



ALUMNAE SPOTLIGHT

PRESENTED BY THE PROFESSIONAL ALUMNAE COMMUNITY



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After SHA, I attended Penn State University, where I studied Biological Engineering with a focus in food & bioprocessing. Going into my senior year, I was an intern at Johnson & Johnson in Spring House, PA, working in their global development clinical operations department within the oncology sector. I made a lot of good connections and was able to return as a contract service employee for J&J through a company called DOCS Global, which is now a part of ICON Clinical Research. I worked as a Global Clinical Trial Assistant in early development oncology for 3 years before being promoted to a Clinical Trial Manager. When I was promoted, I moved into the Immunology department, working on psoriatic arthritis studies. After two years in the role, I was hired as a clinical trial manager as a J&J employee, which was a huge goal of mine! 2 years after that, I was promoted to Senior Clinical Trial Manager and have been in that role for almost 4 years!! I have worked on clinical trials for multiple myeloma, psoriatic arthritis, psoriasis, and lupus.

Can you share a bit about your journey from college to where you are today? How does what you studied in school inform your work today?

I always liked math and science, but had no idea what I wanted to do with that. I applied to schools for engineering because it seemed like a good fit, was practical, and would ultimately lead me to a job. When applying to schools, I loved that Penn State had so many types of engineering because it would allow me more time to figure out what I really liked and wanted to do in future work. I took Chemical, Mechanical, Architectural, Industrial, and Bioengineering classes throughout college, and while I liked aspects of most of them, the science in Bioengineering really excited me. I felt like I could apply this to a lot of different industries in exciting ways. I always kind of laugh at myself because while I worked hard to earn an Engineering Degree, I never really practiced as an “engineer”. But that doesn’t mean I don’t use what I learned in school. I apply a lot of the concepts of engineering to my work and daily life by using critical thinking and problem-solving skills. While I luckily don’t have to do any complex equations anymore, I still use a lot of my engineering skills in different ways.

Were there any pivotal moments or challenges that shaped your professional journey? How did you overcome those? How did they help you grow?

I applied to this one role, which I thought I would be a good fit for, probably 7 times, and never even got an interview. On paper, I had almost all of the qualifications and some extra ones, and could not understand why they wouldn’t consider me (I still don’t know why), but I continued in the role I was in. Soon after another rejection, I was approached for the job I ultimately got, which was actually one level higher than what I was initially applying for. This was a scary leap at the time, but I had a manager and team members who encouraged me to go for it—I interviewed and got the job and have been in this role since. It’s a good reminder that things will work out, and sometimes not getting what we think we want can be a blessing in disguise for something better to come.

What's a project, trial, or other professional achievement that you're especially proud of?

I am fortunate to have been a part of a lot of projects that I am extremely proud of. One of the first trials I worked on was Johnson & Johnson's first CAR-T therapy study, which at the time was a first-in-human trial. The medicine has now been FDA-approved and is available for patients globally. I have seen several of the medicines I've worked on be approved for use, which reminds me of why I keep doing the job that I am in!!

What's something about your job that would surprise people?

I am always surprised, impressed, and proud of how many women I work with in STEM. In college, I was one of three females in a 60-person class, and now in my current role, it is actually majority women. Working with a large team of women is awesome because I think a female-focused team brings a unique perspective and understanding of work-life balance.

What advice would you give other women interested in healthcare, science, or pharma careers?

This is probably relevant for any industry, but NETWORK! Sometimes getting your foot in the door is the hardest part. Someone recently told me, "Every conversation is an interview" because you never know who you're talking to and how it could help or change your career. Be kind and authentically yourself with others, and those connections and relationships will usually help you develop both professionally and personally.

How did your time at SHA shape the trajectory of your career and professional confidence?

I am never intimidated to ask any questions at work, and that is a testament to the confidence instilled at SHA. Additionally, I understand times I need to be professional but am able to enjoy the times when I can be myself with my teams, which I also feel like was a similar vibe at SHA.

Were there any teachers, mentors, or experiences at SHA that influenced your career path?

I think about the SHA goals a lot (I had to recently look up the exact wording of them, but I always remembered the gist). Particularly a social awareness which impels to action and personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom. It is soooo important to help others around us whenever we can. Whether that be mentorship or volunteering, it's an incredible feeling to give back and support others because there were always people who helped me. I am a part of our WiSTEM2D (Women in Science, Technology, Mathematics, Manufacturing, and Design) Business Resource Group and have volunteered with middle schools in Philadelphia and NJ to teach and excite them about STEM. J&J also gives us 36 hours of paid time off to volunteer, which I use all of every year in different ways!

Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom has always stuck in my mind. While its evolved meaning for me in school/work over the years, it's still relevant in my day-to-day work. Sometimes you don't want to do the extra project or additional work, but the choices we make when given opportunities can lead to incredible growth and development.