RESEARCH INFORMED PROGRAMMING

BEYOND the professoriate

About Us

Beyond the Professoriate's mission is to empower PhDs to build impactful careers and engaged lives, wherever smart people are needed.

We provide career education and professional development to individual graduate students and PhDs, and partner with educational institutions, to prepare the next generation of scholars for careers in academia and beyond.

We held our first online career conference in 2014. In 2019, we began partnering with universities and professional organizations to bring our programming to their students and postdocs through our e-learning platform Aurora.

Meet the Team

L. Maren Wood, PhD (Founder) earned her degree in History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to starting Beyond the Professoriate, Dr. Wood consulted to the American Historical Association and the Chronicle of Higher Education on projects relating to career pathways for humanities PhDs.

Susan Joudrey, PhD (Senior Learning Development Advisor) holds a PhD in History from Carleton University and has worked for 8 years as a Teaching and Learning Specialist at research-focused universities in Canada.

Diane Sepa-Kishi, PhD (Instructional Designer) earned certificates in teaching from York University while earning her doctorate in Kinesiology. Prior to joining Beyond Prof, Dr. Sepa-Kishi was an Instructional Design Specialist at the Michener Institute for Education.

Malisa Kurtz, PhD (Digital Marketing Strategist) earned her doctorate in Interdisciplinary Humanities from Brock University. Dr. Kurtz has published award-winning research including 4 peer-reviewed articles, 5 book chapters, and an edited collection.

About Our Research

We use mixed research methods (interviews, surveys, and observations) to collect, analyze, and document career transitions for PhDs.

Our research focuses on two related problems:

- Identify and map the process of a successful PhD career transition.
- Uncover the knowledge gaps and emotional/psychological barriers graduate students and PhDs face when leaving academia.

Beyond the Professoriate research provides a unique perspective and authority in the creation of career education programming. We have interviewed PhDs from STEM, Education, Business, Social Sciences, Psychology, and Arts and Humanities who earned their degrees from universities throughout North America, and now work in the United States or Canada.

While universities and professional organizations host career panels and collect data on specific institutional cohorts, we are the only organization that has conducted a comprehensive longitudinal study at this scale.

This research informs the evidence-based programming students access through Aurora.
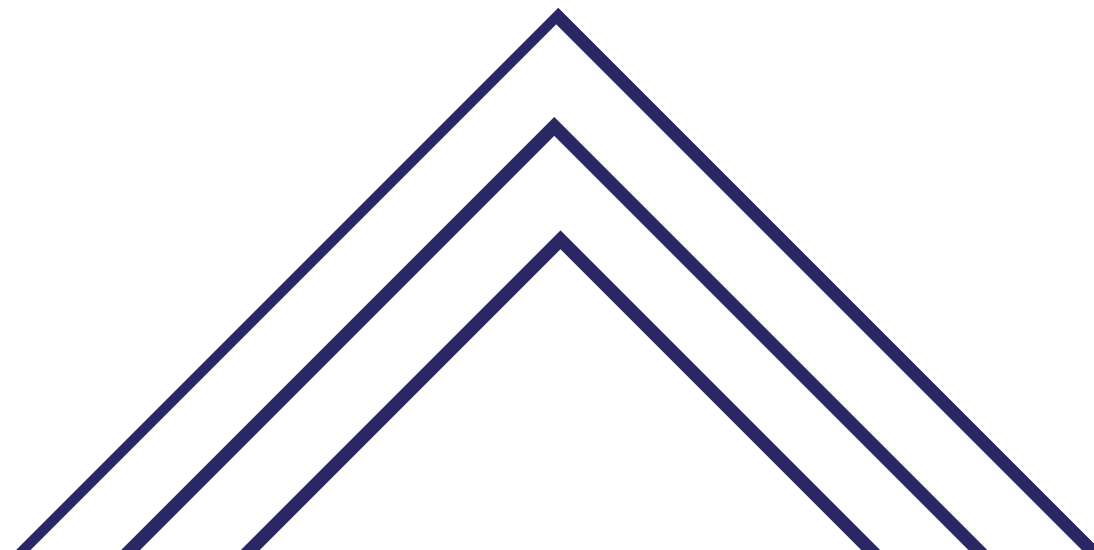
Interviews

Structured Interviews

Since 2019, the Beyond the Professoriate team has conducted **1:1 interviews with 173 PhDs** from Social Sciences, Humanities, and STEM disciplines.

PhDs are carefully selected for a representative sample, with attention paid to diversity (gender, race, ethnicity), academic discipline, and years working in non-academic careers.

