

Careers beyond the Professoriate
College of Arts and Sciences
University of Kentucky

Next Generation Humanities PhD White Paper

Prepared by Sarah Lyon

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Overview of Program Activities

The Careers beyond the Professoriate program is housed within the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky. The program provides resources and support to humanities and social science PhD students at the University of Kentucky who are interested in exploring diverse career paths. It is directed by [Sarah Lyon](#), Associate Professor of Anthropology, with the assistance of a committee made up of faculty, administrators, graduate students, alumni, and community members: [Chelsea Brislin](#) (Director of Gatton Honors Pathway and PhD candidate in English); John Cirigliano (President, Clearbrook Associates and Advisory Board Member of the Humanities Foundation, Gaines Center, U.K.); [Jeff Clymer](#) (Chair and Professor of English); Daniel Crowe (PhD History 1998, International Affairs Johns Hopkins University); [Leslee Gilbert](#) (PhD History 1998, Vice-President Van Scoyoc Associates); [Morris Grubbs](#) (PhD English 2001, Assistant Dean, Graduate School University of Kentucky); [David Hamilton](#) (Professor of History); [Rebecca Lane](#) (PhD Geography, 2016); [Elizabeth Lorch](#) (Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and Professor of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences); Erin Ricci (PhD Anthropology 2008, Global Programs Manager, Bohemian Foundation); [Ted Schatzki](#) (Senior Associate Dean of Faculty and Professor of Philosophy and Geography, College of Arts and Sciences); and [Jeff Rice](#) (Chair and Professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies).

Our committee met four times over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year. Each of the meetings was dedicated to a specific topic of discussion; however, the program director also sought general guidance and advice from committee members at these meetings. On-campus committee members attended the meetings in person while community and alumni members participated via video conference (although, each attended at least one meeting in person). Meeting topics included (1) Preparing PhD Students for Diverse Career Paths, (2) Revising Graduate Program Components to Better Prepare Students for Career Diversity, (3) Fostering Faculty Support, and (4) Connecting with Alumni and Creating Opportunities beyond the Classroom.

Committee meetings were well-attended and each generated thoughtful discussion of these important topics. They also provided a much-needed opportunity to reflect on how the Careers beyond the Professoriate program can best serve the needs of faculty and graduate students moving forward. For example, at our first committee meeting (Preparing Students for Diverse Career Paths) we explored some of the existing research and perspectives on transferable skills development. Ultimately, we decided that our program could better serve our students by focusing more on general capacity building, including helping students to hone the basic communication and organization skills that will prepare them for a variety of future careers. It was at this meeting that we also determined that one of the best ways to achieve this would be to encourage faculty to redesign their seminar assignments in order to intentionally help students acquire these

skills (for example, writing for diverse audiences and in diverse formats, rather than producing yet another seminar paper). Ultimately, this sparked the idea to bring in an outside speaker, Dr. Melissa Bokovoy (Professor History, University of New Mexico), to give a workshop on this topic for humanities and social sciences faculty.

In addition to committee meetings, the Careers beyond the Professoriate program organized a number of events and workshops over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year. The program director organized and ran several workshops specifically for graduate students in the humanities and social sciences (although, these were often also well-attended by students in STEM fields). Topics included: *From CV to Résumé: Looking for Work Outside the Academy* (an interactive workshop co-led with a staff member from the campus career center: the workshop provided students with concrete strategies for highlighting the transferable skills they are acquiring through their PhD training), *The Art of Networking: Brown Bag Workshop* (this interactive workshop taught students networking norms and strategies for how to begin developing and maintaining contacts), and *Navigating Your PhD: Ensuring Success in Grad School and Beyond* (this workshop introduced students to the concept of Individual Development Plans and the importance of thinking early about diverse career paths).

Often graduate students find it challenging to envision how they can transfer their knowledge, experiences, and skills to careers outside of the academy. Therefore, one of our program goals was to bring to campus a variety of PhD alumni who currently work in non-academic or alt-academic fields and who could share their own career trajectories and suggestions with current students. However, early in the Fall semester it became clear that the humanities and social science departments at the University of Kentucky did not, for the most part, have particularly strong connections with the types of alumni we hoped to bring to campus. Ultimately, the committee decided to invite departments to identify potential speakers, alumni or not, who they felt could effectively speak about these important topics in a public forum and meet independently with interested graduate students to foster more informal conversations and networking opportunities.

