

Anna Weisbruch - PodCAST Transcript

Episode description:

On this episode of the PodCAST, we sit down with Anna Weisbruch. Anna is a Medical Laboratory Sciences alumna from the Department of Health Sciences, and is currently a doctoral student in healthcare administration.

Hear Anna describe life as a non-traditional student, juggling life responsibilities, and the process of finding the right career for you. Anna knows it's the power of will that gets you through.

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### **Kara:**

Hello and welcome to the podcast, a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host, Kara Snyder, and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode, we're sitting down with an alum of the college, and today we have a chance to talk to Anna wise Brook. Anna is a medical laboratory sciences alumna from the Department of Health Sciences, and is currently a doctoral student in healthcare administration. Welcome and thank you for being here. Thank you, Kiera, thanks for having me. It'll be fun. Well, let's start at the beginning. Why did you choose the ISU?

### **Anna:**

What a great question. I was an accidental student to ISU, I actually just moved to normal Illinois as a family endeavor, and I found ISU as a potential progression for my education. I was a non traditional student, meaning I was already a mom and a wife at the time, so going back to school was definitely not something that was easy to do. I graduated from Harlan Community College with my associate's degree, and I was looking for the next step. I issue seemed like an obvious choice, because it was local. I had a good reputation, so I started browsing through the catalog and found some of the course offerings that fit my schedule and it just the rest was kind of history.

**Kara:**

I'm curious about your experience as a non traditional student, being a wife, being a mother. Tell us what it was like to juggle all of that. What kind of time management did that entail, and how were you able to pull it off?

**Anna:**

Well, yes, and I think anyone who was a non traditional student will relate to this, but it's more of a power of will than anything else. And the saying, you know, there's a will, there's a way, really running true here, because it was not easy. I was a mom to four young kids at the time, and there was some other personal challenges along the way that came. You know, became additional challenge to all of this. But ISU had a pretty robust offering as far as classes went. So I was able to either do daycare, childcare of some sorts, and sneak out for a class, and of course, then homework and assignments, papers, things like that, would always be done in the evenings when kids went to sleep or nap times or things of that nature. It was not easy, of course, but I was determined to become educated and have a career at some point. So it was something that I wanted to do for myself and to be an example to my kids. That you know, if you want something, you can accomplish it if you put your mind to it. So by I usually definitely made it easier for me. For sure.

**Kara:**

power of will. I love that. Thank you for sharing. And I know with you being an alum of Medical Laboratory Science, traditionally, that can be a discovery major for a lot of students. So how did you find it? Or did it find you?

**Anna:**

I think a little bit of both, and I am no exception and that regard, because I actually was majoring in molecular biology, molecular and cellular biology, at ISU, with the intention of potentially going to medical school, I discovered love for medicine and biology and science later on in life, And I really wanted to delve into that area of study, and I couldn't get enough of it, but I had a unexpected personal event happen that really made it pretty much impossible to commit to medical school. And at that point, I had to figure out, what am I going to do with the science degree? And I started thinking of nursing, but at that time, I already started working at a local hospital in the healthcare sector, and I I pretty well knew that I am not meant for patient facing career, at least not in that regard. So I started looking through the catalog, and I came across

this Medical Laboratory Science. I clicked on it. I met with the advisor. She walked me through the steps of what I still needed to complete, what classes, what the career is all about. And I realized that this behind the scenes idea was really something that I didn't even realize, but I really liked the concept of it, and I applied, got in and completed it and became a scientist after that.

**Kara:**

you had a lot to juggle during your time on campus. What do you miss the most about being a student, though, is there still part of that time that stands out to you as being very memorable? And what do you take with you from that.

