

# Post PhD: Exploring Options

## HCC Seminar

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### Getting to Know Other HCC Students (5 min)

**Directions:** In your small group, go around and introduce yourself! Starting with the 1st year, share your name and answer to the following question.

**Question:** What is something you failed at this semester?

(Yay failing! It's a great growth opportunity. Let us know what you learned from failing too.)

### Thinking Towards the Future: Career Self-Awareness Activities

The goal today is to go deep on who you are, what is important to you, and how to build the career that enables you to live life in an enriching and fulfilling capacity. Whether you want to be a tenure-track professor, to work in a government lab, or to start your own business, taking the time to reflect and cultivate awareness will help you build a career path that's best for you!

#### Values Assessment Activity<sup>1</sup>

Rank the following 10 factors in terms of how important each is to you for a career-related job. Enter a 1 next to the factor that is most important, a 10 next to the least important factor, a 2 next to the second most important, a 9 next to the second least important, and so on until you have ranked all 10 factors.

How important is it that your job...

- \_\_\_\_\_ Permits you to work on a wide variety of tasks?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gives you the opportunity to help others?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provides you with a great deal of independence in deciding how work gets done?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Enables you to make a great deal of money?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Offers you a secure future?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gives you the opportunity to develop friendships at work?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has pleasant working conditions?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Enables you to work with a supervisor who is competent and supportive?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provides you with power and influence over other people?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gives you a feeling of accomplishment?

#### Reflecting on this activity:

Individually

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<sup>1</sup> This activity is adapted from [Career Management 4th Edition](#) by Greenhouse, Callahan, and Godshalk.

**Acknowledgement:** Thank you to everyone who agreed to be interviewed for this document! Putting together this type of information is only possible with the help of professors, students, and alumni.

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1. What did you learn about yourself by comparing these different values in a career?

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2. Are you surprised by any of your rankings?

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As a group...

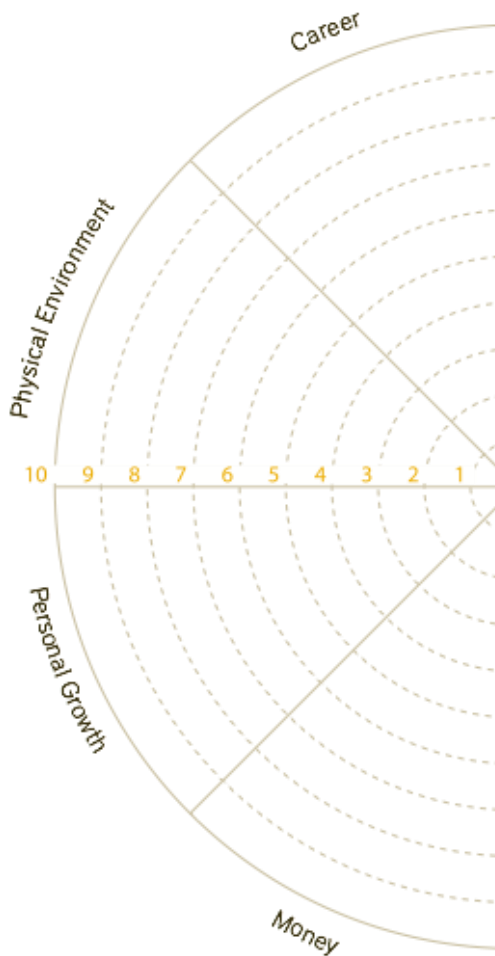
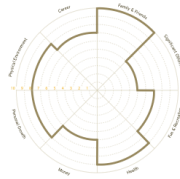
1. Share with each other what you have learned from your rankings.
2. Do you feel like being a PhD matches up with the values of your preferred work environment?
  - a. Why or why not?

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Now that you've ranked factors that are important to you in a career, let's take a look a more global look at your life. In the following exercise, called the **Wheel of Life**, 1 is a low level of satisfaction and 10 is a high level of satisfaction. In the following wheel, you can replace the categories with Areas of Life that are important to you. After you rate each area, connect the lines as shown in the following image:

**Directions:** The eight sections in the Wheel of Life represent the wheel as 1 and the outer edges as 10, rank your straight or curved line to create a new outer edge. The more a real wheel, how bumpy would the ride be?



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**Reflecting on this activity:**  
Individually

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1. Looking at your wheel, how do you feel about the balance in your life?

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2. Reflecting on the balance:

- a. For the Wheel of Life, the goal is not to get 10s across the board. The goal is to create a smoother ride. If one area of your wheel is much lower or much higher than the others, think about what you might do to make more harmony between the many areas of your life.

3. Making a change: Is there an area of your wheel you'd like to make a change in—now or in considering your future career? What area would you like to tackle head-on and what changes would you like to make?

