

Transcript

Speaker 1: You're tuned in to 90.7 FM. My name is Tesla Munson and this is the graduates, the radio talk show where we speak with graduate students about their research here on campus and around the world. Today we're going to have a special episode and joining me, I have not one, not two, but three graduate students here at UC Berkeley and they're going to tell us about their work and also their involvement in beyond academia. The conference that is upcoming here on campus. It is upcoming on campus. Right. Awesome. Okay, so first we [00:00:30] better go through some introductions. We're going to start with the neuroscientists today. So a Clare Oldfield. Hi, welcome. Thank you. Thank you so much for having us. Not a problem. And you're a fifth year phd in neuroscience? I am correct. So why don't you just give us a little background? What does neuroscience, what do you guys do over there?

Speaker 2: Sure. Um, so I'm in the Helen Wills, uh, institute graduate program and it's a very broad program. And [00:01:00] in my lab we focus more on, um, molecular and cellular neuroscience. And personally I, I work with a very tiny model organisms zebrafish and I, I use it as a model to understand what changes in the brain when you get experience at something new.

Speaker 1: So if it's tiny, it must be efficient, not a zebra. Correct? Correct. That's a fish doesn't have little stripes on it. Is that why they call it?

Speaker 2: Yeah. The adults have these horizontal stripes on them.

Speaker 1: [00:01:30] Nice. So when you say it's a model organism, what does that mean?

Speaker 2: So, um, what we're actually interested is the human brain, right? W we're trying to understand how we learn new things, how we understand tasks, how we process information. But we can't really do experiments with humans, but because that would require us to damage people's brains, which is unethical. So we use model organisms to, to study the same questions. We, we make the assumption that [00:02:00] the mechanisms at play in human brains are similar and we don't have as many as the ethical concerns when we're working with zebrafish.

Speaker 1: So when you say you're trying to understand more about novel experiences, right. And how the brain reacts to that, what sort of experiences? It's like when someone jumps out at you or,

Speaker 2: um, so you want to know in the fish's case the Fisher's case? Yeah. Okay. So in the fish's case, the model behavior that I'm studying is prey capture. So when the fish have [00:02:30] five days old, then mild, so open, and they start to hunt these little unicellular

organisms that move around in the solution and they, they starts hunting them. So swimming off to them and capturing them. And [inaudible] I've noticed is that zebrafish larvae will get better at it when they, when they practice. So that's, that's the behavior that I'm studying.

Speaker 1: So practicing and improving as part of that. And it were you, you must have interested in humans [00:03:00] in the beginning or was it the fish? Cause you said the human brain,

Speaker 2: not the fish brain. Right. So of course the things I'm, I'm more interested in is understanding how this relates to the human brain. So is it a change in the neural network? Are there more neurons that will respond to a specific stimulus or do they respond differently? I'm interested in understanding these mechanisms to get an idea of what changes in our brains when we learn a new language or how to play an instrument. [00:03:30] Same [inaudible]

Speaker 1: well, where did you come from in terms of your education? Did you do a bachelor's in neuroscience as well or,

Speaker 2: uh, I did a bachelor's in biology, general biology, and then I got a master's in neuroscience before coming to Grad school at Beckin.

Speaker 1: And so did you always know you wanted to come to Berkeley or

Speaker 2: not as whole? It was just a play at the second sentence is I actually did my undergraduate work in Paris, in France. And through opportunities [00:04:00] I had to do internships. I came here and I really loved the bay area and so I applied to Grad school and, and was fortunate enough to be accepted. So here I am.

Speaker 1: Great. Okay. So that was Claire Oldfield from the Department of neuroscience. We have another neuroscientist here as well. Uh, Sam, I Israel almost called you Sam Irish. Hello. Okay. We have another neuroscientist here as well. Sam Israel, also a fifth year. Yes, that is correct. And do you do exactly the same thing as Claire?

Speaker 3: I don't do exactly [00:04:30] the same thing, but I do do some similar things. Like I also work with zebrafish and I use them as a model organism as well to study a fear behavior and, and olfaction. So smell. So it's, I kind of do a lot of different overlapping senses with the fish.

