

Transitions: Advice for Young Professionals

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**ALC1 Learning &
Resources Committee**



DORIS DUKE
CONSERVATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM
ALUMNI NETWORK

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Hello DDCSP Alumni,

Thanks for reading our guide! As fellow alumni of the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Programs we wanted to provide skills that will be useful to you in the next step of your journey. Along these lines we helped to create the first Learning & Resources Committee for the DDCSP Alumni network. Our vision for this group included having alumni share their knowledge of hard/technical skills (software, grant writing, etc.) and soft skills (eg: tips on navigating the environmental field). We also wanted our committee to be able to share resources like journal subscriptions. While we haven't figured out how to do that yet, we created this guide with FAQ style advice from professionals in the environmental field and a short GIS guide for beginners.

If you have any comments, feedback, questions, or suggestions about the guide or about the committee as a whole please get in touch with Teri Brezner (teri@elpnet.org) with Learning & Resources Committee in the subject line. We hope this guide is useful and that the 2nd Alumni Leadership Cohort will improve upon our vision.

Good luck!

Warm Regards,
ALC1 Learning & Resources Committee
Vincent Irizarry (NAU), Guilu Murphy (UM), Zach Nemec (NAU)



Interview with Tasha Naula: The Journey of a Latinx Environmental Professional

My name is Vincent S. Irizarry, I am an alum of the DDCSP Northern Arizona University 2014 cohort. I am currently with The New York City Department of Transportation as a Community Associate. I advocate for the implementation of green infrastructure and improved transit for New Yorkers. I hold my undergraduate degree from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Urban Studies and Anthropology. In the past, I have interned with The Nature Conservancy's youth programs at the high school and collegiate level.

I will be interviewing a peer and friend of mine, Tasha Naula who has progressed as an environmental professional in New York City. Tasha, and I met at our urban environmental high school in New York City. As environmental students of Latinx descent, We are both familiar with issues in conservation and diversity especially within the work itself, and dealing with perspectives of those in conservation organizations.

This interview will highlight Tasha's current work, and give current DDCSP students an opportunity to see what types of positions and experiences are out there in the conservation world.



Tasha wheeling materials for green work in Brooklyn, NY

Tasha Naula is currently a Garden Educator and a Cooking Coordinator at City Growers in New York. She holds her undergraduate degree from the University of Vermont where she has worked in Community Development at the domestic and international level. As an environmental professional of Latinx descent who grew up in Jackson Heights-East Elmhurst section of Queens, New York City, she looks forward to engaging the next generation of students within our urban environment through her continued garden education work. In addition to Tasha's environmental work, she is interested in the current demographic changes within her vibrant immigrant community including gentrification and changes in the neighborhood regarding equitable access for housing and resources.

How did you become interested in environmental work as a career?

I spent four years at The University of Vermont studying community development. Through these courses I realized that in order to address our changing environment, I would need to work with leaders and community members to have a significant impact.

Did you feel a difference working with the community in Vermont? How could you describe the learning experience for fellow environmental students of color?

There was a difference during the discussion portion of my community development courses. I was forced to reflect on my identity as a Latinx/Latina woman more so than I wanted to. While constantly required to take courses and put my identity forth in every role and opportunity I was given there were many moments where I felt uncomfortable and attacked in these conversations.

What did you do to overcome the adversity of the situation?

There were safe spaces and reflection journals. The reflection journals helped me strengthen my character. I was able to deepen my self-awareness in an inclusive place where people of different backgrounds, cultures, and economic status' blended beautifully.



Tasha Naula pictured at the NYC Parks arsenal in Central Park, NY receiving her tree pruning certificate

Can you highlight current projects in New York City?

I am interested in hearing your experiences while working with diverse communities.

I am currently working as a Garden Educator and Cooking Coordinator at City Growers based in Brooklyn, New York. I work directly with New York City youth from different backgrounds culturally, socially, and economically. I teach them about urban gardening, healthy eating, and cooking demonstrations using the crops and produce that are grown on our rooftop farm. I have worked with a range of students and having met so many students of diverse backgrounds has enhanced my cultural competency.