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4. If you want to make a change, pick something actionable to get the ball rolling. What will you do? When? How will you stay accountable?

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As a group...

1. Reflect on the balance of your wheel or on an actionable change you plan to take to find more balance.
2. What careers might help you find a satisfactory balance in your wheel?

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### Current Career Goals <sup>2</sup>

Based on the exercises we just completed, take a minute to reflect on your career goals. After you've had a chance to write down some goals, go around and share what your career goals are with the group. It's okay to not know what you want to do and it's okay to change your mind.

How do you define career success? Are you achieving some level of success in your current job? What job will help you achieve complete success?

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Who are the people you most admire? What is it about them or their careers that attracts you to them? Is there something about what they have or do that you want for your career vision?

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Using one sentence or a concise paragraph, write your career vision. Consider writing a short vision statement along with a short description of how you currently see yourself accomplishing it - reaching your vision.

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<sup>2</sup> Questions for this exercise come from a Berkeley HR resource: <https://hr.berkeley.edu/node/4591>

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What are some clear and concise short-term and long-term goals that will help you achieve this vision?

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Now that you've had a chance to reflect on your career goals, use the following questions to guide your group discussion:

1. When you came into seminar today, what were your thoughts on about your career plans?
2. What have you learned about yourself and your future career plans through reflecting on these activities?
3. What goals do you have for your career?
4. How can the HCC community help you achieve your goals?
5. Are there opportunities for your group to help each other achieve your goals moving forward?

### **Cultivating Your Brand<sup>3</sup>**

In 1997, Tom Peters famously published the article "The Brand Called You". Peter's message is all about helping you stand out in the modern market where brand recognition is core to the way we remember which shoes are cool, which celebrities we love (or love to hate), and the story behind the people we interact with every day.

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<sup>3</sup> The questions for this activity are taken from p. 68 of *Career Management* 4th Edition.

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Cultivating your brand is just one way to think about who you are and how you make a lasting impression in a professional setting. By completing this exercise, the goal is to help you pinpoint what your special skills are and how you can capitalize on them in your career. This article poses five critical questions about your brand. Take the next few minutes to answer the following questions

**What do I do that I'm most proud of?**

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**What do I do that adds remarkable, measurable, distinguished, distinctive value?**

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**What do my colleagues and community partners say is my greatest and clearest strength... [and] most noteworthy personal characteristic?**

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**What have I done lately—this week—that added value to the organization [perhaps lab is more appropriate here] (and that was noticed by others)?**

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**In what ways is what I do difficult to imitate?**

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**What do you need to do to enhance and market your brand?**

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### **Discuss:**

Now that you've had a chance to respond to these questions. Share some of your thoughts with your group. When you're listening to other members of your group, give them feedback and ask them follow up questions to their answers.

1. What are themes in your personal personal brand?
2. What do you like about your personal brand?
3. What are things you learned about yourself when completing this exercise?
4. What are things you would like to cultivate and add to your brand moving forward?



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### Considering the Options: From Professor to Government

This part of the handout is full of important tips and quick job-type overviews. The goal here is to get you started and help you explore your options—consider this a springboard.

#### Important Information for Every Career

- **Career Exploration**

- No matter who you are, where you are in life, and what your goals are, it is never too late to explore career options.
- Say you've always been set on being a professor. What might career exploration and planning have in store for you?
  - These activities help provide you determine how well your dreams match up with your goals. They also are a great way to set concrete plans for moving your career forward.
- There are lots of great resources online for cultivating a career path. We've provided some links to give you a head start. Check out the additional resources linked to at the end of this handout.

- **Informational Interviews**

- This is an amazing way to grow your network and to learn about different careers, meet potential mentors, engage with your role models, and discover what it's like to work in various environment.
  - Informational interviews are as valuable in academia as they are in any other industry.
- Steps for landing the informational interview 1) the ask, 2) the prep 3) the interview, 4) the follow-up.
  - It's important that you are well prepared for these interviews, from the first hello, to the thank you email that solidifies your new connection.
- These interview can be a great way to transition into a new career or get your foot in the door in a field where connections are everything.
- There's too much to cover in this document. Check out the resources for upping your informational interview game at the end of this handout:

- **Valuing Your Labor: How much does it cost to get equivalent work?**

- You're labor has value!
  - How much is your labor worth?
- So much of our PhD and academic work involves free or underpaid labor. This can really shift our perspective on how much our labor is worth on the market.
  - To get a sense for how much you are worth, and what types of compensation you should be seeking post-PhD, do some research into the type of work you do and what salaried and hourly employees make for the same type of labor.
- Whether you're setting your billing rate or negotiating an offer, knowing your worth is critical!