Speaker 1: So she was telling me Phish can like learn and you're telling me fish can smell and it's like they can, what are, what are they animals or something?

Speaker 3: Yeah, they have a very simple, uh, smell [00:05:00] system. That's the reason why we like to use them is because they're relatively compared to the mouse or other mammals. They have relatively fewer neurons in their nose or their empathy, their olfactory

epithelium. And we use that to kind of study. I use that to study innate behaviors. So behaviors that they don't learn, unlike Claire, I'm interested in behaviors that they are just hard wired so that they don't have to learn.

Speaker 1: So does everyone in your department use zebrafish or are there other

Speaker 3: no, very few actually. It's kind of a coincidence that [00:05:30] the two of us are here. Uh, it's a huge spread within the Helen Wills neuroscience institute. Oh, there's a lot of human studies and FMSI there's a lot of people doing mouse work, electrophysiology in mice. Um, there's people that work with fruit flies, with sea elegans. Um, it's people that work with star nose moles, so all different types of animals answering all different types of questions.

Speaker 1: And what about you? What was your path to Berkeley?

Speaker 3: My Path to Berkeley, I was always interested in the senses from the [00:06:00] sensory organs. So I was the first real neuroscience lab. I worked with, uh, studied hair cells in the inner ear. So these are the cells that are responsible for hearing and balance. And then I worked in a lab, we studied itch, pain and touch, and then taste and fruit flies. And I'm studying, well, my lab traditionally studies smell in both mice and zebrafish. So that's how I got into that. I've always been interested in kind of how we perceive things and how the first, really [00:06:30] the first time our body senses something. What happens in the biology of the cells. So I heard at least three senses in there. Are you going for the whole package or have you already lost sense? I really haven't covered firsthand his vision. So, uh, yeah. You gotta work on that? Yeah, cause that's the key. My Future. Yeah. My postdoc or something.

Speaker 4: Excellent. Okay. And uh, last but definitely not least, Claire, another Claire, uh, Claire Bendix, fifth year in plant and microbial biology. Yup. That's me. That's you. Okay. So you're [00:07:00] not a neuroscientist at all. Nothing to do with neuroscience. Um, why don't you tell us about what you study? So I study the circadian clock. So plants have a circadian clock too. So where is in humans, the circadian clock regulates things like when you eat, when you're sleepy, when you're most active, when you're digesting things in plants. It's about when you photosynthesize, when you store starch, when you grow, when you decide to flower. And I work with corn, [00:07:30] with corn. [inaudible] so tell us a little bit about corn. I mean, is it or is that because you have agricultural interests or is it just a good organism? I think it's a great organism. Um, it's one of the two main model organisms in plants.

Speaker 4: The other one is this little tiny weed called a rabbit oxis that you can grow in petri dishes. And I really liked corn. It's not really, I don't have a good reason for it, but I loved it cause it was bigger than me. I thought, hey, this is a plant [00:08:00] that is huge and I want to work on it. But in terms of why it's interesting for my research, Corrine has a very interesting genome that underwent duplication not too long ago. So it still has lots

of copies of genes retained and for our system we're interested in seeing whether they're all still active in the corn circadian clock or not. So how would you go about telling if a gene is active or not? So there are a few different ways to do it. You can look at mutants [00:08:30] in the gene, you can try and disrupt the gene by making a construct and making transgenics.

Speaker 4: You can also do things more at the molecular level without disrupting it. You can look at gene expression patterns. You can look at protein patterns, there are all sorts of ways of doing it and we really try and utilize as many tools as we can. So it's not just the genes that you're born with, but they actually like keep changing during the lifespan of an organism. Well, genes generally aren't [00:09:00] all expressed. So there are always genes that are dormant and always genes that are expressed. And the genes that we're interested in are expressed cyclically. So they're either more express during the evening or they're more expressed at midnight. And so we're really interested in the temporal component of expression. No, that's like a whole nother dimension of, of genes and expression. Yeah, it gets really complicated. And so how did you get into Berkeley or not?

