

## **Brittany Schieler**

Communications and Program Manager for the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography



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

I am Communications and Program Manager for the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO). ASLO is a non-profit science society that fosters an international community of aquatic scientists of all career stages from academia, government, and the private sector. In my role, I help the organization carry out its day-to-day functions by communicating with our membership and the broader aquatic science community and managing various activities (professional development, outreach, policy and more) that the society engages in.

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

I come from a research-focused background. I have a Ph.D. in Oceanography from Rutgers University, where my research focused on the molecular interactions between a phytoplankton species called *Emiliana huxleyi* and the viruses that infect them. After I finished my Ph.D. I spent about nine months interning in the ASLO Communications Office followed by a year on Capitol Hill as a Sea Grant Knauss Legislative Fellow getting a deep dive in policy and the federal legislative process.

**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?**

Work in a medium-sized science non-profit is extremely cross-cutting. All of my experiences – in basic research, science communication, and policy – help me in my current position and to serve the society to the best of my ability. Being able to effectively communicate is essential in any career in the geosciences and that is a skillset I’ve developed throughout all of my formal and informal education. Having spent many years in the aquatic research enterprise also affords me useful insights into the various programs and services I work on at ASLO.

**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?**

In graduate school it can be very easy to become singularly focused on your research and getting your publications, but your time as a grad student is also an opportunity to explore life “beyond the bench.” Try to incorporate other activities – like teaching and outreach – alongside your research to get a sense of what types of work you enjoy doing and the skills you enjoy using.

**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?**

I believe networking and mentorship is critical in any industry. As a Knauss fellow we quickly got into the routine of asking for “coffees” (now “virtual coffees”) aka informational interviews. It can feel weird at first, but most people are happy to talk to you! I find that it is helpful to do a little research on the person or their job first before reaching out, and have some questions you want to ask ahead of time. Look to do “coffees” with people in a variety of careers and at all professional stages. A question to consider asking in your informational interview is for the person you are speaking with to suggest others to connect with – that is a great way to build your network!

Also, don’t forget to maintain the network you currently have. Make time to check in regularly with your mentors even if it just to let them know how you are doing. The mentors I have been lucky to have along my career path so far have had real positive impacts on my professional trajectory.

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

As one of the few staff tasked with managing many of ASLO’s programs and its communications to our community, my work looks different every day! Depending on what is going on with our organization I could be drafting emails and announcements for our membership, sharing the latest science appearing in our journals on social media, working with the students taking part in our NSF-funded LOREX program, organizing science communication and policy events for an upcoming conference, working with the policy committee and our

partner societies on position statements or letters, assisting our other various committees with their professional development opportunities and programs, or preparing content for our quarterly publication *Limnology & Oceanography Bulletin*.

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

Getting to do a lot of different things! Being involved in so many aspects of the organization can sometimes be challenging, but has been extremely rewarding. I've also been enjoying meeting and networking with the many wonderful scientists and staff who dedicate their time to serve ASLO on the Board of Directors, on the various committees, in editorial positions, and in countless other ways. Their passion and dedication inspire me and make this job so fun! Science societies are uniquely positioned to support the scientific endeavor and to bring about positive change in the field, and I feel very fortunate and excited to be in this particular role.

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

Don't be discouraged by rejections or "failures" and, similarly, be open to new and different opportunities. Lastly, do not be afraid to ask for something. For example, I almost didn't apply for an opportunity because the desired start date listed didn't line up well with a major life event. However, I reached out to the supervisor and asked whether there was a possibility to work something out. She encouraged me to apply! In short, don't be afraid to ask – the worst you will hear is no.

**Connect:**

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