

To: T. Michael Duncan
From: Elizabeth Guilherme
Date: 14 April 2015
Re: LCDR Tara Gooen Bizjak ('02), Senior Science Policy Advisor

On April 6, 2015, LCDR Tara Gooen Bizjak spoke about her experience both at the Food and Drug Administration and the United States Public Health Service. Ms. Bizjak grew up in New Jersey and Pennsylvania before attending Cornell University where she majored in Chemical Engineering with a Bioengineering Option. During her time at Cornell, she participated in two internships with genetic companies and was a research assistant. Immediately upon graduation, she joined the Food and Drug Administration as an Investigator, or Customer Safety Officer. During this time, she also completed her Masters Degree at what is now Rutgers in Biomedical Sciences with an emphasis in Biodefense and Stem-Cell Biology. She worked as a civilian for six years, and then joined the United States Public Health Service.

After outlining her career, Ms. Bizjak listed her reasons for joining the FDA, and described an FDA Investigator's job. The main reason she chose to work for the FDA was because of the clear mission to protect and promote public health. Additionally, she said that working for the FDA has a clear and obvious impact on the nation, which is something that she appreciated. She claimed that as an FDA Investigator, the majority of one's time is spent either at sites doing checks or writing reports. The FDA investigates any company that has the ability to sell its products in the United States. Hence, she had the opportunity to travel internationally, which she appreciated when she was younger. An investigator looks for Good Manufacturing Practices, and writes a report. Headquarters reviews the report, and, if necessary, action is taken to either discard a contaminated batch or halt production.

After describing her job as an Investigator, Ms. Bizjak said that when Hurricane Katrina occurred, the government asked for civilians to aid in the relief in New Orleans. She volunteered, wishing to help, but only people in the United States Public Health Services (USPHS) were asked to aid. This prompted Ms. Bizjak to join the USPHS. She described the benefits of enlisting in the USPHS, including military retirement, access to military bases and lodgings, and encouraged mobility and deployment.

Finally, Ms. Bizjak outlined some of the lessons that she has learned while working for the government. She shared that not everyone appreciates new hires, and as a new hire "you should never feel as though the job you are working is beneath you." Additionally, she emphasized the importance of teamwork and networking, both with your peers and superiors, and that presenting is a valuable skill that must be practiced. Finally, she spoke briefly to why she decided to not pursue a PhD and how she feels as though this has impacted her career.

Overall, I thought that Ms. Bizjak's presentation was well organized and insightful. It provided a look into a job that I personally had not considered. Working for the government seems to be rewarding, impactful, and worth considering as a possible career path.

Edited by Alix Mizoue Excellent memo - comprehensive content and great grammar!