Speaker 4: How'd you get into regular, [00:09:30] but how'd you get into academia and in this program? So I did an undergraduate in general biology as well, like the other Claire and I was really interested in doing plants and my undergraduate was also in Europe, in the UK. And I was told if I wanted to continue working on plants, that Europe wasn't the place to do it because of the strict regulations regarding transgenics and regarding sort of molecular tools that are in place there. So I decided to come to the states. [00:10:00] Berkeley, I think if you ask most plant biologists, Berkeley is maybe the top program in the states because there aren't very many plant biology specific programs. So I applied crossing my fingers to get in and I did that. I wouldn't, uh, I wouldn't necessarily think that the u s has like more lenient transgenic laws, but that's interesting. Yeah, it's not so much, um, that they're more lenient at the commercial level, but at the research level, [00:10:30] there's a lot more you can do in the u s with plants. Awesome.

Speaker 1: Well, if you're just tuning in, you're listening to KLX Berkeley. My name is Tesla Monson and this is the graduates. And today I'm joined by three at Ph d candidates here at Berkeley. We've got Claire Oldfield at fifth year at neuroscience, phd, Sam Israel, also fifth year in neuroscience. And Claire Bendix, fifth year in PMB. Yeah. So let's, uh, let's get to why we're actually here today, which is to [00:11:00] talk about beyond academia. So who's in charge of telling us what, what beyond academia is? What is this that we're talking about today?

Speaker 3: So, beyond academia is a conference designed to teach, uh, current phd students and postdocs about all the different types of jobs there are outside of academia because there is a kind of a need in a call that has increasingly been, um, asked for on campus and pretty much [00:11:30] on campuses all over the country. Uh, there's kind of a lack of resources to kind of figure out what is there to do when I have my phd after I graduate. And so this came about from, from a need within the departments and the

Grad students kind of banded together and we organized it ourselves. And this is the third year we've been doing it. And the past two years have been very successful. So we have, it's a conference. It has panels and workshops and networking lunches [00:12:00] all to teach people what the type of jobs there are. Ranging from consulting to biotech companies to working in the government and finance even. And I went last year. That's how I got involved and it's really was an eye opener and a great experience. So what do most people think their career

Speaker 2: path is when they start a phd? If we have to tell them there are other options, what do they come in thinking? I think most people come in thinking that they'll probably go on to do a post doc and then a professor [00:12:30] Be a professor. Although I do think that this is changing because more and more people are realizing even going in that firstly the funding situation in academia is not what it used to be and that is no longer any guarantee whatsoever that you will actually get an academic job once you obtain your degree. And secondly, I also think there's a genuine interest in other types of careers. Maybe it's because we're in the bay [00:13:00] area and everyone sees this energy that comes from all the entrepreneurship around. But I've definitely seen incoming students who are already kind of wondering what they'll do later, but people don't really know apart from professorships, what else is out there?

Speaker 3: One of the things that we kind of noticed, whether you want to stay in academia or not, the language that is used when you come to Grad school is there's academia and then they're all alternative careers. And [00:13:30] that's one of the things we kind of want to stop. It's kind of this idea that, well, you know, some professors it's considered a failure to deviate from academia. Other professors encourage it, but they still have this mindset that it's an alternative path. It's not the main path. And increasingly that is changing. So it is becoming the majority pathway of most Grad students. And so there are other programs on campus that like that address these other alternative careers. But the word alternative is kind of something that [00:14:00] we want to try to stop being used in this context. So that's another kind of mission of the beyond academia conference

Speaker 2: that it's relatively new to Berkeley. Do you want to tell us a little bit about the history of beyond academia and of course so it'd be happy to, so about three years ago now, it actually all came from a couple of graduate students in psychology, Elsa Vandal Helm and Bryan Alvarez. Both of them were, especially Elsa, was realizing that she didn't want to go [00:14:30] into academia but really had no idea what her other options were. And talking with people around her, she realized that this was also the case for lots of her friends. And so what they decided to do was judge the interest of people, what they would be interested in learning about. And as Sam was describing, what graduate students really need at this point is just information about what else is out there and how to get there because that is not traditionally provided and the graduate education [00:15:00] and so else, and Brian sends houses, surveys, everyone asked them what they were interested in learning and then put together a team to create this conference.

