

THURSDAY CAREERS CHATS

Date of Session: 12/8/11 Title of Session: Careers in Sustainable Development

Alumni Presenter: Vinca Krajewski Class Year: 2010

Title: Project Assistant Employer: Institute for Sustainable Communities

Notes from Session:

Background

- Graduated in 2010 with a major in environmental science
- Participated in the LUCE semester
- Studied in Costa Rica – a sustainable development curriculum
- Each year she worked on campus in the environmental science department, sustainability office, and did GIS research
- Spent her summer doing environmental science/sustainability related work, such as scientific research, farm, etc.
- She didn't know where/what she wanted to so she moved home and worked for a health and dental clinic writing federal and state grants (developed organizational skills, administrative skills, communications skills)
- She enjoyed the challenge of working for a nonprofit, but after doing that for a summer she moved to Vermont on a whim (worked remotely for the health and dental clinic and interned with Environment America, both of which helped connect her to the nonprofit scene in Montpelier. She met a lot of people, went to conferences - great networking. She also did informational interviews, which were awkward at first but very helpful (people were eager to share information).
- During all of this she was also job searching during this time and ended up getting a position at the Institute for Sustainable Communities, which was started 20 years ago by the former governor of VT after a trip to Russia (sharing best practices with Russia). ISC does sustainable development work in US and abroad (have offices worldwide), focusing on climate adaptation and democracy building.

Her work at ISC

- She started by working on a Serbia project, the main initiative was waste management (there was a lot of illegal dumping, no waste management plan). She helped organize a program where 15 nonprofit leaders came to VT and DC to learn best practices – she helped organize the trip
- She also helped support an energy efficiency program with China program
- She's now on the development team, fundraising for opportunities for the organization – she researches what corporations/foundations/government agencies are awarding money, where money is going, etc. and assists with proposal process
- She also helps with country assessments (research needed to inform people who will travel there, such as what kind of issues exist, where should people go, who are "big players," where does money go, etc.)
- With the work that she does she sees both political and environmental issues
- It's a growing organization, so she also helps with systems and database information to keep things organized and up to date

Advice

- Have confidence in yourself, in your degree and in your experience.
- Take time to explore to find out what you'd enjoy doing.
- Talk to people – learn what they're doing!
- It's about who you know and your connections. Helps when people know your name (resumes are looked at quickly – make it pop!)
- Remember quality vs. quantity when applying. Take time to tailor your materials instead of sending the same thing to dozens of employers.
- Internships are great – they can lead to a job and provide great experience.
- Right after graduation is a great time to do international grassroots efforts
- Most sustainable development organizations are in DC-a great place to network and be
- Skills are transferrable and important to know how to market those skills
- DevEx.com website has tons of job postings for development work (especially in sustainable development)
- There are a lot of master's degree options (to be competitive, grad degrees are important, but experience first is good)

Miscellaneous

- "Community resilience," "climate adaption" are better buzzwords, "sustainability" getting to be cliché
- She participates in a Vermont development network – they get together monthly, for people working in that field. She recommends getting involved in something like that. "Green Drink" (professionals get together and chat) is similar, LinkedIn