Career Profile of Science Outreach Expert, Christine Adamczyk, PhD

What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?
Executive Director of the Duke Center for Science Education. 1 1/2 yrs. Prior to this job I was the Director of GSK’s US K-12 Science Outreach program for 12 years. Prior to that I was a senior research scientist in Cancer Biology at GSK for 20+ years.

Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?
My PhD is an ABD. I went back to grad school after I had established a career at GSK. I did my graduate work and my research at NCSU and worked full-time at GSK. After my writtens, orals and part of the first draft of my thesis, I found myself with two babies and a flourishing full-time career. I decided that finishing writing my thesis had to take a back seat to my newborn and 20-month old. I never had a chance to finish writing and it isn't a big regret of mine.

Did you do a postdoc? No

What are your main daily responsibilities?
I develop interdisciplinary activities to help faculty, staff and students become more engaged and more expert in science outreach. I participate in science education research on what works in science outreach and what fails to elevate kids to pursue science and science careers. I write grants. I consult on the broader impact perspective on other’s grant applications. I am building a new recreational, residential science summer camp, called Summer Science Sleuths at Duke, to spark rising 8th graders’ interests in science and science careers.

What are the keys to success in your career field?
Network, network, network. Create your own opportunities. Think about where you want to be in 5 years and unpack what it would take to get there. Find a mentor who can help you get where you are going. Ask for help along the way from more experienced and more well-connected superiors.

What were the most important factors in choosing your career path?
I had good role models in my youth. I had supportive parents. I have a very flexible spouse. I verbalized my goals. I reassessed my goals often (at least every year). I had great mentors.

What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?
Develop a broad background in your early post-grad years. Try lots of things to find what you are truly passionate about. Follow the passion. The key to a "job like mine" isn’t that it is in science education, the key is that I’m doing something that feels right to me. As for science education research and outreach, a broad background helps. Pay attention to trends in US Science Education, state standards and how kids
are learning science. Develop your own outreach activity. Offer your services as a volunteer to gain some experience for your CV. Become part of an outreach organization (science days at schools, robotics mentoring, science fair judge, etc.) and learn what they do to accomplish their mission. Become part of the team that implements the science education (broader impact) component of a major grant. In other words, build your skill set. Most of that skill building can be informal, but you might consider a post-doc in sci ed.

One note about post-docs...there are post-doc positions scattered about in science education. Consider that route carefully. If you take a sci ed PD, you have to decide before hand if it's a viable path for you. After a 2 or 3-year PD away from the bench, it will be hard to go back.

**Links for more information on this career path:**

Transitioning from Researcher to Outreacher
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