**Anna:**

I think ISU has such a beautiful campus. I absolutely loved everything about ISU. I may be biased because I had my professor group was pretty small, and we had almost like an intimate relationship with them. We just knew each other so well they knew us. We. You them, and they made that experience so positive. I really looked forward to my classes. They were so knowledgeable and engaging, and they made this learning journey so so remarkable that they made me want to go back to class and learn and deepen my my knowledge, but I use you in itself, the the beautiful quad, which, you know, the the Department of Health Sciences, right there. So whenever we had a nice weather out, I will go out there and take in the sun, or hop over to get a bagel at Einstein Bagels. I don't know if it's still there, but it used to be my place to go. It was just a beautiful place to be, and very vibrant, very positive, great programs. I just loved everything about ISU. So I miss the campus life, I think more so that I never had the experience of being the traditional student and living on campus and having that, you know, camaraderie with with my peers, but that gave me a good fix of that. And I assumed, being the great school, that it is really embraced me as a non traditional student, and I afterwards, I really didn't feel like I missed out on anything. I still got the student experience, even as a non traditional student.

**Kara:**

That's great. I am so glad to hear that. And as your student experience wrapped up, what was the initial job search like for you, and then where did you end up?

**Anna:**

So in medical, laboratory sciences, we don't know about is, is the huge need for the representatives of that profession. So what I was told pretty early on. In fact, I believe it was the advisor that that told me about it, that was before I even got accepted into the program. Was that typically, when you in clinicals, in most cases, there is a job opportunity, a job offer, before you even complete the program, which was the case for me as well. I happen to be lucky enough to get my clinicals completed at bromine, which was to this day, is still probably my favorite place to be. They have such a great culture there. So I was a laboratory assistance at the Laboratory of Roman and I was able to complete my clinicals there as well. So it was such a natural progression for me to go from being a part time employee to then getting my clinical some among the people that I already knew, and they knew me, they knew my work ethic. They were very engaging and embracing. And then, in fact, before I even graduated, the director at the time offered me a position, and so I stayed with bro man for a little while after that. And yeah, so it was very natural kind of position, from going as a student until an employee.

**Kara:**

Then today, I'm talking to you as a doctoral student. You're currently working towards your doctoral degree in healthcare administration. So tell us how you got from bro men to where you're at currently?

**Anna:**

thank you for asking. So I consider myself now that I know a little bit about myself as an adult, I'm a lifelong learner, and I really enjoy learning period. I'm curious about the world and people and how we operate as society. And the older I got, the more I had this interest in progressing my educational journey, and I wanted to be a doctoral student gain a doctoral degree at some point in my future. But I will say it took me about five years to find the right program, and I finally did, in fact, last year, and it really met all the metrics that I was looking for. And I was like, This is it. I'm going to do this now. I had a goal of becoming a doctor before I hit 40. I'm going to be a little bit behind that, because I'm turning 40 this June, and I'm going to graduate in August, so still close, but, but I'm going to be able to hold the check mark on my on my bucket list. So it was just a personal goal that I set out for myself. It ended up lining up with the fact that my current employer, which is no longer Broman, but offered some tuition assistance, which also helped. And you know, altogether, it just was a an endeavor that I was able to take on. It's not easy. It's a lot. But again, you know, if there were there's a will, there's a way. So there's that again.

**Kara:**

And what would you say the biggest challenge you have faced in your career, in your path so far? What would you say that is?

**Anna:**

will say the same reason why I got into the field in the first place, which is the fact that Medical Laboratory Science is so under advertised, and not a lot of high school students, youth in coming generation of workers, know about this program. So really it's staffing shortages, and that's actually something that I somewhat dedicated my profession to. So Not intentionally, per se, but it just kind of took that turn that I ended up having a lot of opportunities to advocate for the role and and for the program, and then some different avenues to become accredited with the AACP, which is our accrediting body for for the Board of Certification for medical laboratory scientists, and certainly, and I know that I'm not the only one who will say this and will feel the pains of it, but the staffing shortages of accredited and credentialed laboratory scientists is definitely the biggest pain point in our careers these days.

**Kara:**

I completely see that, and I'm sure that's really tough to navigate on a daily basis, when you're in those situations and when you're in positive situations as well. I'm curious, how would you describe your leadership style?

