

TIBBS Career Blitz Career Profile Questionnaire

1. Please provide your name and employer:

Jay Brewster, Pepperdine University

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

**Provost and Professor of Biology,
25 years**

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

Rice University: Biochemistry and Cell Biology

4. Did you do a postdoc?

**Yes: 4.5 years at the McLaughlin Institute for Biomedical Research
(Great Falls, Montana)**

5. What are your main daily responsibilities?

I have been a college professor for 25 years, teaching genetics, biochemistry, and microbiology regularly. I have managed an active research laboratory with undergraduate research students. Pepperdine has no graduate program in cell biology, so no graduate students. I have served in part time administrative roles at Pepperdine over the past 10 years, and recently transitioned to full time administrative responsibilities as Provost (1 year). As Provost, I work with the five deans of Pepperdine's schools and work directly with the president on academic administration at Pepperdine. My administrative role includes casting a vision for Pepperdine growth, and supporting both scholarly and educational efforts at our schools.

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

As a professor at an undergraduate-focused college, the keys to my maturation and progress as a professor are tied closely to my enjoyment of working with young people. I have loved working with young people in my research group, and in the classroom – that has proved intellectually and personally satisfying through my 25-year career. As an administrator, you learn to work with larger groups of professionals – and you learn to delegate responsibilities according to the skill set of people in your professional network. Enjoying putting

others into places for their growth and flourishing is quite important for a provost.

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

As I completed my postdoc, I was looking for a place where I could continue to be a productive scholar, but to balance that aspiration with teaching/mentoring of young people. Pepperdine offered such a balance.

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

Communication is critical for securing a good job. Being excited about your scholarship and telling your story well. It took me some time to improve as a communicator, but by the time I interviewed at Pepperdine I felt fairly confident in speaking publicly about my research. During the interview process, we explored many topics regarding my background and aspirations. I worked to be honest, recognizing that the search committee was seeking someone who would benefit students AND add an active and collaborative colleague in research.

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

A) Dedicate yourself to your work – recognizing it as valuable and worthy of your time. There will be times of challenge in any career, and these are often times of your most dramatic maturation. Try not to listen to those who are discouraging or defeated, watch those who are moving forward and emulate their strategy.

B) Don't be afraid to step out of line and try a new responsibility or direction. I see faculty colleagues who don't seem to be interested in stepping into new roles, and eventually people stop asking. Keep moving forward and expanding your experience and skill set. It will make your career more interesting.

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

Interesting careers are always going to be challenging. I've raised three children as a very busy college professor, but worked hard to ensure I have personal time for my mental health. My favorite activities with my family include church engagement, camping, hiking/biking, and simply

exploring Los Angeles. You need to have an intellectual and physical “break” from your work regularly to stay healthy – though when a grant/paper etc. is due on a strict timeline, my family was always understanding of a window of time where I was working long hours.