET

Detailed job descriptions provided by the U.S. Department of Labor that include:

• Tasks
• Skills
• Abilities
• Knowledge/Education
• Work environment

http://www.onetonline.org/skills/
What Are Your Questions?