**TIBBS Career Blitz Career Profile Questionnaire**

1. Please provide your name and employer:

Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI)

1. What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?
Senior Program Officer – 1 year
2. Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?
UNC Chapel Hill – Microbiology & Immunology
3. Did you do a postdoc?
Yes, I was an IRACDA (SPIRE) postdoc at UNC
4. What are your main daily responsibilities?
Overseeing the HHMI Gilliam Fellowships program
5. What are the keys to success in your career field?
Organization, strong communication with current grantees, prospective grantees, and colleagues within the Institute, knowledge of the grantee community (in my case, academic science and graduate education)
6. What were the most important factors in choosing your career path and current employer?
After being a PhD student and postdoc myself, I was involved in various aspects of graduate education and supporting trainees for 12 years. I became particularly interested and passionate about supporting students from historically excluded and underrepresented groups to pursue and succeed in science careers. While I was able to do this daily at UNC as Director of the NIH-funded PREP postbac program, I had the opportunity to impact diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the sciences on a national level by joining HHMI.
7. What activities (if any) did you participate in that helped you be successful in obtaining your job?
Experience in graduate education administration and directing DEI programs at an institution (UNC) such as overseeing graduate admissions for BBSP and directing PREP. Other related experiences that likely helped me be competitive for my current position were publishing on various aspects of graduate education including admissions, career development, and DEI. Lastly, service outside of UNC such as serving on study sections for NIH and on committees for national organizations were useful to build networks outside of my own institution.
8. What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?
Complete your PhD for sure (it will be over before you know it!) and pursue opportunities for service outside of the lab. Mentor students, help out with summer programs, serve on committees in your department or at your institution, go to conferences beyond science if you can (depending on your interest). Network! Do an internship. I didn’t do all of those things, but some of those options weren’t around when I was in graduate school like they are now. If you are a postdoc or decide to do a postdoc, I think that can be great experience too that can help you even if you don’t want to pursue scientific research, but you should be thinking about yourself and the type of career that would be a good fit for you… then seek out experiences that will help you get there.

1. How is the work/life balance in your career field and how much of a factor was that in your career choice?
My work life balance is finally at a good place. Almost uniformly, I have loved my career and the work I’ve done after my postdoc; however, academia is notorious for having poor boundaries and that was my experience as well. Now that I’m away from it to a certain extent, I can see even more clearly how poor my work/life balance was. Work/life balance, ironically, requires work or at least intention. I can say that in general, work/life balance of a program officer is achievable.