The Careers beyond the Professoriate program brought seven guests speakers to campus over the course of the academic year. Each speaker gave a public talk and met informally with graduate students and faculty over meals and coffee. The featured speakers included: Lisa Maatz (Vice President for Government Relations at the American Association of University Women; Maatz discussed careers in public policy and advocacy [co-sponsored with the Department of Gender and Women's Studies]); Elizabeth Meadows (Assistant Director of The Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University; Meadows spoke about how her Center works to facilitate public scholarship and offered an overview of how some graduate programs have begun to reshape their curricula in order to support student interest in public humanities and work beyond academia [co-sponsored with English]); Felicia LeClere (Senior Fellow in the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and columnist with *Inside Higher Ed*; LeClere discussed how applied research environments—including the government, not-for profits, and research units within universities—pose both special challenges and opportunities for social scientists looking for non-traditional careers [co-sponsored with Sociology]); Melissa Bokovoy (Professor and Chair of History, University of New Mexico; Bokovoy gave a workshop for faculty and graduate students on how we can rethink our seminars to include discussions,

content, and assignments that address the versatility of the Humanities and Social Science PhD, the development of digital and quantitative literacy, working collaboratively toward common goals with others, and the development of intellectual self-confidence); Erin Ricci (Global Grant Making Portfolio Manager, Bohemian Foundation [a Careers committee member and Anthropology PhD alumnus]; Ricci discussed her diverse experiences working in NGO, federal, and private spheres and advised students on how to develop transferable skills in graduate school that will help them succeed outside the academy [co-sponsored with Anthropology]); and Leslee Gilbert (vice-president of Van Scoyoc Associates) and Dan Crowe (Director of Student Affairs in the School of Advanced International Relations at Johns Hopkins University); Gilbert and Crowe are Careers committee members and History PhD alumni; they shared with faculty and graduate students their motivations for leaving academia and how they successfully transitioned into their current fields [co-sponsored with History].

In addition to these events, the Careers beyond the Professoriate program also co-sponsored (with The Graduate School's Office of Professional Development and the Graduate Student Congress) a series of well-attended talks by Karen Kelsky (author of *The Professor is In*) on the following topics: Hacking the Academic Job Market, Advising for Advisors: How to Help Your PhDs in a Time of Turmoil; and Going Post-Ac: The Non-Academic Job Search.

Program Successes and Challenges

The workshops and guest speakers offered by the Careers beyond the Professoriate program were overall very successful. Given the fact that the program was brand new, attendance at our first few events was lower than we hoped. However, over the course of the academic year, our audiences grew in size. In turn, this helped to raise the profile of our program and enabled us to identify allies in many departments within the College. While it's unreasonable to hope that every single faculty member will support our program goals, by the end of the Spring semester it became clear that we were gaining traction as the program director increasingly heard from colleagues that they were encouraging their PhD students to visit the website and attend program events. Moving forward, the Careers Program will begin to track attendance at events more systematically, with the goal of collecting email addresses in order to develop our own distribution list (rather than relying on DGS's, Deans, and Chairs to forward information). This will also enable us to collect feedback from participants methodically with the goal of revising and improving offered workshops (and also gathering input regarding future planned events). Anecdotally, we can say that graduate students seemed to find the workshops informative and interesting. For example, attendees frequently sent follow-up emails to the program director after attending workshops, such as this one: "I just wanted to briefly thank you for taking the time to organize the workshop yesterday. I very much enjoyed it, and I feel as though I came away with some very practical (net)working tool sets."

In terms of the guest speakers, those who were able to provide very concrete advice for both graduate students and faculty about how to best prepare students for diverse careers seemed to have the most impact. Graduate students benefited a great deal from the opportunities to interact more informally with guest speakers at smaller, lunchtime roundtables. These fora enabled students to discuss their own personal interests, hopes, and even fears with one another and sympathetic outsiders who, in turn, often provided useful perspectives and specific suggestions for how students could best move forward in their professional development. Likewise, dinners with

guest speakers provided smaller groups of faculty with an important space for reflection and brainstorming about the contemporary challenges and changing priorities of doctoral education.

Another program success is the nascent network of faculty and graduate student allies that we have fomented over the past year. The program director regularly spoke about the Careers beyond the Professoriate program at monthly Directors of Graduate Studies meetings within the College, and she and other committee members also spoke to department chairs on a regular basis about the program's goals and activities. The latter resulted in invitations for the program director to visit several department meetings, which gave her an opportunity to have more in-depth conversations with faculty about the program. In addition to meeting with graduate students one-on-one to chat about career goals and skills development, the program director also visited several graduate seminars, at the invitation of the instructors, to discuss career diversity.

