Using Instructional Design at the CDC to Educate Public Health Professionals

Hometown: Woodbury, GA
Education: M.S. '08, Instructional Design & Technology (IDT), Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
B.S. '01, Computer Information Systems, Mercer University, Macon, GA
Job Title: Health Education Specialist/Program Coordinator
Employer: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

“The combination of project management and instructional design skills makes graduates of this program very attractive to employers.”

Doris Harris, M.S. ‘08

Preferred developing courses vs. facilitating classes
Prior to applying to Georgia State’s Instructional Design and Technology (IDT) master’s program, I conducted face-to-face classroom trainings as a training specialist for about a year. I enjoyed my position, however I realized I preferred designing courses as opposed to facilitating classes. This came to light when I had to create a training manual for my employer; it was then that I realized I enjoyed the development aspects of training and development. When I looked at my colleagues who were tasked to develop trainings, most of them had degrees in instructional design. I wanted to continue to grow in my career and I thought my real world experience coupled with a degree in instructional design would be beneficial.

First class clarified what I could with the degree
I chose Georgia State’s IDT program for four reasons: the curriculum, required internship opportunities, proximity to home, and its blended program (i.e., in-person and online courses) offering. The first class I took was fondly referred to as the traveling class because we visited companies in Atlanta that provided learning in the private, public, and educational sectors. I had a very limited view of what instructional design was and what I could do with the degree, so this course helped me clarify what I would focus on in the program. In addition, one of the best aspects of my graduate student experience was the availability of faculty and their willingness to work with you and mentor you, even if they weren’t your advisor.

Class project leads to internship and new career
One of my class projects allowed students to develop the interface for CDC’s surveillance system, BioSense. I always had an interest in the CDC and public health, so I applied for one of its internships and was hired as a contractor. That position led to me landing my current role (before graduating) as a health education specialist and coordinator of its eLearning Institute, where I’m responsible for developing courses for physicians, epidemiologist, scientists, and public health professionals. The combination of project management and instructional design skills makes graduates of this program very attractive to employers.

According to CNNMoney/Payscale’s Top 100 Careers with Big Growth

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNERS

$60,000
Median Salary

$97,000
Top Pay

+12%
Greater than National Average Pay Rate in Atlanta