

Adam Ringler

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What is your current occupation?

I work for the US Geological Survey at the Albuquerque Seismological Laboratory. I am a Physical Scientist. My job mainly focuses on doing basic research and development to improve our ability to detect and locate earthquakes as well as mitigate hazards that could result in loss of life or property.

What is your educational background?

I have a BSc in Applied Math Computer Science, a MS in Mathematics, and a PhD in Mathematics. A lot of my informal education involves learning new skills that I can apply to my current work. With how fast science is developing I find it important to keep my skillset relevant and up to date.

A key message for students is that the geoscience workforce is dynamic, and boundaries between sectors and occupations are fluid. How has this been true in your career?

Most of my schoolwork was very theoretical in nature. When I came to the USGS my initial position was very experimental. By not limiting the problems or subject matter I am willing to work on I have found benefits from having a fairly diverse skillset.

Where do you see your sector moving in future years? How would you advise students to prepare to be competitive job applicants and successful employees?

I don't know where the sector will move in the future, but I would guess it will be in a healthy direction with more collaboration as well as problems that require multiple different approaches to solve. My experience is that strong quantitative skills have been very valuable. It is important to make yourself known and have work that you communicate clearly to potential employers.

What is the role of networking in your sector? Do you have advice for a student who is just beginning to build their network? What is the best way for students to get their foot in the door?

Networking is a huge component of seismology. It is a relatively small field and so it is important to get to know folks. Being genuinely interested in what folks are doing is a great way to start a collaboration. It is also important to realize that some folks might just not have room to collaborate because of various family and work commitments.

What does a “typical” day of work look like for you?

While I have no typical day, my job tends to be a healthy mix of advising interns, collaborating with folks on projects, working on my own projects, as well as a minimal amount of administrative stuff. As a seismologist much of this work is done on a computer and requires processing large amounts of data.

What is the best part of your job?

The diversity of my job is the best part. I enjoy working with interns and helping them discover new scientific results. I also enjoy working on my own projects where I realize that there is an unknown question and I get to work towards uncovering the answer.

Do you have any other comments or advice for students looking to enter your sector of the geoscience workforce?

Have fun with the pursuit of science and don't rush to get results. Focus on the process of doing good science and the results will come.

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