**TIBBS Career Blitz Career Profile Questionnaire**

1. Please provide your name and employer:

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1. What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?

Assistant Professor and Assistant Director of Research

Department of Genetics

1. Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?

I entered the BBSP program at UNC in Fall 2012 and joined the Neuroscience (formerly neurobiology) Curriculum and the lab of Dr. Lisa Tarantino in Spring 2013. My research focused on genetic and gene x environment mechanisms that underly complex behaviors with a focus on cocaine use disorder. I completed my PhD in 2017.

1. Did you do a postdoc?

Yes. I actually stayed in the same lab I did my PhD for my postdoc (Tarantino lab at UNC). I know everyone tells you this is a big no-no, but here are my reasons - I already knew I did not want a traditional academic career path, I was in a healthy work environment with a PI that supported me exploring other career options and starting a family while in my postdoc and I was doing research that I genuinely loved with a huge amount of collaborators all over the US. All of that to say – don’t let others’ opinions of what your career path should look like dictate your path – do what works best for you in the phase of life you are in.

1. What are your main daily responsibilities?

My role is a mix of project management (PM) for large federally funded team science grants (~65% of my effort), research administration (i.e. faculty affairs, internal pilot award admin, etc. ~10% effort), and normal responsibilities of research faculty (research, mentoring, teaching, service, publications, etc. ~25% effort). Each day looks slightly different but always falls within those categories. For example – my day today: I am working on campus for a mix of zoom and in-person meetings. I will start by meeting with my direct supervisor, the Director of Research for our department, to update each other on faculty affairs, grant proposals, and my ongoing work for the 2 projects I serve as PM for. Then I will prep for my class later today and prep for a consortium meeting I have for one of the projects I manage for the [NHGRI funded IGVF consortium](https://www.genome.gov/Funded-Programs-Projects/Impact-of-Genomic-Variation-on-Function-Consortium). For that same project, I will coordinate with a core on campus for an upcoming pilot project. Then I will attend and present at faculty meeting over lunch. After lunch, I meet with a project manager on my team to touch base with her on the projects she manages for the department. Then attend the consortium-wide working group meeting via Zoom where I will briefly present for our group. Then off to teach my first year group class for the remaining 1.5 hours of my day. So a nice mix of all my roles! Tomorrow will look very different though!

1. What are the keys to success in your career field?

Ability to work with others, i.e. be a good team member and collaborator, attention to detail, organization, forward thinking, takes initiate, lead, technical scientific writing

1. What were the most important factors in choosing your career path and current employer?

Career Path – I wanted a job that had a variety of tasks, so I stay intellectually stimulated and I knew I wanted some of those responsibilities to involve teaching and mentoring graduate students and staying engaged in scientific research on grant and publications (but not being the lead PI). I also wanted a career that played to my strengths – writing and figure making, organization, detailed analysis and planning skills, and a balance of independent and team work.

Current Employer - Being a young female just starting my family, I prioritized a healthy work environment that was supportive of working mothers and where I could have a very flexible schedule. I was already familiar with UNC SOM and the Department of Genetics through my PhD and PostDoc and knew it fit those two priorities.

1. What activities (if any) did you participate in that helped you be successful in obtaining your job?

During graduate school I was part of a large team science grant where I got to play a role of PM among all the groups to coordinate/do a large phenotyping and genotyping study that spanned multiple years. This gave me a great start to PM. Then for my postdoc, I joined another big team science grant that spanned several institutions and was part of a large NIH-funded consortium. I gained experience in how federal funding works for large team science grants, how consortiums work and more PM and team science experience. I also published a lot during my training which helped me develop the necessary technical scientific writing experience I needed for my job.

1. What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?

Don’t let the very ambiguous term “project management” scare you away from this field. PM happens in almost every field and science is no different. You are probably doing it for your thesis project already – especially if you are also supervising undergraduate, summer and rotation students.

Network with a variety of PMs in science to get an idea of where in PM you want to be – industry, funding agencies, nonprofits, academic, clinical research.

1. How is the work/life balance in your career field and how much of a factor was that in your career choice?

Perfect! I have a very flexible work schedule. I generally work on campus 4-5 days a week (I prefer in person to work from home) but I have full freedom to work from home as needed and rearrange my schedule to meet my family priorities. I do travel some for work, but not often, maybe a few times a year for a few days at a time to attend scientific meetings/conferences.