Speaker 2: So the first year it was just a one day conference and I think we had about 200 people come from mostly psychology and neuroscience because that was the, that those were the departments that the organizers, and it was just so popular. We, we sold out very fast. All the speakers that we invited were [00:15:30] very enthusiastic about coming to talk about their experiences and also sharing their point of view of academia versus industry. And so clearly there was a needs. It was, it was just so popular. And so that's why we built the conference. The second year it was two days. So last year what we did, we had a first day that was focused on using your technical skills. So for example, people who do research both in a nonacademic [00:16:00] settings or you're still using your technical skills. If you knew how to do this molecular biology technique for example, you would still use that, but you wouldn't be doing it in an academic setting.

Speaker 2: And then the second day was more on using your analytical soft skills. So a lot of employers are really interested in the types of skills that PhDs acquire, like analyzing, thinking critically, knowing how to deal with data. [inaudible] to name just three, we're all so used to giving presentations. [00:16:30] We work in teams because we're in labs. So these are all really valuable skills that I think most graduate students don't even realize that they have. And this is what employers are looking for. So that was what the second day was focused on. And this year we're doing it again. It's just the conferences improving all the time. And I think that Sam will tell you more about this year's program.

Speaker 4: No quick other Claire. Oh, the other time. No, that's okay. No. Uh, so yes. So what's this year looking like? [00:17:00] So one thing that we're really trying to do this year is, um, we have a lot of the same panels, but we're really trying to expand the background of the participants. As you heard from Claire Oldfield's, the background of the people organizing the conference is primarily in stem fields. And we really, really want to reach out to the humanities and get people with humanities PhDs on the panels because this isn't just a stem issue, it's all PhDs at Berkeley and all postdocs at Berkeley really are affected by this. [00:17:30] So that's one of our main goals for this year. And another goal is just to expand the topics we have available. So we had a policy panel last year and now this year's policy panel, we have a patent agent on it.

Speaker 4: So we had communication last year and this year we're increasing the breadth of the panelists on that. And then we've added quite a few new panels as well. We have nonprofits, we have the tech industry, we have startups. [00:18:00] So we're really trying to cover more bases in the program itself. But also after last year's conference, we asked people what they liked, what they were looking for, and then we tried to incorporate their suggestions into this year's conference program. So I guess it's a, it seems like it's almost a divide between a place for last Grad students to go when they, when they don't, they don't know what they're gonna do. But you're also saying that these skills from a Ph d [00:18:30] are useful no matter what. So you would encourage people to get a phd even if they are looking at other career opportunities?

Speaker 3: Well, one of the things I've noticed with all my phd friends is that they think that they, you know, if they're frustrated with their project and they don't think they can stay in academia, they think, oh I've, I've wasted all this time. I don't know anything. What, what can my skills be used for? And going to the conference last year there was a whole bunch of workshops that kind of came to light. All [00:19:00] the actual skills you actually, you know, try to solve like how many times in your life are you going to be confronted with a problem no one else has solved before. And just the mental gymnastics you have to do to figure that out can really be applied to anything. And there are literally ways people are really good at using that to market themselves in almost any kind of job. And the knowledge of that is something that we really want to push at the conference. And this is something that, so when people, you know, don't really think [00:19:30] that they were on the academic path, they can still use these skills no matter what job they want to go to.

Speaker 4: All right. And I wouldn't necessarily say we encourage people to do PhDs no matter what. There are plenty of jobs out there that you don't need a phd for. And if you know you want to do that job, that's great. You should go and do it. You don't need to go and do a phd. But what we really try and do at the conference is, as Sam said, provide this affirmative message. You have skills, you've learned a lot. You're capable of doing a myriad of things that you might [00:20:00] not have realized. And we really want attendees to walk away from the conference with that feeling that they have all of these qualities that they could apply to just about anything. So one of the really important things in science right now is outreach and being able to communicate to the public. Do you think that some of these other career paths outside of academia might actually facilitate communication and outreach in a way that you might not otherwise in academia? Right.

