

# Angela Hessler

Founding Director of The Deep Time Institute



## **What is your current occupation?**

I am the founding director of The Deep Time Institute, a 501(c)(3) scientific nonprofit. My responsibilities range from management to scientific research and outreach. I maintain the website, file annual requirements to federal and state agencies, and apply for grants. My scientific tasks depend on the project but include sampling, microscope work, sending rocks to outside labs for analysis, writing papers, and giving talks. I do two to three peer-reviews each year and occasionally chair sessions at scientific meetings. On the outreach side, I create print materials that convey geology for the general public and give presentations in schools.

## **What is your educational background?**

I have a B.Sc. (major in geology, minor in English) from the Department of Geological Sciences and Civil Engineering from the University of Notre Dame. I have a Ph.D. (thesis in Precambrian sedimentary geology) from the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences at Stanford University.

## **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?**

My current position is my third job, after working in academia and the energy industry. These varied experiences are something I value because they have given me interesting connections, technical skills, and a flexible way of looking at things.

I left my first job (four years at a teaching university) for the industry to be closer to my spouse and to branch out professionally. As much as I had liked teaching, I enjoyed the switch to technical work and learned a lot from being in a corporate environment. I decided to leave the industry when my job was transferred to another office, giving me the sense that the company's research program would not last. So, I started DTI to follow my interests and stay active in research.

**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?**

Two trends I can see for scientific nonprofits are (1) more community-oriented science communication efforts and (2) scientist-leaders with business/management skills. I do not think it matters so much which science major or graduate program you choose, or that it's interdisciplinary or cleverly tailored, just that it is coming from a place of genuine interest. A successful applicant/employee at a scientific non-profit can be someone who is passionate but realistic and understanding about how what they are doing fits into a community's needs. Experiences (informal or formal) in communication, environmental justice, and business management help build useful skills and would work in an applicant's and employee's favor.

**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 important, but a little bit can go a long way. I would recommend being (1) targeted and (2) sincere when building your network. In other words, if you have a specific question, interest, or plan, then reach out to the person (or two) who you think can best help you, and then be prepared to follow through.

**What does a "typical" day of work look like for you?**

I usually dig into one big project at a time, while moving the early/late phases of 1–2 other projects along as needed. If there is no immediate deadline, I typically start my day by figuring out which outstanding task I am most motivated to work on, and then I go for it. I occasionally have meetings but mostly spend my day working independently on writing, analysis, or field work.

**What is the best part of your job?**

The best part of my job has been building something I believe in from the ground up. I enjoy chasing my own ideas while figuring out how they contribute to society, and I have been able to scale projects and goals so that they fit with my family life.

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

Be adventurous but prepared for uncertainty. This is especially true if you are starting a nonprofit or joining one in its early phase, like with any new business. There might be certain times in your life when this risk is more tolerable.

**Connect:**

[www.linkedin.com/in/angela-hessler](http://www.linkedin.com/in/angela-hessler)

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[Breaking In: Women's Accounts of How Choices Shape STEM Careers - Ann Wolverson, Lisa Nagaoka, Mimi Wolverson - Google Books](#) Featured chapter: “Enjoying a Life that Fits”