

## **Lisa D. White**

Director of Education and Outreach at the University of California Museum of Paleontology



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

I am the Director of Education and Outreach at the University of California Museum of Paleontology (UCMP) at UC Berkeley. My responsibilities include:

- A. Managing an education and outreach team composed of the webmaster, principal editor, and graphic designer who are responsible for maintaining and expanding a suite of UCMP web resources, <https://ucmp.berkeley.edu/>.
- B. Directing grant-funded collaborations and partnerships that provide avenues to share paleontological research with K-16 audiences and the public.
- C. Developing new collaborations between UCMP and professional organizations and institutions to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the geosciences
- D. Providing opportunities for UCMP graduate students to participate in education and outreach activities to increase their skills at communicating science to others.

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

I have a B.A. in Geology from San Francisco State University and a Ph.D. in Earth Sciences from University of California, Santa Cruz.

### **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?**

I went directly to a faculty position at a teaching-intensive university (San Francisco State University) after receiving my PhD. I stayed at SF State for 22 years and held a variety of posts

Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor, Department Chair, and Associate Dean). My job satisfaction was high and did not intend to change jobs or universities but I am a risk-taker by nature. Despite how “typical” my academic career path appeared, I remained open to new and different opportunities and career directions. When the opportunity came to direct education and outreach programs at UCMP, I thought - why not? As my career progressed at SF State, I became increasingly focused on improving the public understanding of science, science communication, and engaging broader communities in geoscience. For someone with my background and training, a program director-level position at a paleontology museum at UC Berkeley seemed ideal and it proves to be an incredible platform to share science.

**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?**

Museums across the country are undergoing incredible levels of innovation. Funding support for digitizing collections and modernizing databases have opened the door to new ways of sharing information and engaging the public. Preparation for careers as museum scientists or museum education and outreach specialists are not straightforward. There is not a single way to train and sometimes museum job openings are rare. My advice is, along with solid training in Earth science and advanced training in paleontology and/or the biology of a specific organismal group, maintaining flexibility while seeking internships or postdoctoral experience at a museum is a must.

**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 essential in any sector and, particularly in museums where parts of community can be small and clubby, getting to know people through networking at conferences, reaching out directly to individual scientists, or asking others for introductions is a must.

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

My workday varies depending on grant proposal and reporting deadlines, conference schedules, fieldwork, and workshop commitments. However, a typical day is spent managing updates to a number of popular UCMP websites, reviewing budgets and project deliverables for 8-10 projects, and participating in committee service to geoscience professional societies, museum boards, and science centers.

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

I enjoy the range of science I’m exposed to as a museum educator director and the energetic network of museums I collaborate with to share and communicate science both formally (in the classroom) and informally (public events and programs).

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

Preparing for a museum career often involves indirect pathways, flexibility, and willingness to gain a variety of experiences in geoscience research, science communication, and education and outreach. Be patient, stay focused on your goals, but also be open to change and new opportunities!

**Connect:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lisa-white-73250ab/>

**Learn More:**

Here are links to a couple of articles that profile my career pathway, educational history, and professional experiences:

<https://alumni.berkeley.edu/california-magazine/just-in/2021-08-25/bones-pick-uc-berkeley-paleontologist-entices-diverse>

<https://news.berkeley.edu/2015/11/02/pbs-special-to-feature-berkeley-paleontologist/>