



Careers in Higher Education Administration February 15, 2011

Panelists

- Liza Craig, *Grants Manager*, School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
- Emily Ford, *Associate Director of Undergraduate Academic Affairs*, School of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania
- Sarah Vanacore, *Writing Coordinator, Educational Support Services*, Moore College of Art & Design
- Josh Stern, *Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students*, Arcadia University
- Linda Hollenback, *Director of Alumni Relations*, Philadelphia University

Background Information

Liza Craig works as Grants Manager of the Addictions Unit in the Department of Psychiatry at Penn's School of Medicine and has a Master's degree in Organizational Dynamics from Penn's School of Arts and Sciences. After graduating with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Wharton Evening School, Liza began her career in grants management in the Central Office for grants administration as a "post-award" accountant. (The "post-award" phase of grants management involves managing the funds received and ensuring that principal investigators (PI's) are spending appropriately and meeting reporting requirements.) Liza eventually moved into the Department of Psychiatry's Business Office and then into the Center for the Studies of Addictions Unit as a Grants Manager as there was an opportunity for her to get exposure to the "pre-award" phase of grants management. In her current role, she helps PI's obtain research funding from the Federal Government and other sources. She focuses on the "pre-award" phase by facilitating the preparation of proposals and budgets to be submitted. Typically, the role involves working with multiple PI's who have multiple grants. Liza notes that grants management is somewhat unique to research but is very much in demand.

Emily Ford is an Associate Director of Undergraduate Academic Affairs in the School of Nursing. After receiving her undergraduate degree in Spanish from Penn, she worked as a paralegal for an immigration law firm before deciding to return to Penn for her master's degree in Higher Education Management from the Graduate School of Education. Upon completing the master's degree, Emily worked as a Registrar and Student Services provider for the Annenberg School for Communication at Penn for two years. During this time, she realized that she wanted to spend more time in the advising function. Therefore, she moved to her current position in the School of Nursing, where she advises undergraduate nursing students, mostly on matters related to academics and student activities/programs. In this role, she refers students to other campus resources as necessary, works closely with faculty on curricular and advising issues, and interacts with alumni and parents. Emily points out that the ability to work with students is more important than having knowledge of a particular academic subject, which is typically learned on the job.

Sarah Vanacore serves as the Writing Coordinator for the Moore School of Art & Design. After receiving her undergraduate degree in English, Sarah worked at a homeless shelter during a one-year volunteer program. She then worked in various roles such as grants writer, teacher's aide and Americorps summer volunteer before pursuing her Master's degree in English at Penn, as she was considering an academic career. Upon completing the degree, Sarah decided that she would not pursue a PhD and began her work at Moore. Currently, she is the lone staff

person in the writing center, though she anticipates that the Center will expand so that she can train peer advisors. In her role, Sarah helps students with their writing and provides academic support in other areas such as time management, study skills and learning disabilities. In addition, Sarah runs a pre-orientation program for new students who need extra academic support and facilitates writing placements for incoming students. She also works closely with faculty and career services personnel.

Josh Stern serves as the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and the Dean of Students at Arcadia University. While an undergraduate student at Tufts University, he took time off from school and counseled autistic and developmentally disabled clients. Upon returning to finish his psychology degree, he served as a resident assistant for two years. After graduating, Josh worked as a resident director for three years and then went on to pursue a Master's degree in Higher Education Management at Penn. As a result of an informational interview, Josh eventually received and accepted an offer to work as the Director of Residence Life at the Art Institute of Philadelphia. Based on his growing interest in student development, Josh moved to a position at Arcadia University. At Arcadia, he was eventually promoted to Assistant Dean, Associate Dean and his current roles in student affairs, where he oversees residential life, commuter life, community service programs, first and second-year programs, student engagement programs, and wellness services. He has completed the coursework for an EdD degree in Higher Education Management.

Linda Hollenback is the Director of Alumni Relations at Philadelphia University. After receiving her Bachelor's degree in Art History and Classical Civilization from Boston University, Linda had considered academia but was not ready to move directly into a PhD program right after graduation. She worked as a Residence Hall Director of a small college in Scranton, PA, taught Latin at a high school, and decided that she wanted to pursue a career in higher education administration. Therefore, she went to Penn and received her Master's degree in Higher Education Management. Linda's first job after graduate school was with the Penn's Netter Center for Community Partnerships, where she was involved with grant writing and program development. Active in her Boston University alumni network, Linda found out about her current position at Philadelphia University by way of one of her fellow alumni, who thought that she would be a good fit for the Director of Alumni Relations position. She sees her role as one that helps alumni connect with each other and back to the University. Her responsibilities include planning of networking events and facilitating regional alumni groups. She is also connected with the Development (fundraising) team, sometimes referred to as Institutional Advancement.

Questions & Answers

Q: How does someone with a liberal arts or academic background transition to a role in higher education administration?

Highlight internships and extracurricular activities where you can point to transferable skills that can be applied in higher education management. Consider ways that you can connect your major or skill sets to various areas. For instance, perhaps someone who has studied political science may look into opportunities in the government relations office of a university. Language or intercultural skills can be applied in an office that offers international programs or serves international students.

Q: Where are opportunities for international students?

International students are often good candidates to serve as program coordinators or residence directors for Study Abroad programs

Q: For someone with a background in college access/equity, what are some opportunities to influence higher education curriculum based on research findings?

Possibilities include:

- Tenure track position
- Academic support/Act 101 programs
- Institutional research
- University relations and marketing
- Deans of schools and their staff, including academic advising.
- Policy research organizations

Q: Outside of networking, what are other sources for finding out about opportunities?

Websites such as HigherEdJobs.com, StudentAffairs.com, and the Chronicle of Higher Education are a good place to start. Professional associations often post positions on their websites; keep in mind that many job openings are announced at professional association meetings or conferences before they are posted. Links for higher education job boards and professional associations can be found at:

http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gse/gselinks_highered.html

Q: How can one leverage a background in K-12 education when transitioning to higher education?

As with any career shift, identifying transferable skills is key. For instance, the ability to collaborate and assess is transferable. Specific areas to consider are programs where universities collaborate with K-12 schools and mentoring programs for future teachers.

Q: What do you like most about your work?

- "I can be in the know about research, curriculum, etc. while also hands on with the work of administration. Every day is different."
- "At the end of the day, the workday is typically done"
- "I get to tutor and mentor students and engage them in areas related to my academic discipline"

Q: What are general expectations for a starting salary?

There's no clear answer to what starting salaries might be in a higher education job. The size of the institution, and the size of its budget, will directly impact salary. A majority of the positions offered to Master's prepared candidates will range from \$37,500 - 48,000, but this is just a suggestion of the range, and not "absolute". There are exceptions. For instance, residential life positions often provide room and board, so that would need to be taken into account. In some cases, applicants are willing to start with a relatively lower salary to get a foot in the door in their ideal institution or job function. In any case, it is important to consider the entire offer, including the quality of life that the position offers.