- **Developing an Ethical and Sustainable Relationship with Power**

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- Academia relies on a narrative that rewards individualism, but collectivism is at the core of what we do and at the core of successful organizations. In either scenario, power is constantly at play.
- We need to talk about power.
  - Power impacts everything we do.
  - The power relationships between you and your advisor determine how you get paid, who gets work done, why work gets done, and who benefits.
  - We can all be having better work relationships if we're more open about power dynamics and how we all cultivate power in our lives.
- The book *Management Skills for Everyday Life* (3rd ed) by Paula J. Caproni highlights the following at six items as forms of universal influence:<sup>4</sup>
  - Reciprocity
  - Commitment and Consistency
  - Authority
  - Social Proof
  - Scarcity
  - Liking
- Power isn't an inherently bad thing. It's all about how we share our influence with others and how we work towards creating a better social environment.
  - Sometimes we need to step up and take a leadership position, exerting power.
  - Sometimes we need to step back and let others take a leadership position, passing our power to others.
    - How does your privilege impact the power you wield?
    - Do you actively seek out ways to use your privilege and influence to lift up those who are systematically discriminated against?
- Caproni outlines that ethical, sustainable power and influence are founded on...
  - Explicitly telling people what you want to achieve and why.
  - Making the interests of others and the organization a priority.
    - Putting their interests equal to and sometimes ahead of your own interests.
  - Treating everyone with respect.
    - Administering procedures and policies fairly.
    - Actively ensuring that you are not abusing or exploiting people.
  - Leaving yourself open to the influence of other people, within reason.
  - Back your requests with honest supporting data.
- Check out resources at the end of this document find out more about how power comes into play and what you can do to develop an ethical and sustainable relationship with power.

## Tenure-Track Professor

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<sup>4</sup> The following bullets are taken from page 157 of Caproni with minor alterations.

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- **Quick Description:** Professors work at universities of all sizes, from R1s (the most research intensive university) like GT to small liberal arts colleges that focus on undergraduate education. Most focus on a combination of research, teaching, mentoring students, and professional service to the community. There are many types of academic positions available, and it's worth interviewing/learning about each one. You can also complete a post-doc to remain in academia after your PhD.
- **Good:** Freedom in research; large influence in field of study; engagement with students; unique flexibility for work/collaboration; very secure job
- **Bad:** limited job pool; possibly stressful lifestyles; can overemphasize tenure early in career; lower income than equivalent positions in industry
- **Key Points:** Decide the type of institution you'd like to end up at (teaching vs. research focused); research and publication matter everywhere
- **Extra Resources:**
  - CETL workshops for job materials: <http://ctl.gatech.edu/grad-students/workshops>
  - Places to look for jobs:
    - Individual department websites
    - Academic jobs online - <https://academicjobsonline.org/ajob>
    - CRA - <https://cra.org/ads/>

### Alternate-Academic Options (Alt-Ac)

- **Quick Description:** Alt-ac are non-academic positions outside of the hierarchy of faculty life. There are many career options: journalism, think tanks/policy centers, student/academic affairs at universities, consulting and alternative research paths. Alt-ac is traditionally used in humanities to refer to non-academic positions but can also refer to jobs individuals with graduate training can do as well (industry positions are technically "alt-ac").
- **Good:** Lots of career options to suit individual preferences; opportunities in new environments; alt-ac can provide flexibility for your preferences and interests compared to intensive industry or tenure-track positions
- **Bad:** small amount of openings for PhD-qualified applicants; income depends on the specific position; less/no focus on traditional research or teaching (depending on the position)
- **Key Points:** diverse opportunities rule - so much flexibility for personal preference.
- **Extra Resources:**
  - What's up with the alt-ac careers: <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/whats-up-with-alt-ac-careers/>
  - What alt-ac can do, and what it can't: <http://miriamposner.com/blog/what-alt-ac-can-do-and-what-it-cant/>

### Industry Jobs

- **Quick Description:** Industry jobs are jobs in the private sector of employment. In CS, these typically revolve around technology or software oriented companies - most of

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these jobs are either software/product development or product research. However, there are many opportunities at corporations, consulting companies, etc. to apply your unique research area to their products and services.

- **Good:** many openings/employment opportunities; a lot of money (more than academia); routinely life; better work/life balance most of the time; contribution to actual products/services rather than theoretical research -- see your impact in the real world
- **Bad:** less freedom overall (what you work on); the work can be repetitive; little to no research, depending on the position; at risk of market trends; changing jobs frequently (every 3-5 years) is best for career growth
- **Key Points:** \$\$\$\$\$; communication skills/networking
- **Extra Resources:**
  - Interning is a great way to learn about industry positions! (Week 4's handout is about internship)