The majority of our guest speaker visits were co-sponsored with individual departments. On the one hand, this strategy was useful as it helped us to initiate conversations with groups of faculty and graduate students about career diversity and graduate student professional development. On the other hand, it also meant that audiences at several of the talks were disciplinary specific which, in turn, limited our ability to foster meaningful transdisciplinary conversations about these important topics. These types of transdisciplinary conversations did occur at the graduate student workshops and the higher-profile talks given by Bokovoy and Kelsky. In the future, we hope to continue to foster opportunities for faculty and graduate students from different departments to reflect on these critical issues. It's important to note that we did add several additional faculty members to our advisory committee midway through the academic year in order to increase our reach within the humanities departments. In the coming academic year, we will also invite several additional graduate students to join the advisory committee as we now recognize that their voices and perspectives are underrepresented in campus conversations about graduate education reform and professional development opportunities.

A third significant accomplishment is the resource-rich Careers beyond the Professoriate website that the program director built and continues to augment on a regular basis (<https://www.as.uky.edu/beyond-professoriate>). The website features links and resources for: Career Exploration (including self-assessment tools, general perspectives on non-ac and alt-ac careers, and disciplinary specific resources, some of which were provided by individual departments); Skill Development and Job Search Tools (organized thematically into categories such as academic skills, transferable skills, networking advice, job search advice etc.); and Mentoring (with resources for both graduate students and faculty advisers). The website also provides descriptions of all future and past Careers beyond the Professoriate workshops and events and links to relevant on-campus and virtual (for example, forums offered by the Versatile PhD site) events. Eventually, we will have a page of PhD alumni profiles; however, this has proven challenging to construct given the fact that many departments do not have strong relationships with their PhDs working in non-ac/alt-ac fields.

In fact, an unanticipated challenge the Careers program encountered over the past year is the fact that few departments within the College of Arts and Sciences systematically track the career pathways of their PhD alumni. Consequently, it has proven quite challenging to identify individuals who can serve as graduate student mentors and guest speakers. If we had known that these

alumni connections were relatively underdeveloped, we might have structured our planned work for the year differently. For example, rather than allocating the bulk of our funds for guest speakers and workshops, we could have hired a graduate research assistant(s) to assist us with developing a model for long-term graduate student placement tracking that could easily be implemented and sustained by doctoral degree granting units across the College of Arts and Sciences. Such a system would ensure the timely and systematic collection of data that can be used for annual student learning outcome assessments and program improvement. It would also prove useful for both the Careers beyond the Professoriate program and individual departments who hope to strengthen their engagement with graduate alumni and foster networking opportunities for current PhD students. In short, if we had anticipated this challenge, we would have devoted more time and resources to identifying relevant alumni and building relationships with them at the very start of our program. The program director and the Dean of the Graduate School did submit a proposal to the CGS's Understanding Career Pathways for Program Improvement program. While it was unsuccessful, the process of writing the proposal did help us to think through some of the challenges of and benefits to tracking PhD career paths, and these insights will certainly guide our future efforts. Preparing the proposal and securing support from individual departments and administrators across campus who agreed to participate (if funded) also demonstrated to us that there is significant interest in this topic on campus.

Related to the challenges we faced in developing a network of PhD alumni working in diverse fields, is the fact that, in hindsight, our program was focused internally to such an extent that it has proven difficult, to date, to develop an extensive network of external, non-academic partners and allies. We recognize that professional socialization for careers beyond the academy should include activities and opportunities that provide both a depth and breadth of experience, such as internships, experiential learning, and job shadowing. These professional development opportunities could be enhanced through stronger ties between employers and graduate schools and the cultivation of a transdisciplinary perspective that would help doctoral students understand how knowledge in one area can be innovatively applied to problem solving in another. As Dr. Felicia LeClere, one of our guest speakers pointed out, when you work outside academia you do so as a generalist: at the National Opinion Research Council she hires social scientists, not sociologists or anthropologists, and she expects them to fluidly incorporate methods and theoretical frameworks from a diverse range of disciplinary perspectives into their work.

We recognize that stronger links with alumni and partnerships with non-academic institutions would complement our programmatic efforts to transform humanities doctoral training and provide professional socialization for a variety of career pathways. For example, stronger relationships with employers and alumni could help facilitate the transfer of knowledge outside of the confines of higher education as collaborative relationships between business and universities emerge. These links obviously benefit students, but they also expose graduate faculty to sectors beyond the academy; such exposure, in turn, can improve their mentoring of students. Unfortunately, to date we haven't identified concrete strategies for how to best develop these types of partnerships. In the future, we hope to develop a network of allies in our regional business and non-profit sectors. These people can help shape our program's development and potentially mentor interested doctoral students. Furthermore, successfully fostering interest and support for our initiative beyond our campus community would provide us with a source of external validation

that might, in turn, help us transform some of the more skeptical faculty members and graduate students into supporters.