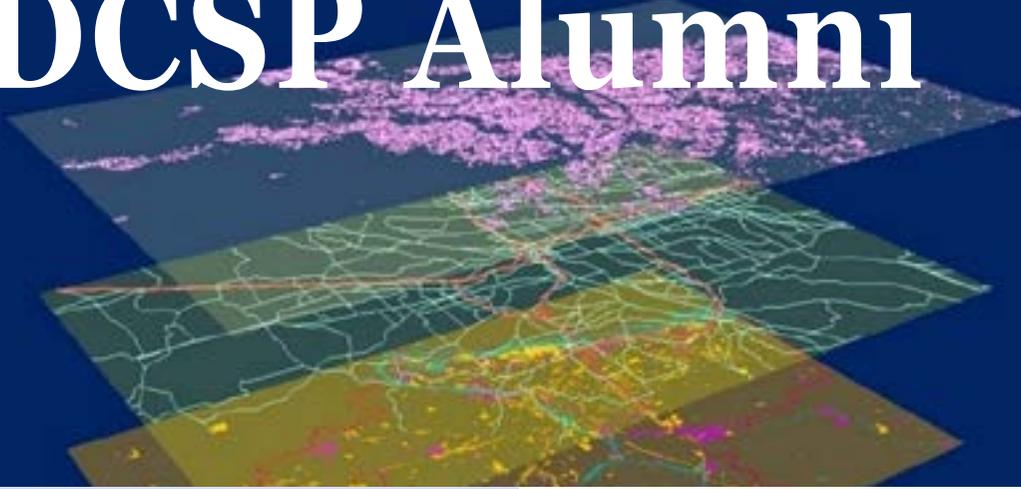
How do you engage diverse students?

I use recipes from the diverse cultures of the students and adapt them to use fresh ingredients. I was excited to see that one using a dish from one student's culture, the student asked for seconds and was filled with joy as we prepared the food. Simultaneously, students can be nervous or hesitant to try foods from different cultures that they have not seen before. I teach the students to respect the food, and the culture that the food comes from. I will find a story online or facts about the food to provide more knowledge to the students on what we will be preparing for that day. As a way to teach respect and appreciation, I break down the ingredients, steps, and explain the importance of the foods for the students.

Do you have advice for young environmental professionals of color? What suggestions do you have for urban residents to become involved in nature?

My advice for POC is to get outdoors utilize the space we were once deprived. Let's reclaim them as ours by inviting our friends and family. The best environmentalists I have seen come from little kids playing in the dirt looking for some worms and then hearing from their parents that's all they could talk about. Make these needed connections.

GIS Guide for DDCSP Alumni



Looking up GIS tutorials can be overwhelming if you don't know where to start. This guide provides helpful links and resources for the absolute GIS beginner including important basic tools and skills.

Basics

- [Article about GIS uses](#)
- Types of [GIS software](#)
- [Raster VS. Vector GIS Data](#)
- [Common ArcGIS file extensions](#)

Projected Coordinate Systems

A projected coordinate system is always based on a geographic coordinate system that is based on a sphere or spheroid.

- About [Map Projections](#)- changes distortion of maps
- How to change the coordinate system in ArcGIS ([6 min youtube](#))

Generally good ones for the US: Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM, left) and State Plane, don't use Geographic Coordinates!

