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Major: English Writing & Sustainable Practice

Title: Climate Equity Programs Associate

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What is the day in the life like at your job? What are typical job responsibilities for someone in this role?

Day to day, my work focuses on program administration and management of 3 key climate equity programs focused on energy efficiency building upgrades in low-income housing, building out building electrification readiness, and launching an online engagement platform to solicit resident feedback to support the development of the 5-year sustainability policy. My responsibilities move between the following buckets: tracking program participant data and project deliverables, getting out into neighborhoods to engage the community sustainability issues like green workforce development and food access, or maintaining new climate platform technologies with content-writing or graphics curation.

No day is the same by any means, each day gives a variety of projects or tasks to juggle – so there’s always opportunities for new ideas to broaden your horizons!

What do you love about your job?

I love the combination of hands-on work and intellectual, strategic thinking. It’s exciting to work at the intersection of both these modes and I love to make tangible, positive change that improves the quality of life of communities and the city as a whole! In sustainability, there’s always new subject matter to learn and approaches to improve outcomes, so I love how curiosity is innately interwoven and all the generous coworkers/people in this field who are always ready to share.

What is challenging about your role?

The variability of the work and lack of staff capacity are most challenging. Specifically, the unknowns of city government and political realities can complicate the likelihood of successfully implementing a new project, particularly in terms of timeline turnaround and funding support. I often seek quality first in a project then results, so discerning when to swap my sequence is very helpful. Managing priorities and the time to give them is also an ongoing learning opportunity.

What are the benefits of working in this field?

The problem-solving is dynamic for the day-in and day-out and the multi-faceted nature of sustainability allows one to be a life-long learner across many applied disciplines. Endless opportunity to make an impact directly in your community and the world at large and earn a healthy income. The field will only continue growing as the public and private sector invest more financially.

What experiences did you have that prepared you for this role? What types of activities were you involved in at Lipscomb or during college that helped develop your skills? And/or what about your first jobs helped you obtain a more desired career?

Lipscomb's English studies and Sustainability major prepared me with critical thinking, writing skills, and an understanding of how to frame conversations and problems/solutions. The importance of critical thinking cannot be understated. LU's professors' support, mentorship, and education were transformational, intellectually and personally.

Additionally, the Writing Center is an incredible resource for students seeking a multi-disciplinary profession– pursue any opportunities to practice your communication skills – Speech 101, blog-writing, or public speaking once a semester (even if it's 5 minutes)! Effective communication is key for success in sustainability. The student-run Diverse Student Coalition developed my skills in leadership, accomplishing goals through a team with multi-faceted skill sets and backgrounds, and engaging in community-building. My DSC experiences continue to ground me and I still learn from these experiences amidst my current professional context. DSC's social justice work is a primary motivator for my desire for a well-rounded, holistic career. Also, independent studies were excellent environments to build initiative and follow-through in a real-work context beyond Lipscomb.

What do you see happening in the future for these types of careers?

I see sustainability practitioners being key players across organizations and expanding into vital, sought-out leaders throughout all industries and institutions in our working lifetime.

City, state, and federal governments are actively hiring skilled people now. So, I think sustainability-minded careers are just getting started in their scope, integration, and place in our workforce and economy to improve our society's well-being.

What advice do you have for a student considering a career in your profession?

Learn broadly in your classes and then deepen into your interests when you identify them. Find a supervisor who can teach you effective skills and learn deeply from through their actions – or seek out a mentor who can support you in your specific career goals and trajectory. Pursue intentional professional experiences while in school to enrich your academic learning and expand your lived context & imagination for what work you want to do after graduation! Take advantage of the Career Development Center's resources to help you reflect throughout these experiences. Find or create a community you thrive in and can give/receive support, learn from, and find joy in can only help you grow! And take intentional breaks/rest/fun. These bigger life-learnings have kept me interested, refreshed, and engaged amidst new accomplishments and uncertain transitions. ☺