10 Questions for a Successful Working Professional

Amy Jacobson – Assistant Registrar

M.S. Counseling, with a concentration in Higher Education
Alumni May 2008

A college registrar is responsible for maintaining the registration and matriculation requirements at a college or university. One of the duties of a college registrar is to work with the deans in various academic departments within the college to determine the educational course requirements for graduation within each degree program. The registrar also develops course scheduling, along with other members of the registration department. He or she also develops procedures to be used in the registration department, and ensures that those procedures are being successfully followed. A registrar may also help to determine requirements for students wishing to enter the college.

1. Why did you decide to become an Assistant Registrar?

*I became an Assistant Registrar because, while I enjoyed my previous position as an Academic Counselor, I also wanted to get a feel for working more behind the scenes performing transfer evaluations, developing articulation agreements, overseeing academic policies, and coordinating graduation-related activities. In the position of Assistant Registrar, I still work with students on a daily basis; however I perform many management/administrative functions as well. I am able to use my transferrable skills from previous positions I have held in conjunction with my education in this position. I am also using and further developing my supervisory skills as I am responsible for supervising the Registrar Office staff.*

2. What are the educational requirements to become an Assistant Registrar? Is an advanced degree or certification necessary or beneficial to gaining employment in your field?

*The educational requirement for an assistant registrar position is typically a bachelor’s degree; however, a master’s degree is highly preferred. Having some experience in higher education (in student services, academic records, advising, admissions, etc.) is also required. It helps immensely to have computer skills in programs such as Microsoft Access, Banner, DegreeWorks, or Scribe.*

3. What is a typical work day like for you? (i.e. job responsibilities)

*A typical day for me as an assistant registrar involves responding to student, faculty and staff inquiries related to transcript evaluations, coursework, degree audits, and graduation. I also become really busy right before graduation, because I am heavily involved in coordinating certain aspects of commencement. I have to make sure that students are on track to graduate,*
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process graduation related petitions, represent the office on the Graduation Committee, and put together the commencement brochure. My day also consists of supervising staff members and student workers, attending meetings, and handling other issues as they arise.

4. What do you like and dislike most about your job?

The things I like most about my job are working with students, performing transfer evaluations (I like detail work) and training student workers.

The things I like least about my job are when I have to tell students they are not graduating, and working in Banner. (Anyone who works with Banner would understand!)

5. What kind of individual (in terms of talent and personality) would be best suited for your job, and why?

To be successful in an Assistant Registrar position, an individual should be detail-oriented and organized. One should also have the ability to work well with others and respond to stressful situations in a calm manner. There are times when the Assistant Registrar has to respond to upset parents, students and faculty, so the individual should feel comfortable explaining and enforcing policies and procedures that are challenged at times. Computer skills, the ability to learn about curriculum/student learning outcomes, and supervisory ability are also important in this position.

6. What kinds of jobs are available for someone entering into your field today?

There are a variety of positions in a Registrar’s Office such as Registrar, Associate Registrar, Assistant Registrar, Scheduling Coordinator, Articulation Officer, and Department Assistant. The nature of the positions and how much responsibility each position entails depends on how the college is structured. For example, being that I work for a small, private, liberal arts college, there are four of us in the Registrar’s Office; at a larger university, there can be quite a number more.

7. What are some suggestions you could give to a student to give him/her an edge on the competition?

Interning at a Registrar’s Office or Admissions Office (the Registrar’s Office and Admissions Office usually work together a great deal) is a great way to get your foot in the door. Remembering the value of highlighting transferrable skills such as supervisory experience, being
computer savvy, and having the ability to perform administrative work is also important. Learning additional (relevant) computer programs is also a way to get an edge on the competition. Understanding what the Registrar’s Office does and why, and a knowledge of FERPA is important as well.

8. What was your interview process like (i.e. one-on-one, panel), day long? What kinds of questions did they ask?

The interview process that I went through for my current position involved 3 one-on-one interviews on different days. The types of questions that I was asked were:

-What were your two most significant achievements in your previous or current positions?
-How would you describe your management style?
-Describe your knowledge and use of computers in the workplace.

9. What is the pay scale like for your position, and are there possibilities for advancement?

The pay scale can vary for this position depending on the candidate’s education and work history. Someone with a Master’s Degree and at least one year of relevant experience can ask for a higher salary than someone who has just one or the other (a Master’s degree can usually substitute for one year of experience). The pay for an Assistant Registrar typically ranges from $35-$50K per year. There are opportunities to advance from Assistant Registrar to Associate Registrar and then to Registrar.

10. Lastly, what is one piece of advice you could give to someone interested in pursuing a career in your field?

The one piece of advice I would give to someone wanting a career in this field would be to Network. Networking is a great way to meet professionals in the field, to learn about positions that may become available, and to learn about the field from people who are actually in the field.