

- A lot of us expected to stay in academia after our degree and are now understand that this won't be an option due to the job market. Did you experience this? How did you overcome the disappointment?
 - So I knew going into my degree fairly early (I would say halfway through my masters so if you are tracking that was between year 1 and 2 of my 8 year grad journey), I didn't want to go into academia. I had seen too many horror stories about tenure, competitive job market, lack of job security, and the amount of work you have to do compared to how much you were compensated and decided it wasn't for me. There was a bit of disappointment because I do love teaching and interacting with students. However, I saw that those same things I loved about being in academia (researching, interacting with people, teaching) can be found in lots of other jobs in industry. For example, with teaching, you can be a trainer at a company or facilitate workshops for employees. No its not at an academic institution but people learn everywhere, so they need teachers everywhere! So I would try to identify what about academia you like and wanted to accomplish as a professor and see if there are other jobs where you can do similar things.
- Is GORE interested in mechanical engineering graduates?
 - Yes for sure! We pretty much hire all types of engineering since we are involved in a ton of different industries. We also hire a lot of non-engineers too so check out their jobs page to see options!
- Specifically, did people ask about delays finishing your PhDs in interviews? That was what I meant
 - Ah I see what you mean now and I assume you are talking about a prospective employer. No one asked specifically, but I usually brought it up on my own and spun it in a positive direction. So I had questions during interviews like "Tell me about a time that you had a difficult situation and how did you deal with it". So for me, that's where I brought the time factor thing. I would usually say "It took me 6 years to complete my PhD because 3 years in, I switched advisors and projects which was a very hard experience. But that experience taught me perseverance, most people would quit and trust me I wanted to but I was determined to find a better solution to complete my degree. This taught me about when its appropriate to ask for help. It also taught me how to know when to stop something that is not working, which is just as important as trying to push through a problem. Sometimes projects/ideas just need to be killed so that experience taught me to advocate for myself and share my opinion if I do not feel like work is going in the right direction". Yes my experience is unique, but I would say if anyone asks (directly or indirectly) during an interview why it took you so long to graduate, you can say something like "yes it took me a while but I learned lots of valuable skills and techniques along that way that make me a good fit for this position"(Then try to list some of those skills/techniques). But in my experience and those of my friends who hold PhDs, if you finished your PhD in 8 or less years, this question doesn't really come up from a prospective employer. And my guess is if it has taken you 8+ years to finish your degree then there are probably good valid reasons why and if you feel comfortable you can share in a job interview such as loss of funding for the project or the death of an advisor (has happen to some people I know) and even life

happens like you had a child and had to take time off or a death in the family that caused you to take time off etc

- Any advice on negotiating your salary after getting a job offer?
 - **ALWAYS NEGOTIATE.** The worst thing that can happen is they say no. And if any company rescinds a job offer because you tried to negotiate, its probably not a company you want to work for anyway. Now don't be ridiculous. If they offer you \$50,000 salary don't come back and say you want \$145,000, so negotiate within reason. To even know what to negotiate for, I would recommend taking a negotiating salary workshop. I took one through the career services at Virginia Tech and that was super helpful. First I would say is you need to do some research about salaries for a given position and area you want to be in. My PhD is in engineering so glassdoor and salary.com are great resources to try to understand what someone with my degree would be making in a given job title. Next , I would set for yourself your absolute minimum base salary. This is going to be different for everyone and is a personal preference. Now you might ask, what salary should I even target if I have only been making \$22,000 a year as a grad student? Salary.com has a great assessment tool to give you a range of how much you should be making based on your field, location, degree, and experience. After you set your minimum you are willing to accept, I would pick your ideal salary range to be 10-20% above from your base. Now if you get a job offer in the range you have set for yourself that's great! And Gore gave me a job offer in my preferred range (actually at the top of it!), **BUT I STILL negotiated.** I said "Thanks so much for the offer I am very excited to have the opportunity to work for this company. I did some research on salaries for people in similar positions in the area and found that they were making in **X range**, is there anyway we can come up to meet that range?" I was then told they can't really increase my salary but they can increase my sign on bonus (which they did significantly), which I would have never gotten unless I asked. Now that minimum base can also shift based on some other benefits you may receive. I have a friend who works for a startup company and even though the initial salary was below her threshold, they offered her crazy good stock options and because she believes in their product she decided to take that. And she has received significant raises since then. Also **do not be afraid to walk away from a job offer.** I had a friend who was searching for a job, graduated and was unemployed for months and got a job offer that was about \$15,000 less than the minimum salary he had set for himself. Even though it was hard for him to say no, he declined the offer and then a couple of months later he got a job in the salary range he wanted (he actually works for Gore now too!)
- What was the first step you taken when you transited from academic to non-academic job?
 - I continued to network. Even though I really enjoy working for Gore, I continued to learn about other companies and positions there in case I wanted to make a career change. Also, at Gore I made an effort to learn more about my company and the different types of roles that were there. When I was searching for jobs I only looked at research scientist type positions because I felt that was all that I was qualified for. But I learned that there are so many other jobs and career paths for people with PhDs so I tried to learn as much as I could about other roles in case I am ever interested in switching one day

- Advice on how to handle the 2-body problem when job searching?
 - I would sit down with your partner and talk about your priorities and make a plan. In my situation, since I was graduating first (my partner had a year left) we decided together that wherever I go, my partner would join me there. With that being said, I made sure to search for jobs in locations where my partner would have opportunities (we are in different fields). That took some planning on my partner's end to research companies/roles in different cities to help us narrow down my job search. Also, like academia, some jobs may offer spousal job support. I am sure you have heard of professors that get hired at a university and then their spouse gets a spousal hire? Companies do that too. I know for a fact that Gore does that, as there are a LOT of married couples that work here. I would also have honest conversations with your partner about real scenarios. If one of you gets a job and the other one is in a transition period, are they comfortable going with you and not working for a while? Are you comfortable with that? If so, for how long? Or are you willing to be apart for periods of time if that means your ideal jobs are in different places? With a lot of jobs switching to being virtual or even partially virtual, your job can be based in one place but you can physically be in another. For example, I have a work colleague who lives in Ohio even though we are based in Delaware because her partner got a job that required them to move to Ohio. Because Gore is flexible with working from home she was able to keep her job even though she moved, so those are things to consider when looking for a job, if remote work option is available. That can give you some flexibility in where you and your partner decide to settle.
- Is GORE interested to expand to developing countries?
 - Unfortunately, I am not on the team that decides on business strategy and expansion so I do not have an answer for this