THE PLANS:

THE PLAN YOU TELL YOUR ADVISOR: “I'M GOING TO BE A PROFESSOR AT A MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITY AFTER I GRADUATE.”

THE REAL PLAN: LOOK FOR CAREER ALTERNATIVES.

THE SECRET PLAN: BECOME A BAKER/ROCKSTAR/WRITER.

The University of Texas at El Paso
Updated: J. Aaron Waggoner
7 April 2017
versatile (adjective)

1. Capable of doing many things competently
2. Having many uses or serving many functions
3. Capable of moving freely in all directions
The Branching Career Pipeline

Not to scale – outgoing pipe sizes vary by academic discipline
The Good News

• You are not alone
• PhDs & ABDs work in all sectors
• Demand for grad degrees is rising
• Your desires may change
• You DO have marketable skills
• Each career path has its advantages/disadvantages
Non-Academic Career Advantages

• You may have the freedom to live where you want
• Variety of different jobs and fields
• Possibility of higher income potential
• Perhaps there is more advancement opportunity
Typical PhD Skills

- Critical thinking, analysis
- Subject matter knowledge
- Research skills
- Rapid learning
- Teaching
- Written and oral communication
- Problem solving
- Assessment/evaluation
- Adaptability/Versatile!
Helping graduate students and PhDs envision, prepare for, and excel in non-academic careers since 1999

Existing Member Log In

Versatile PhD is the oldest, largest online community dedicated to non-academic and non-faculty careers for PhDs in humanities, social science and STEM. Over 50,000 have joined this site to...

Discover interesting career paths

Consult the community

See job listings appropriate for PhDs

Network with successful PhDs nationwide

Attend local meetups

Why should you trust us?

JOIN NOW
# PhD Career Finder

The versatile PhD provides career opportunities in various fields:

### Humanities & Social Sciences
- Business
- Consulting
- E-Learning & Instructional Design
- Finance
- Institutional Research
- Government
- Grant Writing
- K-12 Education
- Law
- Marketing
- Nonprofits
- Policy
- Program Evaluation
- Research Administration
- Technology
- University Administration
- Writing & Editing

### Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
- Biotechnology
- Consulting
- Data Science & Software Development
- Entrepreneurship
- E-Learning & Instructional Design
- Finance
- Government
- Industry
- Intellectual Property
- K-12 Education
- Marketing
- Nonprofits
- Research Administration
- Science & Medical Writing
- Science Outreach
- Science Policy
- University Administration
Consulting

What it is

Businesses and other organizations hire consulting firms to provide an outside perspective and analytical skill to help address pressing strategic or practical issues. Management consultants address business issues; scientific consultants address technical issues. Management consulting involves problem identification and analysis. Case by case, it can cover everything from internal systems to public perception. Technical or scientific consulting can involve bench research, usually about product or process development, or providing input on the technical aspects of a proposed project. Both require major mental shifts: the academic science community values thoroughness, narrow focus and perfect accuracy, while the business and government communities value efficiency, breadth of knowledge, and getting projects done.

Starting points

Large management consulting firms will hire STEM PhDs for their analytical skills. Large firms can take chances with hiring and are also more aware of the strengths of PhDs. You would probably start as some sort of “associate,” “analyst” or “consultant.” Entry-level position titles in technical consulting firms will often include the word “scientist” or “engineer.” Some management consulting firms are adding technical and scientific consulting to their services.

Advancement

Advancement opportunities from management consulting are vast and diverse. With a few years’ hard work and successful performance, you can move up or across within the firm, change firms, or even move into one of the businesses or industries you’ve served. Technical or scientific consulting can lead to employment with a key client, moving up within the consulting firm, or starting your own small firm.

Disciplines

All STEM disciplines can enter this field. Technical consulting keeps you closer to the bench and to science itself, whereas management consulting will take you and to—
Grant Writing

What it is
Helping nonprofits operate by attracting grant funding. The grant writer is a key member of the resource development team, preparing and submitting grant proposals, tracking past submissions, identifying new funders and reporting back to funders when funds are expended. Skills needed include prospect research and analysis, case-making using statistics and other factual information, organization and deadline management, relationship management and fast learning.

Starting points
Large nonprofit organizations (including universities!) have multiple grant writers on staff; look for positions like Grant Writer or Grants Associate. Smaller organizations may hire you as a Grant Writer, and the very small may accept your help as a volunteer or inexpensive consultant.

Advancement
From Grant Writing, one can progress to becoming Director of Development and ultimately Executive Director. With experience and a successful track record, one can establish a freelance practice, or move over to the grant-making side and become Program Officer at a private or corporate foundation. Interestingly, fundraising is a profession where women have a slight edge and can continue working their whole lives without fear of “aging out.”

Disciplines
Rhetoric and Composition is a great fit, but any humanities or social science discipline that requires you to do a lot of reading, writing and case–making would be good preparation.
HIRING SUCCESS STORY

Scott Breunig, Ph.D., Molecular Biology, Princeton University, 2011
Hired in 2011 as Consultant at Oliver Wyman

Included here (scroll down):
Narrative, resume, cover letter

As a fourth-year grad student I knew that my options after graduating were limited, and the idea of spending another 2-6 years as a low-salaried post-doc with little job security was entirely unappealing. I began taking advantage of the university’s career counselling office, which had recently begun organizing events for graduate students looking outside of the academy.

I attended a number of recruiting sessions aimed at graduate students by firms that typically recruited undergraduates. From finance (Goldman Sachs, DE Shaw) and retail banking (BOA) to consulting (McKinsey, BCG) and industry (J&J), I went to various open houses to learn what firms were looking for and expecting. I settled on consulting as probably the best fit given my natural curiosity across a broad range of topics and my love for breaking problems into data-driven questions.

I created a generic resume that I could tailor by firm. I trashed my CV and built the resume from scratch. Out went the standard historical layout and in its place I had three sections ordered by what I believed recruiters cared most about: analyst experience, leadership experience, education. I was able to separate out my various on-campus roles to fit into the first two buckets. The descriptions tied in with the section, so my time in grad school was not “creating an understanding of yeast genetic and metabolism” but instead was “analysing and...
Power Search Form

Name

General Disciplinary Category

Specific discipline within that category

Current employment status

Current city or town

Search
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Other Useful Features of VPhD

• Supportive, confidential discussion forums – not just grad students but successful post-academics too, answering your questions

• Jobs for Hum/SS and STEM PhDs

• Local meetups

• Good Twitter feed @VersatilePhD
Where to find Versatile PhD

http://www.utep.edu/graduate/professional-development/other-resources.html

“Versatile PhD offers resources for advance degree holders in Humanities/Social Sciences and STEM considering careers outside the academy. The site includes overviews of possible fields, real-life narratives of PhD holders working outside the academy, forums & panels, and job ads. The first time you login, access Versatile PhD here with your UTEP credentials and register.”