TIBBS Career Blitz – February 2013

Career Profile – Amanda Marvelle, PhD

What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?
Biology Instructor & Director of Digital Media Learning at Research Triangle High School (RTHS). Founder of Research Triangle High School. I have worked in this capacity since August of 2012, however prior to this position I was the Education Director of the Contemporary Science Center, the science education non-profit that started RTHS, since October of 2010.

Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?
Ph.D., Curriculum in Genetics and Molecular Biology
Advisor: Dr. Karen Mohlke
Dissertation Title: Genetics of Obesity-related Traits and Lipoproteins in Filipino Women

Did you do a postdoc?
I did not do a postdoc

What are your main daily responsibilities?
My day-to-day responsibilities vary as I am working in a high school. There are always students needing something that is not on my to-do list. However, my main responsibilities include managing RTHS’s on-line presence like our on-line grade website, our learning management system, internal email system, and student scheduling. I also teach two sections of freshman biology. In addition I document school activities and produce digital assets so that we can share what we do with other schools. Finally, I manage and coordinate contact with scientists in Research Triangle Park to give our students real world applications to what we are studying in the classroom.

What are the keys to success in your career field?
The key to succeeding in such an entrepreneurial field like science education is being flexible, resourceful, and a jack-of-all-trades. While I love science, I spend many days doing things that you might not think relate directly to my Ph.D., but the skills I learned while in graduate school are used daily. For example, I am often asked to do things that I have never done before, so I put my researching skills to the test and either find someone to help me or learn how to do it myself.

What were the most important factors in choosing your career path?
I have always known that I wanted a career where I could bridge the gap between science and the public. However, I knew that I could not be successful without a degree and an extensive background in science. So I applied to graduate school, and during my PhD I took advantage of many opportunities to explored different career paths. I realized that I had a passion for science education and outreach. I loved teaching, but also wanted a job that would evolve over time.
What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?
My advice for landing any job would be to cultivate as many contacts as possible in variety of fields. Additionally it never hurts to develop your leadership skills. For a science education job, I would advise you to take advantage of all the teaching opportunities that you can. Since the job requirements are so diverse, I would suggest that you develop a variety of skills, but hone in on your passions.