

Benchwork to Deskwork: working within the Federal Government

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Overview

- Allison trivia → background and career trajectory
- Working at NIDA
- Working at the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products (FDA CTP)
- Alternative careers in science, changing course and getting your foot in the door

Undergraduate Education



EMORY
UNIVERSITY



- Research experience
 - Lab tech: rat behavioral models
- Graduated in 1992
 - Major: psychology
 - Minor: philosophy

Graduate Education



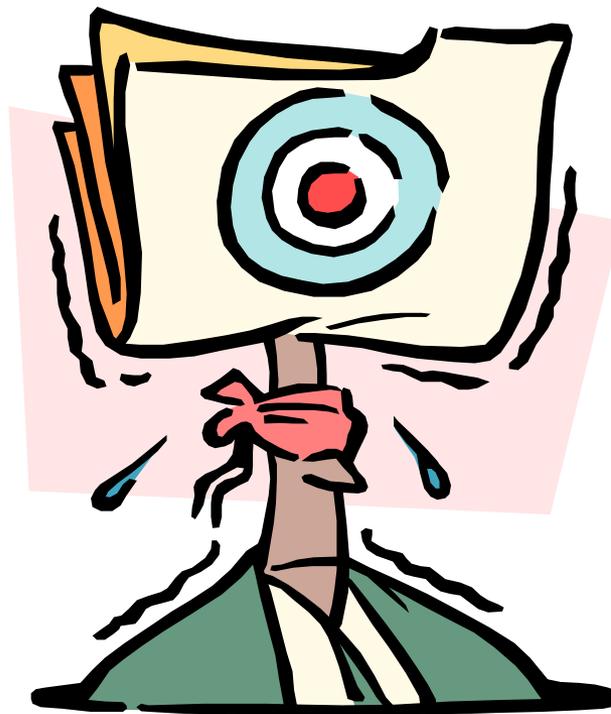
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Psychology Department: Neuroscience and Behavior
 - Research focus: effect of caffeine or food on various rat behavioral models
 - MA 1994 and PhD 1998

First post-doc position

- NIDA's intramural research program in beautiful Baltimore, MD



- Focused on drugs of abuse
 - Learned new methodologies and the cocaine behavioral pharmacology literature
 - Stayed for 2 years
- But decided to take a chance...



Second post-doc position



- Why learn about human laboratory research?
 - interest, marketability
- Behavioral Pharmacology Research Unit at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
 - Related to my background (drug abuse), fellows with varied experiences, and conveniently located!
 - Plan and manage human lab studies and pharmaceutical studies, IRB communication, etc.
 - A 2 year fellowship

The job search: what I did



- **Talk to people or people who know people**
 - What is their job like?
 - Program officer versus SRO? Science policy? CRO?
- **Limited geography so expansive possible interests**
 - Anything that I was interested in and may be qualified for
 - Science writing/editing, research labs (nonclinical and clinical), colleges/universities, science/research policy, NIH

The job search: what I didn't do



- Didn't think about other DHHS government agencies
 - FDA, EPA, CMS, other DHHS agencies or HQ
<http://www.hhs.gov/about/orgchart/>
- Didn't think about lobbying/politics or media

First “career” job in 2002– NIDA program officer

- Translational research branch in the Division of Basic and Behavioral Research
 - Nicotine/tobacco portfolio of grants
 - Unusual to have a drug focus versus discipline focus
- Re-organization – it happens.
 - Different branch → given a choice
 - Change in portfolio

Daily activities as PO at NIDA

- See the “big picture” of nicotine and tobacco research
 - Portfolio originally had both animal and human research
- Talking to prospective applicants
 - *before or after* review
 - For first few years – training committee
 - Esp. interested in young investigators (first R01, first renewal)

Daily activities as PO at NIDA (cont.)

- Address gaps in knowledge through workshops, development of initiatives
 - Within NIDA and with other ICs
 - Scientific conferences/seminars focused “gap areas”
 - Be creative! Don’t let a lack of budget stop you

Daily activities as PO at NIDA (cont.)

- Work on NIH and DHHS activities
 - NIH Blueprint activities
 - Trans-NIH workgroup on tobacco
 - Healthy People 2010 and 2020
- Co-coordinator of Nicotine and Tobacco Research and Outreach Activities
- Lots of teams
 - Be friendly, knowledgeable and considerate



Moving to another Agency

- Temporary versus permanent
- Detail opportunities
 - Great opportunity to “try it out” – for them and you!
 - Specific job for a limited period of time
 - USAJobs or create your own

Taking the opportunity

- Offered a detail at FDA CTP mid-Jan 2010
 - Started Feb 1, 2010
- What I did:
 - Menthol and the new Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee
 - Presentations, written reports
- Why I stayed:
 - Public health impact
 - Maxed out at NIDA

FDA CTP



- FSPTCA signed June 22, 2009
- The Act gives FDA authority to regulate tobacco products, which are products made or derived from tobacco intended for human consumption.
- Currently “tobacco products” include cigarettes, cigarette tobacco, roll-your-own, and smokeless tobacco.
- Regulations are required to exert authority over other products made or derived from tobacco
- Tobacco products do not include drugs or devices which are regulated under different provisions of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

Taking a new position

- Ambiguous, but okay with that
- Moved to the Office of Science (OS)
 - 7 people April 2010 – now >100
 - Jack of all trades for a few months
 - Addiction Team lead
 - Currently have 7 direct reports
 - Biology, biochemistry, pharmacology (nonclinical and clinical), behavior, clinical psychology

Daily activities at FDA CTP

- “sailing the ship as it’s being built”
- Managerial/supervisory activities
- All science experts:
 - Knowledge management/integration
 - Report and application review for tobacco products
 - Guidances, regulations, operating procedures
 - Research projects through IAAs, contracts, etc.

Daily activities at FDA CTP (cont.)

- Meetings, meetings, meetings, and lawyers
 - Potential regulatory action
 - Document development
 - Internal or external
 - OS lead or OS support
 - Strategy /Planning
 - Industry
 - General request or report/application specific

Daily activities at FDA CTP (cont.)

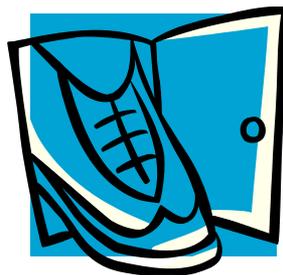
- Research – ideas and oversight
 - Contracts
 - Partnerships through interagency agreements with NIH, NCTR, CDC
- Other Activities
 - Working with Special Government Employees (SGEs)
 - Conference presentations
 - Scientific manuscripts

Opportunities for gaining experience in a new field

- Additional training opportunities
- Detail opportunities within DHHS
 - Make your own adventure!
- Internships or fellowships
 - <http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/WorkingatFDA/FellowshipInternshipGraduateFacultyPrograms/default.htm>

Figuring out your options

- Geography
- Directly or indirectly related to current experience
- What do you like versus don't like?
- Looking for an entre → find out if there is an appropriate training program or internship



Once you are in Government

- Easier to move within the Government
 - Within Agency, between Agencies
- Details become a potential avenue
- Talk with people in your areas of interest



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