

Joining the Dark Side: A Classicist's First Year as an Academic Administrator

Last year, for the first time since finishing my B.A., I did not teach Classics for a living. Instead, I began my new career in academic administration, faculty development specifically. In doing so, I found work that, while very different from what I had been trained for, is stable, rewarding, and uses many of the skills I developed as a Classicist. In this presentation, I hope to explain my experience transitioning to academic administration, identify potential steps that classicists interested in academic administration can take in pursuing that career, and provide tips on maintaining one's connection to the Classical World even when one works outside of it.

Like many Classicists who have pursued alternate careers, my choice was driven by the Classics jobs market. My job, while nominally full-time, proved to be less stable than I'd believed, offered minimal opportunities for promotion, and the hyper competitive tenure track market was challenging both professionally and emotionally. Academic administration jobs, on the other hand, offered guaranteed (as opposed to by-the-course) pay, clear paths to advancement within the institution, and a job market that holds considerably more opportunities and (surprisingly to me) a considerably lower level of competition. For example, while over 100 highly qualified people applied to a Tenure Track Classics job in my city last year, less than five applied for my higher-paying position. That said, while the job market drove towards administration, once I moved I discovered that my new position gave me access to much more of my institution than I ever had as a classicist, along with a level of support, access, and appreciation from my school's faculty, staff, and leadership that dwarfed anything I experienced as a Classicist. Furthermore, while I rarely get to incorporate Greek and Latin into my work, I regularly use the research ability, attention to detail, and critical thinking skills that I developed

as a Classicist. Indeed, my work on the CAMWS Graduate Student Issues Committee probably did more than anything else to prepare me for my current position.

While GSIC was my gateway into academic administration, the world of Classics offers numerous opportunities for people interested in pursuing a career in that field. The service opportunities provided by our state, regional, and national level organizations can all help you gain experiences that can be applied to the world of administration. Running study abroad programs and field schools in the Mediterranean World build skills needed in several academic staff departments. That said, people seeking jobs in administration would be well advised to attend the leadership trainings offered by their school, and seek out leadership positions in student, faculty, and school governance. A couple of accomplishments clearly connected to the administrative role one is seeking may provide a basis on which to add your Classics-based assignments. The most important advice, however, is to be active in your search. Administrative searches do not follow the typical academic timeline, and if you catch the right one you may well be one of relatively few applicants.

Finally, seeking a career in academic administration does not need mean turning one's back on Classics. Since taking on my new position, I have used my lessened teaching load to attend more of the Classics-based events in my community and took take on leadership roles in my statewide Classical organizations, although I do need to use vacation time to attend conferences like CAMWS. That said, I have found that such conferences are vital for keeping my connections to the field and community that I love. With their help, I can be an academic administrator without compromising my identity as a classicist.