

BSOS ALUMNI CAREER PROFILE: HUMAN RESOURCES GENERALIST

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Hayley Kantziper '13

Major: Psychology

Employer: Kennedy Krieger
Institute

Position Title: Human Resources
Generalist

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What do you enjoy most about your current position?

The collaborative and supportive nature of my team and colleagues, the variety of work each day, and all that I am able to learn. Undertaking this role has been a huge challenge for me, personally and professionally. I was in highly specialized HR roles before, and expanding my scope of knowledge has totally stretched my comfort zone. There is never a dull moment!

In a survey of Kennedy Krieger Institute employees, the three words they used to describe the employee population were supportive, compassionate, and committed. The culture at Kennedy Krieger Institute exemplifies this every day. Because of this, I have never felt discouraged from asking questions or suggesting improvements to existing processes. I have also been afforded multiple opportunities to attend professional development seminars. My leadership and colleagues definitely embody the “three words” and are nothing short of inspiring.

What is a typical day like in your position?

I have a variety of tasks on my plate, so there is not really a typical day. As an HR Generalist, I am responsible for compensation, leave administration, employee relations, training, policy writing and enforcement, and organizational development for my assigned departments. Because I have my hands in just about every function of HR, each day can look very different. One day, I may be consumed with compensation analyses and FMLA questions; another day, I may be coaching a manager to work through an employee performance concern or strategizing with an employee regarding an interpersonal conflict.

Which undergraduate experiences did you find most helpful in preparing you for this position?

The undergraduate internships I completed in the mental health field helped to prepare me for my current position, in that they allowed me to work with people from a variety of backgrounds and with varied personal difficulties. I learned how to empathically and compassionately interact with people from marginalized populations. My internships also showed me that I did want to work in a field in which I could help people, but I did not want to work in a clinical capacity.

How has your coursework helped you in your current position?

I use my quantitative and research skills every time I work on compensation. I love that compensation is both an art and a science - all of the good market data in the world cannot accurately determine what a specific person should be paid; you have to look at the whole story. A course that has helped me immeasurably in my post-college career has been Helping Skills. I employ the skills I gained from that course every day, especially when dealing with employee relations issues. In this role, I often hear concerns and then embark on a search for truth. Active listening and asking good questions are key to being an effective employee relations consultant.

Job or internship advice:

A psychology degree is very attractive in HR job candidates. If you think you are interested in working in HR, seek out all of the internship and/or volunteer opportunities you can. Temporary opportunities such as these are the perfect way to try on a job before fully committing to it. Also, don't underestimate the power of transferable skills. Make sure to list any relevant projects and extracurricular activities to your resume when applying for HR internships. Online courses are also a huge plus, like those on Lynda.com.

Any additional tips:

Do your research before you go too far with a position or company. There are so many resources out there, like GlassDoor and Indeed, in which you can read employee reviews about an organization. Treat each job you apply to as you would treat a prospective online purchase - read the reviews, ask around, and don't waste your time on what you aren't really interested in.

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Trust your instincts throughout the job search, application, interview, and offer process. If something feels off, it may be for a good reason. As an example, I was told in a job interview once that my “psychology degree would come in handy with this team.” I remember this comment striking me as odd, but I wrote it off. I wound up accepting the job and learning almost immediately what the interviewer had meant - the team was completely dysfunctional and disgruntled. The work environment was so overwhelmingly negative that I wound up resuming my job search right away.

Know your worth. With all of the online salary tools available now (GlassDoor, PayScale, etc.), you should have no issue finding a fair salary range for the role at-hand. Don't be afraid to negotiate, and don't sell yourself short!

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*If you have any questions, or would like to learn more about Hayley's experiences, you can email her or schedule a phone chat through [Terrapins Connect](#). Create [an account](#) today and search for her name in the search box.