A final, and unfortunately anticipated, challenge we encountered is the fact that while there is a great deal of interest and institutional support for our initiatives, we unfortunately lack the necessary resources, in terms of both finances and staff, to fulfil our aspirations. Land grant universities, such as the University of Kentucky, are multi-faceted and serve multiple constituents. They also face unique pressures, such as declining state appropriations and public frustration over rising tuition costs. This past year the College of Arts and Sciences experienced a budget crisis which meant that staff support for the program was curtailed. Consequently, the program director was forced to single-handedly manage the logistics and promotion of all workshops and guest speaker visits. Ultimately, this meant that we did not achieve all of the ambitious goals that we established in our Next Generation Humanities PhD proposal. For example, we only organized ten workshops and guest speaker visits over the course of the academic year, rather than the fourteen we planned. Similarly, we convened four substantive committee meetings rather than the six we intended to hold. On the other hand, we now realize that important work and conversations can happen outside of these formal spheres of interaction: the many informal discussions that the program director and other committee members participated in over the course of the year might ultimately end up having more substantive impact (for example, by fostering culture change) than additional committee work.

In addition to the budget crisis within the College of Arts and Sciences, our program development was somewhat hampered by the fact that the landscape of graduate education at the University of Kentucky is currently in flux. In 2017 the Provost's office convened a multi-stakeholder panel to re-envision graduate education more broadly on campus with the goal of developing a rigorous intellectual and cultural vision for our graduate education mission over the next ten to fifteen years (the Careers program director, Sarah Lyon, is a member of this panel). Consequently, there is a level of uncertainty about how graduate funding will be administered in coming years and what metrics will be used to measure program effectiveness. The resulting tension undoubtedly shapes the conversations we are attempting to initiate about the goals and purposes of graduate humanities education.

Culture Change and the Future of Humanities Doctoral Education

The realization that higher education is experiencing profound transformations and an accompanying decline in the availability of tenure track positions is hardly revelatory. In fact, this decline is neither new nor temporary and it is not likely to reverse itself in the future. However, what is less clear is how humanities and humanistic social science doctoral programs can best respond to these transformations: some argue that graduate programs should shrink, accepting fewer students and producing fewer PhD's. However, constriction such as this would undoubtedly result in less accessibility and declining diversity. Others assert that the solution lies with political pressure and civic engagement geared towards fighting the current tide of 'adjunctification' in higher education. While the latter efforts may be laudable, they are unlikely to produce immediate results or to offer meaningful assistance to currently enrolled students. A third option is to enable more graduate students to prepare for and obtain positions in diverse fields, both on and off campus. It is this third option that our program, Careers beyond the Professoriate, promotes. While we have found that many University of Kentucky faculty and graduate students either tac-

itly or enthusiastically support our goals, cultures change slowly. Therefore, it is challenging to empirically measure the impact of the Next Generation Humanities PhD project on our campus community. On the other hand, it's clear that our program has fomented a critically important conversation within our College over the past year and, as a result, there have been several qualitative changes in how, when, and where we talk about doctoral education and career diversity.

One of the most significant changes is largely a symbolic one involving the language and terminology we use when discussing the future career paths of graduate students. We intentionally named our program Careers beyond the Professoriate in order to not replicate the discursive divide that characterizes many of the conversations about non-ac, alt-ac, and/or post-ac career pathways. Language is a fundamental part of culture; consequently, if we are trying to encourage culture change, how we talk about these issues matters. Rather than referring to careers beyond the professoriate as a "plan b," or as an alternative, we instead orient our conversations around the notion of career diversity. The reality is that for many humanities and social science PhD's, the lines between the academy and other professional settings have always blurred: for example, many faculty members work as consultants on external projects and others intentionally share their scholarship with non-academic audiences. Within many social science disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology, there are long and thriving traditions of applied research, with scholars using their methods and theories to solve problems; inform policy; and improve the practices of businesses, organizations, and governments. In short, in our conversations with graduate students, we believe it's important to stress that their identity as a scholar will not necessarily evaporate if they choose to step off the tenure track.

