

Roderick Mason

Interviewed by: Rachel Hopkins



Career Timeline



What do you currently do?

I am currently the Director of Service and Leadership at The Pittsburgh Project.

How did you conduct your job search/find out about your job?

Right out of college, I started working at Impact [Foundation], and I was working there while I was in college, so there wasn't necessarily a search. When I transitioned to the Pittsburgh Project, I first contacted the people I knew in the nonprofit world to connect me with other people. I wasn't necessarily looking for a specific job. I just wanted to get connected into the field and continue working with youth. I used the contacts I had and then started applying for jobs as people started recommending me jobs and people.

What skills did you gain from completing a Psychology degree that helped in your career(s) after graduation?

A lot of the classes I took centered on childhood development. I learned in those classes about how kids' minds develop, how they learn, the different stages they go through, and how over time the things they learn at young ages affect the decisions they make at older ages. Both negative and positive interactions as children can affect their development when they're older.

What skills were most useful for your career outside of what you learned from your Psychology degree?

Through Habitat for Humanity and the gospel choir, I learned how to interact with people who were different from myself. I met people, and learned and understood that my life and the way I grew up is different from other people's experience, which is not necessarily bad. The way that I see the world is different.

Currently at: The Pittsburgh Project

Position: Assistant Director of Service and Leadership

Graduated: 2006

Degrees: Psychology (B.S.)

Non-profit; Youth programs



Are there any skills you wish you had the opportunity to develop better in college?

The APA style was pretty specific to the department but not necessarily helpful beyond that. Learning more general writing styles would have been helpful.

What advice would you give to undergraduates pursuing or graduating from Psychology?

For those pursuing: As early as possible, try to take different types of entry-level psychology classes so you can understand what you're interested in. Then, moving forward in junior and senior years, take classes that speak to the things you're interested in. There are so many things you learn along the way, and you can take those skills and use them in many different types of careers. Dig deeper and learn a little more.

For those graduating: Don't feel overwhelmed or stress about getting a job right away that is directly related to what you studied. Sometimes it takes time to find exactly what you're looking for. Be open to new things. Whatever job you start off with won't necessarily be your career. You've got to start somewhere. You learn something, good or bad, from every job. Be open to learning from the good and bad experiences.

Any tips for undergrads who are interested in your career?

Working in nonprofits is great work and very rewarding, but it doesn't always pay super well. If you're passionate, know you might not necessarily get paid as much as your peers in entry-level positions. But still, it is good and rewarding work, and if it's something that you're passionate about, then you should follow it.

There are definitely a lot of skills I've picked up and learned when I was going through my major. When you think of positions as you're moving through school, learn what you can. Communicate with professors, get involved outside of the classroom, and get involved with people. In the long run knowing how to interact with other people and work in other environments will benefit you.

