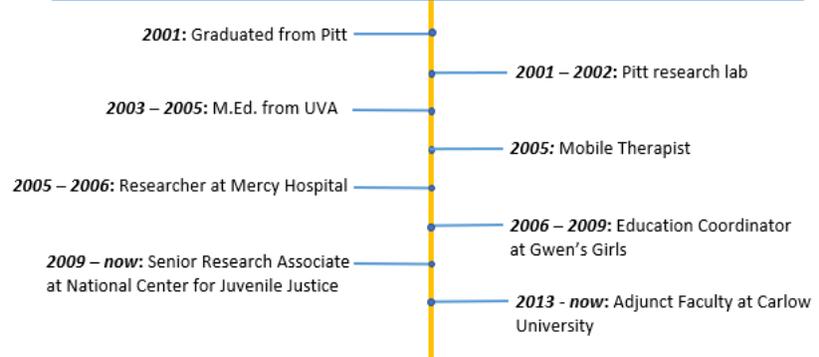




Teri Deal

Interviewed by: Rachel Hopkins

Career Timeline



Currently at: National Center for Juvenile Justice; Carlow University

Position: Senior Research Associate; Adjunct Faculty

Graduated: 2001

Degrees: Psychology (B.S.); Neuroscience Minor

Graduate Studies: Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Counseling from the University of Virginia

What do you currently do? How do you feel your position is related to Psychology?

I am currently a Senior Research Associate for the National Center for Juvenile Justice, as well as an adjunct faculty member at Carlow University. There are a lot of parallels between my position and Psychology. Right now, in juvenile justice system, there’s a push to incorporate developmental psychology. There’s also a strong focus on substance use in kids, and many community programs use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, so that kind of knowledge comes in.

Most useful from the program was exposure to different types of research programs. I was a dork who loved Research Methods. I teach it now at Carlow. Seeing how studies are designed and working with researchers was what I loved to do, and there are no shortage of opportunities for that here.

What was your career path after graduating from Pitt?

I started college wanting to be a doctor. I took all the AP classes in high school. When I got here [to Pitt], it wasn’t what appealed to me, and I fell into psychology because I liked research. I worked at a smoking and sleep research lab, and I really enjoyed the “systematic-ness” of research. I also wanted to help people. It’s kind of unusual to be social work-y but nerdy about math, organization, systems, and things. I thought I’d go into psych research.

Juvenile justice system; Research methods; Research



Afterward, I worked at an alcohol and sleep research lab. At 22, I didn't know what I wanted to do, so it's basically a "throw a dart at a map" story. My husband was at UVA, and school counseling sounded interesting. I would be able to help people and get summers off, and it was a great experience.

When I left and came back to Pennsylvania, I didn't have a license here yet. I got a job as a mobile therapist for a while, and then a research job at Mercy Hospital. After the grant ended, I got connected with Gwen's Girls and became an Education Coordinator. I realized I was not cut out to work with kids and families because I take everything home with me and get too attached. It takes a special type of person to do that, which just wasn't me. I wasn't as happy as I could be, but I am thankful for the opportunity.

I met my current boss after seeing her speak at a Carlow conference about girls in the justice system. Her presentation and research interested me, so I kept tabs on her organization. When they had an opening, it was to help nonprofit agencies collect and use data. So almost 10 years ago I was hired to work on a project with nonprofits on a grant system. As that portion ended, I got to learn from people who had been there for decades, and I was mentored. Now, I direct federally-funded projects, deliver training and technology programs, and make data decisions about juvenile justice.

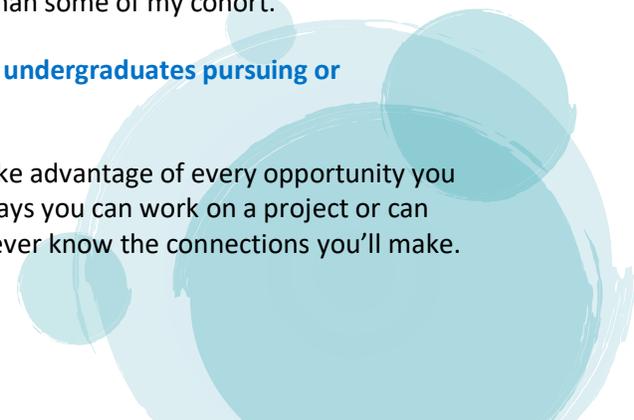
In sum, it was a lot of trial and error, and networking that got me to where I am now.

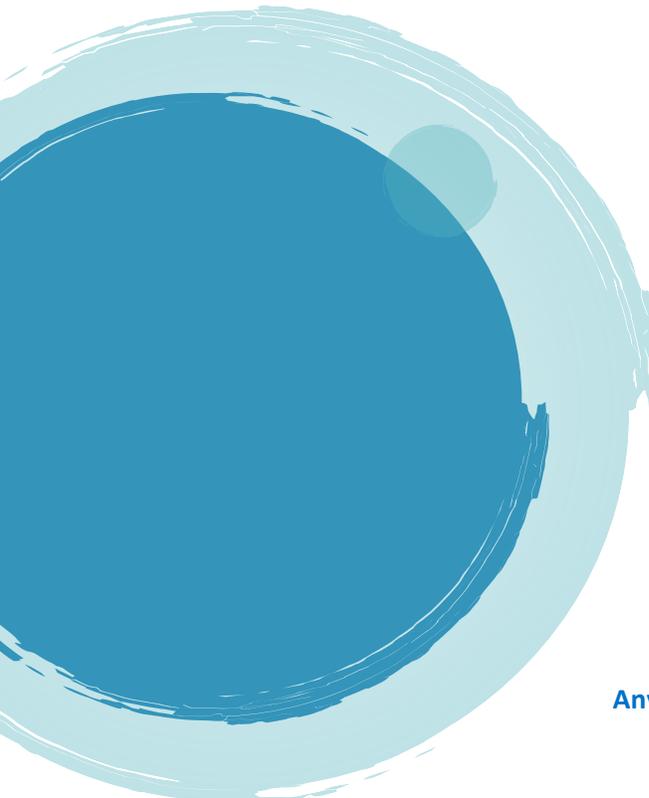
Are there any skills you wish you had the opportunity to develop better in college?

In retrospect, there are some classes that I would have taken. For instance, I think I'd benefit from more policy classes, specifically classes related to politics, local politics, and policy development because that feeds into my current job. If I was there now, I'd take programming classes as well. I never felt like, "Oh, I didn't get this from college." I'm a believer in the idea that you get what you put in, and I took a wide array of classes. When I got to grad school, I was better prepared for it than some of my cohort.

What advice would you give to undergraduates pursuing or graduating from Psychology?

For those pursuing: First, take advantage of every opportunity you have, anytime a professor says you can work on a project or can help out a nonprofit. You never know the connections you'll make.





Network and experience new things. Secondly, one thing I never understood even after graduate school was the sheer number of jobs there are. When I was in high school, I didn't know my job existed. More jobs exist now than before. In college you tend to have blinders for what you want to do—be open.

For graduates: Real life experience is critical. People who go straight from undergrad into graduate school, or from graduation into the workforce are at a deficit, especially for social work, community psychology, or working in a community environment. You need feet on the ground before you can go around and tell people how to run their programs or their life. Real life experience in communities is valuable.

Any tips for undergrads who are interested in your career?

Get real world experience, especially for researchers. That's the number one thing. Also, if you get an opportunity teach, take it. Part of the job of a researcher is to convey your research in ways others can understand. In my experience, an example is talking to probation officers. You would talk to them different than to other researchers, so it's important to get experience talking, teaching, presenting.