Each interviewee is asked the same questions to help us identify:
- What energizes them about their new work,
- How their non-academic career connects to their graduate education and training,
- How they obtained their first (and subsequent) positions,
- What kinds of skills they needed to develop to be successful in their new careers,
- What career and job searching advice they would like to give graduate students interested in their career field.

Unstructured Group Interviews
Career Panels 2014 - Present

Since 2014, Beyond the Professoriate has conducted **39 panel-discussions with 156 PhDs** who work in non-profits, government, for-profit/industry, higher education, and as faculty members, to understand how PhDs use their education and training in specific career fields, and to map career transition from graduate school/postdoc into various career pathways.

 As part of their participation in these career panels, PhDs were asked to:
- Map their career transition journeys,
- Highlight the skills they use in their current position,
- Describe what they found rewarding and energizing about their work.

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Survey

Graduate Student Mental Health And Perception of Career Opportunities

In February 2020, Beyond the Professoriate conducted a mental health survey of graduate students and recent PhDs. The survey used the Center for Epidemiologic Studies - Depression Scale (Radloff, L.S., 1977), which determines if a respondent was depressed or not depressed.

3500+ Graduate Students and PhDs completed the survey.

To assess causes of depression, Beyond the Professoriate included additional survey questions to understand relationships with advisors, access to career services, and attitudes towards non-academic careers.

- 82% lacked confidence in their financial futures.

- 57% felt like they lacked career prospects.

- 56% agreed with the statement "I worry that if I leave academia, I will not be intellectually engaged." Only 10% strongly disagreed.

- Over 50% worried that their work and life would have less meaning if they worked outside of academia.

- Only 43% were excited about non-academic career options.

- 50% worried that if they left academia, their friends and peers would no longer respect them.

- Over 70% planned to pursue a job in academia after graduation.

Needs Assessments

Open-Ended Survey Questions

Beyond Prof hosts monthly webinars attended by grad students, postdocs, and recent PhDs. Topics cover career exploration, job searching, and academic career success.

In 2020 we had **15790 registered attendees** from approximately 330 different institutions from across the globe. Attendees hold advanced degrees from all academic disciplines.

Our team **evaluated 1272 questions** to assess knowledge gaps for future programming.

Transcriptions of the webinar chats were also evaluated to observe interactions, conversations, and behavior of attendees.

PhD Career Transition Readiness Assessment

A new tool launched by Beyond Prof in January 2021.

Nearly **1300 graduate students and PhDs completed the assessment in the first two weeks.**

The tool assesses a student's knowledge of
- Career transition and exploration,
- Job searching,
- Perceptions and attitudes towards non-academic career options.

Based on this research, the student is assigned a stage of PhD career transition. (More about the 4 Stages of PhD Career Transition below.)

This assessment tool will help Beyond the Professoriate analyze attitudes and knowledge of non-academic career options and non-academic careers to inform the development of future resources, mapping, and tools.

Our Research Findings

The results of our needs assessments demonstrated that graduate students and PhDs approach the job search without a plan and without structure.

However, our research-based on **interviewing 345 PhDs** shows that there is a clear process that students can follow to maximize their career-transition success.

We used our research results to map out the career transition process into **four clearly identifiable stages**, each with its own specific goals.

The process helps students break down the career transition process into manageable steps to increase success.

Stage		Objective
1	**Discover**	Students recognize their optimal career pathway ™ and develop a plan for their professional job search.
2	**Research**	Students evaluate possible careers that align with their skills, interests, and values. Recognize successful PhD job search strategies.
3	**Implement**	Students actively job search with proven PhD job search strategies to secure a job in a specific career field.
4	**Build**	Students examine their career choices and identify future opportunities for advancement and growth.

How We Apply Our Research

Our research shows that students acquire knowledge about careers and job searching through a variety of mediums and settings (on-campus workshops and career services, academic department, Beyond Prof virtual events, mentors and peers).

Students struggle to apply the knowledge to their own job search in a logical way and often miss foundational concepts. Knowledge gaps lead to haphazard job searching, which leads to frustration and failure.

Our courses **available to students in Aurora,** are designed to teach students a proven process for career exploration and job search success.

Each course aligns with one of the stages of PhD career transition and builds on foundational knowledge acquired by completing the previous course.

Courses include instructional videos and a workbook that helps students apply what they are learning to their own job search.

Know Your Options:
Identify your Optimal Career Pathway™ and develop a metric to measure career opportunities in the professional workforce or academia.

Evaluate Your Best Opportunities:
Research career opportunities that align with your Optimal Career Pathway™ and learn proven PhD job search strategies.

Implement a Proven Job Search (Coming Summer 2021)
Identify one career field of interest and actively apply for careers using proven PhD job search strategies.

Contact : institutions@beyondprof.com

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