**TIBBS Career Blitz Career Profile Questionnaire**

1. Please provide your name and employer: Jeff Schmidt, Morrison & Foerster LLP
2. What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job? Patent Attorney, 6 years
3. Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in? University of Nebraska Medical Center; Cancer Research
4. Did you do a postdoc? No
5. What are your main daily responsibilities? Draft patent applications involving various life sciences technologies; draft responses to address rejections of patent applications; perform various due diligence reviews; meet with clients (including inventors) to discuss their inventions.
6. What are the keys to success in your career field? Skilled oral and written communication; attention to detail; time management; ability to meet deadlines.
7. What were the most important factors in choosing your career path and current employer? The diversity of life sciences technologies that I would work with was a major factor that drew me toward becoming a patent attorney, including the ability to dig into the technology and meet with inventors on the cutting edge of biotechnology. I enjoyed writing throughout grad school, so the ability to draft patent applications to cover innovative biotechnologies, and to use my creativity to draft responses that overcome rejections of patent applications really attracted me to this career path. What attracted me to my employer was their reputation for outstanding work in the patent field, including their representation of many of the most innovative biotechnology companies—big and small.
8. What activities (if any) did you participate in that helped you be successful in obtaining your job? Interning at the technology transfer office of my university for about a year after completing my PhD was very helpful since it confirmed my interest in becoming a patent attorney. I also interned at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office prior to law school, which was also an incredible experience. I also studied for and passed the patent bar exam prior to law school, which made me stand out to my employer and helped me secure my job.
9. What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours? I recommend seeking out opportunities to gain experience and/or training in patent law. For instance, you can intern at your university’s technology transfer office, you can take courses at your university relating to intellectual property, or you can take online virtual courses in patent law, such as the one offered each fall by my employer, Morrison & Foerster LLP, that is run in collaboration with Harvard’s Biotech Club, i.e., the MoFo Fall Patent Law Virtual Course. Law firms, including mine, will hire PhDs straight out of grad school or a post doc, without any law school, legal training, or licensing required. Seeking opportunities to gain experience and/or training helps to set these candidates apart when applying for these positions.

A second piece of advice is to reach out to patent attorneys and/or patent agents for informational interviews and networking. This can be incredibly helpful not only for gaining insights into the patent law profession and figuring out whether it may be a good career fit for you, but such networking can also be very helpful when looking for a job.

1. How is the work/life balance in your career field and how much of a factor was that in your career choice? Being a patent attorney can be a demanding and stressful career at times. However, it is a flexible career as well, as I am able to have some flexibility in when I get my work done, so that I can make time for things that are important in my personal life. For instance, I prefer to work longer days during the week so that I can have most of my weekends free. It is also flexible in that it is relatively easy to take time off for vacation or to accommodate activities going on in my personal life, so long as I ensure that my work gets done on time. With that said, a patent attorney is a service provider, and projects must get completed by their deadline. This means occasionally working later than desired or having to adjust plans in my personal life in order to meet the deadline.

The work/life balance of a patent attorney was not a major factor to me when choosing my career path. I knew that being an attorney was a career that was known for having less of a work/life balance than many other career paths I could have taken. However, to me, this was outweighed by other aspects of the career, including getting to work on cutting edge biotechnologies, the flexibility of the job, and the generous compensation.