Speaker 2: That's certainly possible. I think that, and [00:20:30] this is a generalization, but I, I think that academics tend to prefer to only talk to academics. They enjoy talking about their science in great detail and, and, and don't really make compromises on the truth versus whether it's understandable not. And I think people who go into other careers work with people who don't have the same background as them and have no choice but to talk about their science in a way that's [00:21:00] more approachable to people who don't have the same type of training. So I think that could definitely be a happy consequence of more PhDs, uh, transitioning to [inaudible]

Speaker 4: industry. Yeah, and it's true that, um, in terms of outreach, some of the jobs sectors that we've seen the most interest in from our attendees fall into that category. So education and communication are very, very popular.

Speaker 3: Yeah. Science journalism is also another very hot career interest I would say. I know people that [00:21:30] have spent a lot of time writing for the Berkeley Science Review

and on-campus journals and have expanded to blogs online. So that's kind of another interest of people.

Speaker 1: Yeah. If you're just tuning in, you're listening to 90.7 FM K alx Berkeley. My name is Tesla Monson and this is the graduates. And today we are speaking about beyond academia with Claire, Sam and Claire. And so we've heard a little bit about the history of the conference and what's going to happen this year and now we're just sort of like waxing poetic about about [00:22:00] science and about other career paths. What do you think the public thinks about all this? Do you think they know what academia is versus non academia? Do you think they can weigh in on this?

Speaker 4: I think it depends a lot on the background of the people who are thinking about it. So for me it's always been a part of my life because I come from a family of academics and so I know what that lifestyle is like and what it entails. For a lot of people who don't come from that background, [00:22:30] they come to graduate school and have their first sort of brush with what academia is and some people like it and some people don't. But I think it's something that you need to have experienced or have firsthand experience of before you can really say, well I know academia entails x and I know non academia entails. Why this idea though that there are academic and nonacademic jobs I don't think is a dichotomy that's in the head of anybody [00:23:00] who hasn't been in academia though.

Speaker 2: I agree. Actually I can tell you an anecdote. Last year at the conference there were a couple of television reporters who came because we had made a press release and so we were trying to get some, some attention and it's true that they didn't really understand. They didn't really know that, um, there were PhDs that would have a hard time finding jobs as professors or have a hard time finding jobs elsewhere. So I, I do think [00:23:30] it's a concern that is this, this concern, the concern of transitioning to industry is, is, um, is the concern of the, the graduate students. I will say though that I've come across several industry recruiters who are realizing the benefits of having PhDs on their teams and their problem is not knowing how to get in touch with people because they don't really, they don't have the mailing lists. They then, [00:24:00] unless they're trying to hire a phd for this specific technical skills, they don't really know what they want.

Speaker 2: A Phd in neuroscience or a phd in plant biology at T. To give you an example, I, I was talking with someone the other day who went into finance and who has a phd in French literature and it's very unlikely that the people at the finance company were thinking to themselves, we, we really need someone with a phd in French literature for this job. [00:24:30] So my, my point is, is that employers know that they want someone with analytical skills and critical thinking skills, but they don't know how to reach out to them because they don't know what kind of discipline they're looking for.

Speaker 1: Why do, I mean, is this a new thing that Phd's have trouble finding jobs? Is that say more about the PHD system or the job market? It's not really an [inaudible]

Speaker 4: the new thing. There've always been too many PhDs for the academic job market. [00:25:00] I think maybe the attention being paid is a little bit new, but also there's a trend in the last, I don't know what the exact numbers are. Maybe Sam knows a little bit more about that. But there's a trend to have more and more at Phd's graduated and less and less academic jobs available. So I'm sure you've probably heard about the adjunct issues, you know, people graduating and then going into these poorly paid adjunct positions that don't have health insurance and universities using them for their teaching [00:25:30] needs. So there's kind of a, um, the market isn't great, but there are lots of people on the market. At the moment. And I guess that just means that at the moment the issue is particularly pressing.