Projections of the United States

Geographic Coordinates



Albers Equal Area Projection



Useful GIS Skills (ArgGIS specific)

Tools

- Select tool ([9 min youtube](#))
- Time Slider ([2 min youtube](#))

Data

- [Importing Excel data](#)
- [Editing values in a table in GIS, 11 min youtube](#)
- How to Join Data Tables to Data/Map Layers- [2 min youtube](#)

Editing

- [Quick overview](#)- the editor toolbar is very helpful for editing map features
- Quick overview of [how to use the editor](#)
- [6 min youtube](#)

Georeferencing ([10 min youtube](#))

Georeferencing is the process of taking a digital image, it could be an airphoto, a scanned geographic map, or a picture of a topographic map, and adding geographic information to the image so that GIS or mapping software can 'place' the image in its appropriate real world location. ([Source](#))

Geocoding ([5 min youtube](#), [PDF guide](#))

Geocoding is the process of linking addresses or coordinates to an actual place on the map. More about geocoding [here](#).

Thematic Maps ([2 min youtube](#))

A thematic map is a map that emphasizes a particular theme or special topic such as the average distribution of rainfall in an area. They are different from general reference maps because they do not just show natural features like rivers, cities, political subdivisions and highways. ([Source](#))



| customers | | | | |
|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|---------|---|
| | NAME | ADDRESS | CITY | S |
| 1 | Ace Market | 1171 REDMONT AVE NE | ATLANTA | G |
| 2 | Andrew's Gasoline | 1670 W PEACHTREE ST NE | ATLANTA | G |
| 3 | AP Supermarket | 4595 BEVERLY RD NE | | G |
| 4 | Atlanta Market | 241 16TH ST SW | ATLANTA | G |



More Resources

- [How to Go from GIS Novice to Pro without Spending a Dime](#)
- Recommended textbook-- [The GIS 20: Essential Skills](#) by Gina Clemmer
 - See if you can check it out from a university library if you don't want to buy it
- More advanced [GIS ideas and tutorials](#)
- ArcGIS online- [storymaps](#)
 - [Example](#) of a storymap and ArcGIS online uses



Online courses:

- FREE-- [MIT](#) w/ data and exercises, [ESRI MOOC](#) (massive open online courses)
- Paid-- [Coursera](#) and [UC Davis](#) (ask about the possibility auditing for free) and [Lynda](#)

Possible Data sources:

- US Census [shapefiles for states, counties, zip codes, census tracts, etc.](#)
- [US Census data](#)



DDCSP People who have GIS experience for more specific questions:

Guilu Murphy— egmurphy@wesleyan.edu (UM)
Xavier Nelson— xnelson@brandeis.edu (UM)
Jessica Rioja— jessicariojas97@gmail.com (UM)
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Ethan Bott— swimbott@gmail.com (UW)
Saloni Dagli— sdagli@umich.edu (UW)

Your home and DDCSP university almost certainly have professors or graduate students well versed in GIS programs that could be great (probably better) resources! Look up their Earth/Environmental Sciences/Geography department and ask around!

Interview with Dr. Melissa Mark: (Director of DDCSP@NAU)

Post-Graduation Transitions

What did you do right after you graduated from undergrad?
How was the transition from undergrad to this position?

Well, I had a pretty interesting story! After undergrad, I was pretty sure I wanted to do my PhD in primatology, specifically behavioral ecology of Neotropical primates. Since I knew I wanted to go to grad school, I took my GREs in my senior year, so I wouldn't have to worry about them any more. However, I had never worked in the tropics before, or with primates, so I wanted to get some experience working as a field assistant before applying to graduate school. Despite having 3 years of experience doing fieldwork with lizards, I could not find a position because everyone wanted someone with tropical experience. I finally got a job working with a PhD student, Francis Bossuyt, at Cocha Cashu Field Station in Peru. The plan was to travel in Peru with my mom and my sister for a few weeks, and then start my new job in July. A couple of months before I was to start, Francis disappeared. He was declared dead a few months later. This accident was a terrible tragedy for Francis and his family, and by comparison the impact on me was small. But there I was, just about to graduate, and no post-college plan. So I did what any unmoored recent graduate does- I moved home! I tried to find another job working with primates, but since most interviewed 6 months out for a minimum 6-month position, it seemed that even if I got one, I would have to delay grad school by a year. I decided I didn't want to delay, and I would just concentrate on saving money for that next step. So I worked as a cocktail waitress, went out way too much, and weighed my options.

