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What was your experience graduating from a geoscience program and entering the workforce like? I definitely related to Jamie's experience. AGI seeks your voice in a new opportunity to understand this transition! - Maureen Moses

I graduated from college in 2009 and upon entering the workforce I realized I had a problem. I was working as an Environmental Consultant and I became aware that much of the content knowledge I learned was not pertinent to my job. While I could identify minerals through an optical microscope or create geologic maps, my employer didn't need this. However, I was expected to know: how to determine if a site qualified as environmentally sensitive; which contaminants to sample for; and how to collect water and soil according to government regulations. The problem was: I didn't know these things. While not all of my collegiate experience was irrelevant, I do wonder how I could have been better prepared.

AGI Workforce Development researchers are looking into just that by working with the Association of American Geographers (AAG) on an NSF-funded project (grant #1202707) called Geoscience Career Master's Preparation Survey (Geo Career MaPS). There are three groups of people who are being surveyed. The first group consists of current Master's students, the second are alumni from Master's programs, and the third are faculty from geology and geography departments where the highest degree offered is a Master's.

Based on the online surveys from master's students and alumni, the AGI Workforce Program will compare what students say they have learned in their graduate studies to what alumni say are most important in their field of employment. We hope to identify any knowledge gaps that exist between the two cohorts. We will also compare what faculty say has been taught to what students say they've learned to determine if faculty are already trying to communicate a certain skill, but students just simply aren't getting it.

The workforce program will then develop online materials that address any identified needs. These resources will be free and open. By utilizing these, students will be able to identify what skills and competencies are relevant to their desired fields of employment and advisors can point students to resources that will bolster important expertise. Faculty members can look into alternative ways to teach a crucial skill and departments can evaluate how they can better serve their students to improve their employability. To create exemplary resources, we need participation in our surveys. If you're interested, or know someone who might be, please contact the Principal Investigator, Heather Houlton, at hrh@agiweb.org or researcher, Jamie Ricci at workforce2@agiweb.org. We will be happy to send you the appropriate survey link. We look forward to hearing from you! - J.R.

Tags:

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