

Jonathan Litz

Job title: Biophysical chemistry graduate student

Can you tell us a little bit about your experience at grad school? What's an average day look like for you?

I study biophysical chemistry at the University of Washington in Seattle. As a graduate student, my time is split between doing research—both in the laboratory and at the computer—and teaching undergraduates chemistry, biology, and physics. One of the great parts about being a researcher is that I don't have an average day: I could spend Monday in lab, Tuesday writing up code, and then Wednesday troubleshooting experiments and brainstorming with my lab mates.



What sparked your interest in Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM)?

Growing up, I always wanted to know how the world worked. When I was little, it seemed like my parents and teachers knew everything. As I started getting older, I became fascinated by how we (humanity) simultaneously know so much and so little about the natural world. When I realized that I could actually discover things never before known about the world we live in, I was hooked.

How did you start on your path to a career in STEM and what did that path look like?

I started by taking each a math and science class every semester in high school. I took advantage of any STEM activities that cropped up at my high school. I chose to go to a STEM-based college (Harvey Mudd) so that I could be fully immersed in all things math and science.

What would you say to young folks who are thinking about a career in STEM?

Go for it! It can be tough at times, but it is also incredibly rewarding. Also, lots of tiny steps will take you a long way: if you just take one math and one science course each semester in college, you'll not only know an immense amount about the world around you, but you'll also only be a couple courses short of having a double major. Even if you decide not to major in a STEM field, understanding the logical nature of scientific and mathematical thought will benefit you in any career path you choose.