A couple months before graduation, I had started dating a friend who moved to Fairbanks, Alaska for grad school. We had agreed not to do long distance, but one day when I was complaining about my home situation to him on the phone, he suggested I move up there. Well, either way I would be waitressing and living rent free, so I decided to take the adventure! So I lived with my boyfriend in Fairbanks in a cabin, saw the northern lights, learned how to cross-country ski in the dark, hiked Denali, stumbled across grizzly bear and moose, and went halibut fishing. At the end of that summer, before moving to New York for grad school, I volunteered doing bird counts near ANWR for one of our friends. It was the first time I really got into birds, which later on, would become my passion.

What were the challenges you faced during this time?

The challenges I faced during this time revolved primarily around uncertainty. It felt like taking a step backwards to move back home, and I struggled to find a job in my field. It was difficult for me, after being so successful academically, to feel like I was not progressing. I did not deal well with the failure of losing the job with Francis, even though it was just a freak accident. I felt the need to prove I was successful, and the best way to do that was to go to grad school. I felt so pressured to continue my pathway to “success” that I stopped asking myself what I really wanted. And that pressure was mostly internal.

“working for a few years in a job to make money is not a failure”

What skills, information, or advice did you wish you had in the transition period and the first position you had right out of undergrad?

“it was ok to take some time to figure things out”

“I wish I had been more honest with my family and friends about my fears and asked for more support”

I would tell 2000 me that it is fine to take a year off and explore her options. I would have also told me to take time for some more adventures, or to spend more time in Alaska. I would also tell younger me that working for a few years in a job to make money is not a failure. Sometimes you have to take side pathways out of necessity, but if you are passionate and committed, you will find your way back to your true calling, and being able to do it with a degree of financial security is an advantage. I wish I had talked to more friends and mentors, and I wish that someone would have told me that it was ok to take some time to figure things out. I did not deal well with perceived failure at the time, and I wish I had been more honest with my family and friends about my fears and asked for more support. I did have certain personality characteristics that helped me during this time, such as my love of adventure, a willingness to take opportunities, a strong sense of purpose, and an ability to adapt to new situations. I also had a lot of support from my family and friends.

I would also tell 2000 me to be open to a broader diversity of research jobs in the tropics, rather than being fixated on only one kind of job. I was single-mindedly pursuing opportunities working with primates in South America and I probably missed some other opportunities for working in other regions with other taxa. I would have advised 2000 me to take any job as a field assistant in the tropics, even if it would have meant delaying grad school. I think I would have had better luck finding a field position if I had leveraged my connections better. I didn't like "networking", it always felt selfish or smarmy. But networking is the best way to find opportunities, and as long as you are sincere and reciprocate any favors, it can build positive relationships. I also wished I had asked for more help preparing my applications and interviews. I thought I should be able to do everything on my own, when I really needed the advice of a mentor who had experience hiring people for field positions.

"networking is the best way to find opportunities, and as long as you are sincere and reciprocate any favors, it can build positive relationships"

"I felt that I needed to project an image of success, strength, and independence. ...I felt like I had something to prove, as a woman in science"

I think during this transition time I was my best ally and my worst enemy. I was aided by my love of adventure, a willingness to take opportunities, a strong sense of purpose, and an ability to adapt to new situations. However, I also felt that I needed to project an image of success, strength, and independence. I didn't ask for help and I felt like I had something to prove, as a woman in science. I wish I had more confidence and had taken the time to define what success would look like for me. My advice to people in this stage would be to take advantage of opportunities, ask for help, recognize that there is more than one pathway to any professional goal, and trust your instincts. YOU are the only person who can define success for yourself.

"take advantage of opportunities, ask for help, recognize that there is more than one pathway to any professional goal, and trust your instincts. YOU are the only person who can define success for yourself"