Academia encompasses careers in research, teaching or both. If you want to exclusively conduct research look for research professorships and staff scientist positions. If you want to exclusively teach, look for lecturer positions, or professorships at small schools and community colleges. Or if you are looking to do a combination, explore individual schools to learn about the expected balance between research and teaching.

Alumni Spotlight

Susan Alberts
PhD in Ecology and Evolution, University of Chicago
Professor of Biology, Associate Director for Science, National Evolution Synthesis Center, Duke University

What did you do as a trainee to prepare for your current career?
Finding the right mentor was crucial, and doing a ‘test run’ on field work (the heart of my research) to see if it was going to work out for me. I can’t emphasize enough how helpful it is to find someone who you can work with and be mentored by. Not 100% essential, but very helpful.

What are the typical things your job entails each day?
Besides combing through emails? Mentoring students, managing my research project, providing service to the university, teaching in both formal and informal settings and, in those few precious moments that I can now dedicate to it, my research.

What is the most rewarding part of your job?
The joy of creating knowledge. Most people don’t think of science as primarily creative. For me, it is. What we learn and know is fundamentally dependent on what and how we ask questions, and on the context we bring to interpreting the meaning of results. Those things are all intensely creative endeavors, and that’s where the rewards lie.

Interview courtesy of the University of Chicago.
Sample Job Titles

- Assistant/associate professor
- Research assistant professor
- Research associate/staff scientist
- Lecturer/instructor

Professional Organizations

Society for College Science Teachers (SCST)
http://www.scst.org