Outline for Today’s Discussion

- The Undergraduate Experience
  - Taking advantage of it fully

- Graduate School
  - Choosing to attend graduate school
  - Choosing when to go to graduate school
  - Choosing a specific graduate school
  - Choosing what to study in graduate school
  - Choosing the best-fitting degree program

- Potential Roadblocks

- Post-Graduate
  - Choosing your line of research and work

My Undergraduate Experience

- Brown University, AB
  - Pre-medical student
  - Majored in public health
  - Volunteered at hospitals

- Undergraduate Summers
  - NHLBI/NIH funded research
  - Three consecutive summers
  - Children’s Hospital
    - Buffalo, NY
  - First journal publication

Four Years Fly By…

- Pre-Graduation Thoughts
  - Do I really want to go to medical school?
    - I don’t know, but I will take the MCAT anyway
  - If I just delay medical school, what should I do in the meantime?
    - Work
    - More research
    - Travel
    - Figure out what to do next
  - I thoroughly enjoyed my research experiences

My Transition Time

- Post-Undergraduate School
  - Took two years off and worked
    - Medical office
    - Other random positions
  - Prepared and sat for the MCAT
  - Stayed connected with undergraduate advisors!!! (See why later…)
  - Thought about what I really enjoyed about science and health
    - Discovered the field of public health...
Discovery of Public Health

- It was a bit of a serendipitous or random discovery
  - Noticed many medical doctors had MPH degrees
- Researched the field and discovered that this might be a good fit for me

Public Health

- Public health is not a single discipline
  - It includes many fields with the common purpose of protecting the health of populations
    - Epidemiology
    - Biostatistics
    - Environmental science
    - Toxicology
    - Health education
    - Behavioral science
    - Health policy, etc.

Applying to Graduate School

- After two years of working/introspection
  - Choose to apply to a Master of Public Health program
    - Many programs required some work experience
    - Most programs accepted my MCAT scores and I did not have to take the GRE
    - Gathered recommendations from employers and undergraduate school advisors (This is why)
  - Applied to 7 or 8 schools
  - Selected a school based on program, reputation and location

My 1st Graduate School Experience

- Emory University, MPH
  - Initially Health Education/Behavior Science concentration
  - Switched to Environmental/Occupational Health concentration
  - Worked on various public health projects/programs
    - CDC program evaluating environmental carcinogens
- Graduate Summers
  - Dekalb County Board of Health
  - Planned Parenthood of Georgia

Environmental Health Sciences

- Concerned with the adverse influence of the environment on human health and with controlling these influences
  - Traditionally, the field has focused on hazardous agents in the environment
    - Chemical – Methyl Mercury
    - Biological – E. coli O157
    - Physical – Radiation

Two Years Fly By Even Faster…

- Pre-Graduation Thoughts
  - I don’t want to go to medical school
  - And I feel relieved that I finally came to a conclusion that I knew all along in my heart
  - I want to obtain a “PhD” in Environmental Sciences
    - Do I want to take a year off?
    - Yes
    - Do I want to apply for a deferred admission?
    - Yes
    - Do I want to leave Atlanta?
    - No
My No Transition Time

- Last Semester At Emory
  - Completed a thesis
  - Applied to (1) school for deferred admission
    - Program required several years of work experience
    - Program accepted my MCAT scores
      - (Great, because they were expiring)
    - Gathered recommendations from graduate school advisors
  - Selected a school based on program and reputation
    - (Not necessarily location this time)
  - Waited for an admission/rejection response and enjoyed the Atlanta sunshine, but…

Future advisor called and said “hey, you’re admitted, but we want you to start now”

My 2nd Graduate School Experience

- Johns Hopkins University, DrPH
  - Environmental Health Sciences concentration
  - Worked on many environmental science research projects in Baltimore
  - Applied and received a NRSA/NIH grant
    - Covered tuition
    - Stipend

- Graduate Summers
  - Summer fellowship…
  - Air quality research
  - Doctoral research

Dissertation Research

- Third and Fourth Year
  - Switched to more appropriate advisor for dissertation research
  - Collected original data
  - Dissertation

“PhD” can be used as a generic term for several different doctorate degrees
Potential Roadblocks

- **Funding For School**
  - Applied for a Pre-Doctoral NIH grant
  - National Research Service Award (NRSA)

- **Personal Life Changes**
  - During my second year in my doctoral program, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis

Four Years Fly By Fast Again (Kind of)...

- **Pre-Graduation Thoughts**
  - I don’t want to go into academia full-time
  - I don’t think I want to work for the federal government (e.g. U.S. EPA)
  - I may want to go into the science/policy sector
  - I really think I may want to go into the private sector (e.g. consulting)
  - I may want to go into the state/local government sector (e.g. Health Commissioner - Department of Public Health)

My Post Graduate School Experience

- **Post-Doctoral Fellowship**
  - The National Academies, Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology
    - Reviewed and contributed to the research of several projects including the evaluation of the current trends and the future of toxicity testing

- **ChemRisk**
  - Scientific consulting firm based in San Francisco, CA
  - Provided risk assessment expertise in order to assist clients with their environmental and occupational health challenges

Current Experience

- **Exponent**
  - Scientific and engineering consulting firm based in Menlo Park, California (See next slide)
  - Health Sciences Practice/ Center of Exposure and Dose Reconstruction
    - Located in Wood Dale, IL office

- **University of Illinois at Chicago**
  - School of Public Health
    - Adjunct Assistant Professor in Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences

Exponent’s Areas of Practice

Nearly Another Five Years Fly By...

- **Early Career Thoughts**
  - I don’t want to go into academia full-time
  - I don’t think I want to work for the federal government (e.g. U.S. EPA)
    - Still may believe this
  - I may want to go into the science/policy sector
    - Perhaps on a project by project basis
  - I really think I may want to go into the private sector (e.g. consulting)
    - Enjoy consulting
  - I may want to go into the state/local government sector (e.g. Health Commissioner - Department of Public Health)
    - Still very interested in this
Questions & Answers