Informational Interview

I was interested in going into the data analytics field through the College of Public Health so for my informational interview I decided to interview someone who worked in the field. I was unable to meet them in person however but I was still able to get good insight on their career. We had a great lengthy conversation however about her office and such. She described her work environment as a big and nice office space where she is able to not only have her own space but is still able to communicate with others when necessary. She described it as business casual because she is alone most of the time but she still needs needs to dress appropriate because it is an insurance company. I found this description of the work environment to be pretty interesting and compelling to me.

When talking about what sparked her interest in data analytics she actually mentioned to me how she was actually on the premed track before realizing it was not a good fit for her. This made me think because I am currently on the pre med track but I have had my doubts so far like she did. She also mentioned that being a data analyst in healthcare requires one to analyze administrative claims and provide health reports to consumers letting them see the improvements. Also see mentioned that there is no typical day because each day has different tasks such as going and demonstrating information to customers or creating new data, so to be a potential hire one must have the skill of adaptability. Erica also mentioned that her favorite part

of her job was when she is able to combine the populations health with analytics using Tableau, meaning that one should have knowledge in computer software in order to perform tasks.

Erica also told me her dislikes about the job. One of her dislikes was how it is very frustrating for her sometimes because she is given a limited amount of information and she has to use that little information to somehow demonstrate data. For example, most of the time she is only given healthcare claims, which only include the payment and she sometimes needs more information to see if the product was effective or it was prescribed and had no effect. She cannot get this data however due to patient data being confidential which can make her job difficult. She also mentioned that she does not like that she does not get to interact with customers a lot, she gets to occasionally but for the most part she is in her office compiling data. Hearing this information made me wonder if I would be able to deal with these problems. I determined that I would not be able to deal with these problems because my main goal in majoring in public health is to communicate with others in order to find a solution rather than just looking and creating data.

During the interview Erica also mentioned how although this is an old career field it advances with technology quickly. She told me that if I was interested in data analytics I should definitely consider taking coding and programing classes along with learning how to use statistical software because this knowledge is vital to be able to find a job. When I heard her say

this I began to reconsider data analytics because I am not really passionate or somewhat interested in computer science and because of this I think it would be very challenging for myself to go into this field.

Erica did mention other various career paths for public health such as working for the CDC and just focusing on the analytical side of health rather than the interaction among individuals. She mentioned several opportunities for me as I move up such as shadowing for various public health fields that I am interested in so I know what I am getting myself into. She also mentioned that I should travel abroad because that will not only show me different situations and problems people face but it will also give me a better perspective when analyzing problems. Erica also suggested that I do at least one internship even though she didn't because it will help show me the variety of day to day activities so I become well prepared. She told me I could probably land an internship by just reaching out to other public health alumni through alumnifire because that is actually how she found her first job. She also mentioned again that the main qualification looked at when sorting through candidates is if they have knowledge of statistical software and if so that will definitely differentiate you from others.

Overall, I thought the informational interview went pretty well. I was able to hear some insight on a career I was pondering on as well as receiving advice on how to become a good candidate for this position. The interview did not go as expected; originally I thought that I would not learn as much as I did and it would be similar advice as what I was given when

looking up skills needed on google. I think what really made the informational interview

worthwhile was learning that inorder to succeed in this field I must know computer science. This

really made me think and surprised me because coming into the interview it never crossed my

mind that I would have to know all this new software. However, it makes sense because the

software not only makes ones job easier but prevents most human error and provides safe

storage. Since I now have more knowledge on the data analytics side of public health I have

assured myself that this path is not for me due to the amount of knowledge in computer science I

am expected to know. I say this because I do not find statistical software remotely interesting

and I do not think I would enjoy my job if most of it consisted with me using these systems.

Erica gave me some advice as well for my career in public health. First, she mentioned

that I should not have self doubt in my capabilities when learning new things such as coding

because it will hold you back in most cases. Also she told me that I could connect with her on

LinkedIn so I am able to get started on my mission of connecting with more public health alumni

so I can be exposed to opportunities such as job shadowing or even an internship. My next step

in career planning is to explore other careers possible in public health because I have just

narrowed it down by determining that data analytics is not of my interests. I think that the next

career I plan to explore is biostatistics because I am drawn to it due to a possible career listed is

working for the CDC. I think I will most likely look for another alumni from the college of

public health that is working as a biostatician, so I am able to see the opportunities and

challenges that come with it like I was with data analytics to help me determine if the career

path.