### Starting a Business

- **Quick Description:** If you're excited to provide your own services (research, consulting, social media design, etc) without being a part of a corporation, starting your own business may be for you. Or, if you have a killer idea for a product, consider doing your own start-up or becoming. There are even independent researchers who run their own research business outside of industry/academia.
- **Good:** freedom to do what you want to do (even if you want to integrate some amount of research); you get to be your own boss; less location constraints (not tied to a university of job necessarily)
- **Bad:** risky; stressful; responsible for all your employees; many logistics issues to be taken care of
- **Key Points:** investment and outcome; management skills; vision
- **Extra Resources:**
  - GT Startup Launch: <http://startupsummer.gatech.edu/>
  - Startups & Entrepreneurship: <https://www.cc.gatech.edu/content/startups-entrepreneurship>

### Government Jobs

- **Quick Description:** Another option for research-oriented positions can be working at national labs, federally funded research institutes, or other government positions. These jobs can have varying degrees of research freedom. Examples in the US include working for NIH, the Army, Center for Disease Control, NASA, Oak Ridge National Labs, etc.
- **Good:** engage with research; balance between theoretical research and practical impact; fairly secure job depending on the position; better work/life balance
- **Bad:** citizenship or naturalization requirements depending on the project/job; limited degree of picking your research topics; pay is lower than industry but not bad
- **Key Points:** research; security & privacy; work for the government
- **Extra Resources:**

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- NSF Careers: <https://www.nsf.gov/careers/>
- <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Working-in-a-Government-Lab/45212>
- <http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/1999/07/jobs-industry-vs-jobs-national-labs>

### Changing Careers: It's NEVER too late for academia or other options

- While there are a lot of opinions about whether or not you can become a professor if you stop publishing research after PhD, most of this information is outdated!
- The most important voice to listen to here is your own. What are the career goals you have and how can you achieve them?
  - It's okay to step away from academia and publishing. There are many people who transition back into professorships (although they may be more alt-ac than tenure-track).
    - Did you know you can Postdoc in academia and in industry?
  - Once you get back into academia, you can set goals and make career transitions that are right for you.
- If you think tenure-track is something you're interested in but want to check out other options first, go ahead!
  - One great way to do this is to give industry research a try. This allows you to keep publishing but in a different organizational context.
- Take risks to pursue your goals!
  - Maybe you realize halfway through your PhD that your career fulfillment exists elsewhere. That's ok! It may be a risk to leave, but it is never too late to start pursuing fulfilling career options.

### Invest In Yourself Outside of Work

- Life's too short to only consider your career goals! Don't forget about all the other areas of the Wheel of Life!
  - Make sure you spend time cultivating your relationships and investments in the Areas of Life that are important to you.
- While there isn't more on this topic in this document (it's a bit out of scope), it's too important to leave unsaid. When you're planning your career and developing your goals, don't forget about who you are outside of the workplace.

### Additional Resources

- Wheel of Life Resource: <http://www.coactive.com/docs/resources/toolkit/pdfs/18-Wheel-of-Life-Exercise.pdf>
- 1997 Brand Called You article in Fast Company: <https://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you>
- Career Development Resource:
  - <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/01/23/using-self-assessment-tools-help-you-determine-best-career-yourself-essay>
  - <https://hr.berkeley.edu/development/career-development>
  - <https://www.cms.livecareer.com/quintessential/career-vision>

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- [Darden Job Objective Exercise](#)
- Informational Interview:
  - [www.themuse.com/tags/informational-interviews](http://www.themuse.com/tags/informational-interviews)
  - [www.livecareer.com/quintessential/informational-interview-questions](http://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/informational-interview-questions)
- Ethical Power:
  - Caproni, Management Skills for Everyday Life Ch. 5
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founder%27s\\_syndrome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founder%27s_syndrome)
  - <https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/07/feminist-leadership-workplace/>
  - Social Styles:
    - <https://hbr.org/2012/01/whats-your-influencing-style>
    - [https://advance.washington.edu/resources/docs/Social%20Styles%20and%20Effective%20Performance\\_Yen&Carrigan.pdf](https://advance.washington.edu/resources/docs/Social%20Styles%20and%20Effective%20Performance_Yen&Carrigan.pdf)
    - [www.smallworldalliance.com/documents/SocialStyles-Assessment.pdf](http://www.smallworldalliance.com/documents/SocialStyles-Assessment.pdf)
  - Negotiation:
    - <https://www.themuse.com/advice/8-rules-of-negotiation-every-professional-should-memorize>
- Many people leave academia feeling they did not receive good career guidance. The activities in this handout and the resources linked here are a start for engaging with what happens post PhD!
  - If you're interested in a more complete personal career assessment activity, email Ari (Schlesinger) for some follow-up.

## Sharing Tips + Announcements + Q&A

**Sharing Tips:** Learn something in seminar today? Now is a great time to share out.

## Questions & Announcements

If you don't get a chance to share tips, questions, or announcements during the meeting, please email the HCC listserv and/or Marissa and Hayley to follow up.