**TIBBS Career Blitz Career Profile Questionnaire**

1. Please provide your name and employer:

Jennifer Wheeler, Aclairo Pharmaceutical Development Group

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

Toxicology Consultant and Medical Writer, 4 years

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

University of Rochester, Toxicology

1. Did you do a postdoc?

Yes, at Duke University (~18 months)

1. What are your main daily responsibilities?

Life as a consultant varies from day to day, but in general, start the day triaging emails from overseas clients (Asia/Europe), then the day is split between attending meetings with different clients and working on different writing projects. Currently for different clients I am helping write two different IND applications for gene therapy products, write pharmacology reports for a biologic, reviewing reports from a contract research laboratory, put together slide decks summarizing data supporting a candidate nomination for clinical development, and write a literature review for a target for a cell therapy product.

Internally, our company only has 1-2 meetings per week where we touch base on ongoing projects, new clients, and ask for help or advice. I can always reach out to other consultants as needed, but in general, there is a lot of independence to set your own schedule as it fits with your workload and clients.

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

As a consultant, being flexible and excellent at time management are necessities. You can easily get pulled in many directions, so being able to pivot quickly from project to project requires a great deal of discipline and ability to keep to deadlines. As a writer supporting clients in the pharmaceutical industry, being able to write concisely and be familiar with the applicable guidances is a must!

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

After the birth of my second child, I was looking for a position so I could spend more time with my young children. I took a big leap and left my 40-hour a week, stable, Research Investigator position at a large pharmaceutical company and took on a contract writing job as it was a way to get experience in the industry. That job gave me the experience to apply for full time remote writing positions, which enabled my family to move back to our home state. I love the flexibility of both working from home and for a small company that is very supportive of consultant independence.

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

I attended a lot of conferences in my time as a graduate student and postdoc and was very active in different organizations within the professional societies. This opened up many networking opportunities and allowed me to identify people in the industry to do informational interviews. I also sought out writing opportunities in my time as a Research Investigator, as it was an area I was interested in and knew I wanted to transition to. Scuttle work like writing reports, summaries that managers didn’t want to do, meeting abstracts and shadowing writers within the company, I volunteered for all of it!

1. What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?
2. Conduct as many informational interviews as you can. Scroll Linkedin for alumni from your university to get a sense of their career path and any tips they may have. You also never know when opportunities may come up and that person may think of you! Many writing positions start as contract, which may not be appealing, but a great opportunity to get into the field and start building experience. Plus many have the chance to turn into full time gigs, or some really love the flexibility contract work gives.
3. As a writer, honing your writing skills is a must in any way you can. As a graduate student/postdoc, this is often limited to publications, but ask PIs for opportunities to help with writing grant applications, meeting abstracts, etc.
4. How is the work/life balance in your career field and how much of a factor was that in your career choice?

It was a huge factor in my choice. I loved the work I did when I was working in a pharmaceutical company right out of my postdoc, but since it was a lab based position, there was no work from home options and there were many times I was stuck in a lab late because a piece of equipment broke or for a big study endpoint. In the end, I left because I didn’t have a path forward for moving away from the lab, which is why I pursued writing. Writing and consulting in my current position gives the flexibility to work from home, and able to move where I want to go. It’s a great balance because I can work at night or while traveling if I need to spend time with sick kids of take an afternoon off to help at their school, and the variety has kept the job fresh as I get to write about the latest therapies and newest modalities in the pharmaceutical industry.