Speaker 3: I think one of the sources of the issue is that there was a lot of funding for training grants, um, to kind of increase the number of Grad students being trained. Um, so there's a huge number of graduate students and post docs like as everyone has been saying for [00:26:00] the, for the amount of actual tenure track jobs. So

Speaker 1: I guess I should ask you guys, as people who are clearly invested in this conference, do you plan to leave academia or should I not ask?

Speaker 4: It's okay to ask. Um, I do. Yeah. I, but also I'm one of those people who came into graduate school knowing that I probably wasn't going to go into academia. However, for quite a while, actually my first four years maybe I wasn't sure what direction [00:26:30] I would go in. And that's where it, beyond academia has been really helpful. Like Sam, I was at and d last year and I felt really inspired and I started searching and this year I think I may have found something that I'm interested in. So it's really, it's been the primary source for me, for my career development. Yeah,

Speaker 3: I kind of phrase it as I like to keep my options open, but I'm probably not going to stay in academia though. The way my research is going it, I'm always interested in science and research, but [00:27:00] I don't think the actual day to day lab work is for me at a on a longterm level. So I think I will, I'm interested in learning about all the different types of jobs there are and I'm, I'm kind of like some it, it depends who asks me if a, if a professor asks me, I usually say that I'm not sure that I'm still weighing my options, which is somewhat true, but I think it would take a dramatic change for me to, to decide to stay in academia. I, I'm pretty set [00:27:30] on finding a job elsewhere, although I, I think that it's a path that is very well suited to some people.

Speaker 3: I, I prefer things that go a lot faster. I think the pace of academic research is very slow and, and in my view, the thought inefficient. But, um, that's just my, my personal opinion. One of the things also that I like to think about is how much of a change do I

need? I feel like right now my research is [00:28:00] kind of, you know, it's frustrating like, like everyone gets into, it's a frustrating point and I don't know if that maybe just changing a field or the lab or something might make it more interesting to me. But right now I'm, my, my main decision is do I want to do a postdoc or not. And I don't think beyond that I will stay in academia, but I am kind of unsure about whether I realistically want to do a postdoc or not.

Speaker 4: And just for the audience, postdoc is generally a one to four [00:28:30] year paid appointment. Depends on the lab, uh, where you, it's mostly research based in that's before you can become a professor if you're on that track. So I guess I should go back to what Claire said though. No, I say something about a postdoc. Yes, you may. Um, so at least in my field that postdocs over the past few years have been increasing in length kind of dramatically. So at this point, many people doing a postdoc or looking at another phd length commitment. And I think that [00:29:00] has a lot to do with why people decide to leave academia after graduate school. Rather than going into exploring the possibilities of a post doc,

Speaker 3: it becomes kind of this downward spiral in a way because there's so many people waiting for these academic jobs that they stay in postdocs longer and they publish more. So then the bar is raised so that if you want to get a job, you need to do just as long as post doc and you're in, it's like this vicious cycle. So what I'm trying to think what most people should be thinking [00:29:30] about is not going into a post doc as kind of like, well this is just the next step, but do you really want to go through this whole nother, yeah, it's a lot of postdocs I know six or seven years, um, in the molecular biology fields and they still are having trouble trying to find jobs. But then when you've been in it that long, it's kind of like you're so invested that you still want to push forward it. Yeah. It's kind of like I think of that and I'm like, ah, I don't, I don't know if I want to do that.

Speaker 2: [00:30:00] If my, I may just add to that. If you're considering a POSTDOC, I would strongly advise you pick a postdoc that increases your skill set, learn a different skill, try to learn something that would be useful in the industry just as a backup plan if you're really invested in academia because you just never know. So I think it's smart to pick your postdoc that will open doors in both academia and industry.

