

Alumni Spotlight: Micah Segelman, Ph.D.

What is your current position?

I currently work at RTI International as a public health research analyst. RTI is a matrix organization which means we “live” within multiple organizational structures. We have a “home room” type structure where we have a supervisor and coworkers who often have similar skills or research interests. And then we are on at least one and usually multiple project teams. The hierarchy on the teams can vary greatly from project. For example, you can report to someone on a given project and they can report to you on another project. This allows for a lot of opportunities to learn new things from people who have particular expertise, and also many potential opportunities to develop your own leadership skills and unique style.



How did your UR experience prepare you for your current position?

My UR experience prepared me very well for almost every aspect of my job: the health policy context, the data sets I worked with, statistical skills, statistical software, how to write clearly (although there are some small differences between writing for an academic audience and a policy audience), and learning how to publish in a peer reviewed journal. Perhaps most importantly – how to learn from feedback rather than getting defensive. There were opportunities to learn other things at UR such as writing a grant that would have been helpful but that I didn’t choose to make time for in graduate school.

What were some of your favorite things about your time at University of Rochester?

The UR program offered many great opportunities including meeting wonderful fellow students who can become long term colleagues, and working with a great faculty. I really enjoyed the opportunity to meet people outside of the university through conferences, lectures from visiting professors, and other guest lecturers. Perhaps one of the most important lessons I learned is that you can’t expect yourself to know everything about the field. This is a team sport. Accepting that you have some relative weaknesses can allow you to focus on your relative strengths, and it’s ok to reach out for help.

What tips do you have for PHS graduate students to obtain their first job after graduation?

Use the opportunity to learn about the field in a different way than you did taking classes and doing research. Talk to people, read lots of job postings, reach out to people who do work similar to what you have done. I think people are often generous with their time and are happy to speak to people who have taken the time to read their research. I would also suggest using the opportunity for growing your “soft skills” – such as emotional intelligence. You will be transitioning from being a student to being a professional and you need to develop your emotional intelligence skills just as you develop your technical competencies.