



College of Global Futures Career Path Profile

Tina Phanmanivong

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CGF Graduation Year: Fall 2021

CGF Degree(s): Master of Sustainability Leadership

Other Degree(s): Bachelor of Science Aeronautical Engineering, Purdue University

Current Role: Program Associate

Current Employer: Plug and Play Tech Center

Career Pathway: Academia and education, Consulting, Government agencies, Waste and recycling

How did you end up in your career field?

While studying at Arizona State University for my Master in Sustainability Leadership degree, I interned at the City of Phoenix as a Solid Waste Admin intern. After graduating, I worked as a Waste Management intern at Leslie's doing consulting work. Eventually, I moved on to being a Zero Waste engagement program coordinator at ASU. Now, I work as a program associate at Plug and Play, a company that accelerates, invests, and connects sustainability startups to corporations. Moving across different sectors has been an integral part of my professional journey. Each sector has its own set of priorities and work culture and being able to navigate that space is essential for success and collaboration within my field.

What were some of the key academic/professional relationships that helped you get to where you are today?

The people I followed on LinkedIn. I would attend webinars and presentations that interested me. If I found the speakers to be motivating or captivating I would follow them on LinkedIn afterwards. Eventually, they would post about open job positions in their organizations and I would apply for them. This is how I found two of my jobs!

What was your career "aha" moment?

Growing up in Alaska I always had a profound appreciation for its natural beauty. I knew I wanted to protect it in its pristine condition. I loved spending time outside camping, fishing, hiking, and boating so I was extremely passionate about this cause. I would volunteer for many park clean ups growing up, but I knew that

was not enough. I wanted to make a career of sustainability because it is a problem I could spend every day thinking about and work on trying to solve.

What is something that surprised you about your career path?

I needed to separate my career and my personal identity. I am passionate about sustainability and doing better for the planet, but not many people share that same sentiment. My priorities were different from theirs and so it became frustrating when my ideas and programs would face opposition and hit a wall. I learned that I had to detach my work from my personal self-worth. I am one person trying to do my best and that is enough. Climate change is not going to be solved by one person. Billions of people are contributing to the problem so this needs to be a collaborative effort. I learned to be patient and to be ok with not seeing the results I wanted right away.