Speaker 3: And just [00:30:30] a comment where when you said earlier that you don't want to tell your professors, you're thinking about leaving academia, what is, what should we take away from that?

Speaker 2: Some, some professors are openly hostile to the students leaving academia that that's not the case for, for my professor is just the, as some sets professors have no idea what else is out there because they went on to do a postdoc off to their phd and then they got a tenure track position and that's all they know and they just, [00:31:00] they, they're unaware of what else is out there and it is best for them if the students continue on in academia because it means that they've trained someone who has left and gone into

academia and been successful so it looks better for them. I there is also this traditional sense that academia is the the only successful path, but I do think that is changing. In my case, I, I don't really say anything because [00:31:30] I prefer that, that my career path after my graduate education doesn't come into consideration in my interactions with my advisor. I'm definitely going to have to mention it at some points, but until I absolutely have to, I'm going to just make sure I do a good job in lab and, and do my little [inaudible]

Speaker 3: Korea development education on the side. One of the cool things about the conference last year was there was a workshop and one of the things I talked about was how should I talk [00:32:00] to my advisor about doing jobs that I don't think they would approve of. And you know, one of the revelations was that you don't need your advisors like recommendation letter for most jobs. And that was like this bombshell that most people didn't even realize. They're just so used to getting their advisor to approve of everything. And that's just part of the, uh, the, the thinking. Um, problem I think. I think that the opinions of professors range from open hostility to, [00:32:30] it's kind of a more old school way of thinking where anything outside of academia is considered a failure. But more and more the younger, the newer professors, even some of the older professors, they encourage it, but they just don't know what to do.

Speaker 1: So they should go to the beyond academia conference.

Speaker 3: Yeah, there was actually, I, there was a co like a mini conference that was circulating about, it was specifically designed for professors to talk about alternative careers for their students. I don't think it was well attended, [00:33:00] but yeah, the, the knowledge and the kind of just open communication with your advisor is another, it's another issue. It's a problem.

Speaker 2: Yeah. That that workshop was actually led by one of our conference workshop leaders, Doug Kailash, and it wasn't very well attended, but I think it was just a pilot and he said that it went very, very well and that everyone want, there was a, a good open discussion and there were people who genuinely wanted to help their students but didn't know how. The only, I [00:33:30] think thing that, that I wasn't aware of that came out at this workshop is that ulcer professors who would be open otherwise to their students leaving academia the way that is done leaves a bad taste in their mouth. Meaning that oftentimes students who want to leave academia are afraid of talking about it. So their advisor. And so they, they just arrange something and if they're not happy, then though they'll just leave immediately as soon as they found a job and not really [00:34:00] follow up on all of the projects that they're working on. So I think on our side as graduate students, it is good practice to make sure that we've done our bit before running off and doing something else.

Speaker 1: So we're, uh, almost out of time here on the graduates. Would you, what advice would you give to undergraduates or other students who are thinking about who are thinking

about these decisions? Right now? We're trying to think about where they might be 10 20 years from now.

Speaker 3: [00:34:30] So when you're thinking about a degree going on in your education, most degree programs like medical school or law school, there's a kind of a clear path at the end of it. And with Phd, the traditional thinking was that there was a clear path in academia, but, so we're trying to get rid of this kind of anxiety surrounding the fear of not having a direct path if you're not going to go in academia. So what I would say to people, to undergrads that are interested in science [00:35:00] that really, and this is important, you shouldn't really go into a phd unless you really cannot think about doing anything else like at the time I think this is true for me since you're for everyone else is that the science research was kind of the chief interest at the time. I really wasn't thinking about the future that much, but I really knew that I wanted to still work in lab, but if you're thinking about your future, there are many, many options as a phd and this should be an exciting thing. This is another goal of the beyond academia [00:35:30] conference is that it shouldn't be a source of anxiety. It should be one that excites you, that there you can, you can do a million things, can work in government, you can work

Speaker 1: in business, you can work in all these different areas.