This dual emphasis on scholarly identity and career diversity is critically important since the vast majority of doctoral students begin their PhD programs precisely because they have a deep passion for their field of inquiry. Furthermore, at the outset, most also hope to remain in the academy after completing their degrees. In fact, an unanticipated challenge that we've encountered at the University of Kentucky is directly related to this: while one of our central goals is to encourage doctoral students to begin thinking early and regularly about their future career trajectories, many seem reticent to contemplate alternatives to traditional professorial positions. However, we do not want to reproduce the humanities in crisis narrative in order to secure graduate student buy-in. Ultimately, we believe our program will be more successful if we instead reassert the enduring value of our disciplines in a rapidly changing world. In other words, we anchor our conversations with graduate students in workshops, classrooms, and one-on-one interactions within an expansive vision of the humanities PhD rather than a framework shaped by catastrophe and scarcity.

One significant way in which our program has already begun to change the culture of graduate education and professional development at the University of Kentucky is by normalizing these discussions of career diversity and positions beyond the professoriate. While in the past doctoral students might have discussed these topics independently with their faculty mentors, or even pursued non-traditional pathways on their own with little formal assistance, we now purposively create an intellectual space where doctoral students can forthrightly discuss their goals and fears with one another, faculty members, and PhDs working both on and off campus. We also are working to normalize the idea of career diversity by encouraging departments to more actively track their PhD alumni and to advertise all of their career successes; for example, by publicly

announcing and advertising (on websites and in annual reports, etc.) non- and alt-academic placements alongside more traditional tenure track ones. These are small, but significant, steps that over time will contribute to a groundswell of change.

Sustainability and Future Planning

The Careers beyond the Professoriate program at the University of Kentucky originated in 2016 at the recommendation of an ad hoc committee of faculty and administrators formed by the then Associate Dean for Faculty. The goal of the College of Arts and Sciences' Careers beyond the University program is to enable graduate students in the humanities and social sciences to explore the possibility of, and to be better prepared to pursue and obtain, non-academic and alt-academic jobs. We continue to believe that a program of this sort at once fulfills our moral obligation to assist graduate students to advance in their lives and careers and makes UK's College of Arts and Sciences a more attractive place for prospective students to pursue a graduate degree. While our planning grant has ended, our work will certainly continue in the coming year. Our immediate goals include building out the alumni profile section of our website, increasing attendance at our planned workshops, encouraging departments to track PhD career trajectories more consistently, and further developing our network of alumni and community partners.

In addition to this work within the Careers program itself, we increasingly realize the importance of collaborating with colleagues across campus in order to ensure (a) that we are not duplicating efforts, (b) that these critical issues remain at the forefront of any and all conversations about the future of graduate education at the University of Kentucky, and (c) that we continue to broaden our network in order to increase our reach. The Careers program director has been appointed to several graduate education related advisory boards over the past year (such as the Provost's Panel on Graduate Education and the advisory board for the Graduate School's Preparing Future Faculty and Professionals program). She is also collaborating with other units on campus with the goal of promoting the Careers program to doctoral students who might not currently be aware of it. For example, in August she will give a workshop at the Center for Graduate and Professional Diversity Initiatives' new student reception and she will also speak at the Graduate School's August TA orientation.

In addition to this on campus work, we increasingly see the value of participating in disciplinary specific conversations about graduate education, professional development, and career diversity. Therefore, along with distributing our white paper on our website, we also plan to share our insights with colleagues at other universities through conversations at scholarly meetings and even publications. For example, the program director is currently writing an article for a peer-reviewed anthropology journal that explores the topics of career diversity, graduate education, and the problems associated with drawing a false dichotomy between academic and non-academic (or applied) career trajectories.

Concluding Thoughts

At a time when our university community is reevaluating the purpose and structure of graduate education, the stakes of these conversations are seemingly very high. While there are certainly conversations about graduate student professional development and career pathways that are specific to the humanities, at the University of Kentucky, we have found that there is significant interest in these topics and questions beyond these fields. In the future, we hope to encourage

transdisciplinary conversations and the cross-fertilization of ideas and strategies. We remain committed to our belief that transformed PhD programs that help doctoral students explore multiple career paths are not simply about skill development. Rather, they involve the cultivation of a worldview that enables scholars to see alternatives to specialization and to think innovatively about communicating the knowledge they create beyond the confines of higher education. Broadening the conversation about the goals and methods of humanities doctoral training will further not just the diverse career goals of our students, but scholarship itself. By sharing its research with the broader public in more imaginative ways, the humanities will also be better able to address the most critical issues of the 21st century.