

The AMS Board for Early Career Professionals wants to highlight members of the weather, water and climate enterprise who exemplify the AMS Mission early in their career. Our “Perspectives from Early Career Professionals” segment aims to highlight early career achievements in multiple sectors of meteorology. This spotlight features Tom Bedard, who works for AccuWeather Enterprise Solutions, but has a fascinating background in public service and emergency management. Read on for insight into his career journey within the private sector and advice on everything from the job search to finding balance between work and fun.

***BECP: Where do you currently work and what path did you take to get to the position you are currently in today?***

TB: I am the Implementation Manager for AccuWeather Enterprise Solutions (AES) in Wichita, KS. Prior to moving to beautiful, corny Kansas, I worked for RMS as a Solutions Analyst and for the University of Hawai‘i’s National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC) as a FEMA training course developer.

***BECP: What is it like to be an early career professional and work in the private sector?***

TB: The private sector is a sandbox for early career meteorologists. There are no shortage of businesses to work with, areas to innovate in, or competitors to keep us on our toes. If I’ve ever had a boring day at AES, it has been my own fault. For those who are willing to accept the volatility of working in private enterprise, it’s incredibly exciting.

***BECP: How important were internships early on to get to where you are today?***

TB: Internships and part-time jobs (even those not related to MET) allow you to participate in the world that you’re working hard to join. They teach you customer service, project management, stress management, and are a crucial mark on your first resumes denoting that you are capable of contributing to any organization you join. During my studies at Penn State, a healthy blend of part-time EMS work, part-time line cooking for a restaurant, and emergency management internships helped me understand where I wanted to take my career and what additional courses I need to enable that path. No one should miss these incredible opportunities to learn and grow!

***BECP: What was the most difficult part of the job search process for you?***

TB: The tedium of reformatting resumes, copying the same resume information into a company’s proprietary resume system, and then waiting weeks for a response drove me quietly insane. The three months that I spent looking for a door to my career after graduation felt like a never ending purgatory painted in Microsoft Word, but now I look back on them as a great exercise in patience and quality word processing.

***BECP: To reach this point in your career, what role have mentors and advisors played?***

TB: Owen Shieh, Tanja Fransen, James Burke, Lydia Morikawa, Kevin Sur, and Karen DiBrino have each helped me grow, become a stronger team member, and develop the skills that have enabled me to enjoy an exciting early career. Whether we enjoyed a formal mentorship or they took the time to informally provide advice, each of those individuals has had a significant and lasting impact on my personal and professional life.

***BECP: Do you have any helpful tips for someone going through the job search right now?***

TB: Be mindful that you and your career will evolve and change over time. Your first job, your first relocation for work, and your first salary are not permanent. You will find other jobs, you will move, and, if you perform well, then you will find a more fulfilling salary. Don't be afraid to take a chance on the jobs that are offered to you.

***BECP: Do you have any tips or advice to give to young professionals when it comes to applying and interview for a job?***

TB: Write unique cover letters, research the company that you're applying to, and make sure that you're at an appropriate place to be video/phone interviewed when the time arrives. Be mindful not to reuse cover letters that you wrote for other companies (or certain federal meteorological agencies) without editing them first!

***BECP: What recommendations would you give young professionals to avoid becoming overwhelmed or burnt out?***

TB: This may be an unpopular recommendation, but the feeling of burning out or becoming overwhelmed is crucial to your personal and professional growth. Embrace the feeling of having pushed yourself well beyond your normal limits, remember the feeling, and then learn from the experience. The lesson that you'll learn will allow you to develop a better "work life balance" and to remember that you're capable of much more than you think.

***BECP: What are some challenges you have experienced as an early career professional?***

TB: When initially entering the career field I had no semblance of a "work life balance". After a few years of working late, working weekends, and working holidays, I discovered that there is beauty and adventure that exists in the world beyond your desk. Those early years left me irritable, over passionate, and probably a bit obnoxious to work with. Since striking a balance between work, my relationship with my wonderful girlfriend, and my volunteer obligations, I've really come to enjoy life more. Don't be afraid to put the pen down and walk outside.

***BECP: What does a "work life balance" mean to you?***

TB: This answer is different for everyone. I endeavor to strike a daily balance of office work, physical activity, social time, and sleep. Outside of daily obligations, I try to find sources of active relaxation and avoid activities that don't provide that (though, like everyone, I do enjoy binge TV weekends). My best evenings are spent at a dance studio with my girlfriend or with my local Masonic lodge. My best weekends are spent volunteering with a local emergency management agency or working as a volunteer EMT/firefighter. That schedule may seem like a lot, but it's perfect for me.