Speaker 4: So I have a little bit of a counter story to that. I was actually much less sure I wanted to do a phd. I was definitely interested in science and I definitely wanted to pursue it as far as I could, but I had that anxiety about, you know, what would I do afterwards? And my father being an academic [00:36:00] had lots of things to say about it of course. But one thing he said that kind of stuck with me was that his advisor, when he was doing his phd, told him don't think about it as the topic. Think about it as a hunting license and that's, you know, it's a kind of an old fashioned way of phrasing it, but the idea is that having a phd opens up possibilities, you're able to get a certain level of job that you weren't able to get before. If you're concerned [00:36:30] about financial things, there is still, you still do get paid more if you're a phd in most jobs. And so I kind of went into it viewing it more for the possibilities that it opened up for me and I found that very helpful.

Speaker 2: I agree. I don't think that starting a phd is a decision that you take lightly. Just thinking, oh, I'll just do it for fun because it's, it's difficult, especially in those middle years. It's a long commitments and it's something you want to think about [00:37:00] carefully. But if you're interested in, well, we were talking about science, but because we're, we're stem PhDs, but this is also true for, for the humanities. I found that really I had no idea what I wanted to do in the future and all I knew was that I didn't want to go to med schools. I didn't want to be a doctor. I didn't want to be a lawyer. I didn't want to go to business school, but I liked school so, so I decided to go to Grad school and I think [00:37:30] that even though it's a long five years, I think that the training that you gain and that the extra time and you just, you get a better feel for what you like, what you dislike, if you prefer working with people or by yourself, if you prefer doing experimental work or if you prefer talking about science. I think those are questions that are difficult to answer

when you just have an undergraduate degree because you just haven't been exposed to [00:38:00] these other things. So I think Grad school is a a good option. I think it's definitely a long commitment. So, so be wary. Yeah, five years if you're lucky. Right. At least in my department right in us too. But usually things turn out well for people who have PhDs.

Speaker 1: So remind us again, when is this conference beyond academia? When's it happening? What's happening on March 16th and 17th the two full days at the Clark Kirk campus [00:38:30] on Berkeley. And you can buy tickets now. Nice. And so is the general public or is it mostly focused towards graduate current graduate students?

Speaker 2: It's, it's only relevant to people who are either in graduate school or who have postdocs. Otherwise it's, it probably wouldn't be very useful for you. Most of our attendees will be graduate students and post docs from UC Berkeley, but we're not turning anyone away from other schools.

Speaker 1: And so do you guys have a website or where do people [00:39:00] buy tickets? We do have a website. It's beyond academia.org and we have an event to buy tickets. Awesome. So March 16th and 17th Clark Care Campus, which is here at Berkeley. Yes. And beyond academia, learn about all the other possibilities that are out there, a whole world of possibilities for people with skills in the sciences and humanities, uh, gained here at Berkeley. So any last words from, [00:39:30] from you my guests?

Speaker 2: So just before we end, I just wanted to add that if any of you graduate students out there are listening, we are always looking for people to join the team. We are entirely a graduate student and postdoc run and it's a great volunteering experience. You get to work with a wonderful team, you get to get experience with contacting people in the industry, raising money, organizing, logistics, everything. It's a really great experience. So if you're interested [00:40:00] in contacting us for volunteering or any other question, if you want to sponsor us, you can email us@infoatbeyondacademia.org as well. Thank you for having us on the air. It was really fun. Yeah. Thank you.

Speaker 1: Yeah, thank you. Yeah. So just to summarize, uh, you've been listening to the graduates here on Calex. My name is Tesla Monson. Today I had the great fortune of being joined by Claire Oldfield, Claire Bendix, and Sam Israel, all phd [00:40:30] students here at Berkeley and all involved in the beyond academia conference designed to help graduate students and postdocs understand what sort of opportunities are out there for people with their degrees. So thank you again for being on the graduates. We really enjoyed it. And, uh, hopefully, you know, the con, the conference will be great. I might even see you there. You never know. So we'll have to have you. Yeah, thanks again. Uh, stay tuned. You're listening to 90.7 FM k a l ex Berkeley.