**Anna:**

My focus is on, how can I remove obstacles for my team so they can do their work more efficiently and without those roadblocks along the way. So I would say I'm a people first leader. That does not mean that I let anything go or say yes to everything. My goal is to not only create a robust and strong team, but also a team that can operate under any circumstances and is able to endure some tough situations and challenges, but has such strong foundation and internal support that it does not create the sense of urgency and sense of emergency and wanting people to flee because things got a little bit too challenging. It is not something I can do on my own. Of course, this, it takes a village to that, and I've been lucky enough to work alongside some amazing people, really, in all of the organizations I worked in and at and same with my current position. But I will say that what I find to be very interesting, and what I find my stride to be in is pulling people together to work as a team cohesively, pull out the good qualities out of

colleagues and fellow team members and fellow leaders, to really play off of each other's strengths to create that strong team that really can endure any challenges along the way.

**Kara:**

And thinking about that, when you're creating your team, what kind of qualities are you looking for someone to bring to the table? And when I ask that question, I'm thinking about our students that might be job searching. How can they be a good team member?

**Anna:**

selfishly speaking, it's always good to find somebody who lives locally, who wants to be part of the community, because I find that that's the aspect that we struggle with the most. The need is so great for for the laboratory scientists, that the opportunities are out there and readily available in all corners of the country. So it's very challenging to retain that talent, and and, you know, put in investment of that time and training and have them then stay for a period of time, so then you have that return on that investment. So what we really try to do is a see for look for local talent if available. We try to create really strong sign on bonus structure, so then people are even more inclined to sign with us and stay with us, but there are certain qualities that's really hard to put on paper. There is this gene Sequoia about a person that you just know that this person has integrity and they're dedicated and they're going to be worth the time you put into them to invest in a lot of times we get to learn that when we invite students for clinicals, which is a great partnership that we currently have at the lab I work at currently at ISU, that is a fabulous way to bring in new talent. You get to learn their work ethic and how are they preparing for the clinicals? Are they asking questions, or do they just stand there and kind of let you do the talking and then just want to get through the day? So can they can go back to whatever it is they want to do. I will say that I issue is producing fabulous med techs is what we call them here locally as our profession. So we see a lot of really good quality students coming out of ISU and other programs as well, but those are the things that we typically look for. Are you engaged? Are you asking questions? Are you taking notes? Surprisingly, not a lot of people do that these days, which I don't quite understand. Why wouldn't you? But when we see those qualities, it actually says a lot about a person and how it's much attention do they pay? How interested are they? How well do they want to be perceived by the trainer or the by the preceptor? So those little nuances and those little behaviors really tell us a lot about a potential colleague. Now I don't have the benefit when I interview. Someone, but you can still tell a lot about a person by how they conduct themselves, how engaged they are, how engaging they are, and whether they want to come and

see the lab or is the only question they're asking me, What is my pay gonna be? Because that usually tells me you're in it for one reason only, which is okay. I mean, of course, people don't go to work because they don't have better things to do. Financial factors are important, but we're looking for people that want to be part of the team, that have that drive to make a difference in the community, and I think that's really what makes a difference. And there's a lot of people like that out there, and that's what I'm looking for, usually.

**Kara:**

Backing up even further when we're thinking about these students that are still maybe searching for the right fit or searching for their passion. What would you say to someone who is considering a degree in Medical, laboratory science?

**Anna:**

What I find to be the common theme, and it's almost without fail, is the question, do you see yourself being patient facing or do you have the passion for helping people, but don't see yourself having that smile on every day and putting your best customer face on every single moment of your eight to 12 hour shift. And typically, when the answer is Oh yes, I definitely want to be in front of patients. I definitely want to have that one on one interaction lab sciences is probably not for you. But if the answer is the opposite is, yes, I would love to be part of this. I want to make a difference. I want to help people, but I am an introvert. I don't really feel comfortable around people. People overwhelm me. That's usually a pretty good indicator. The lab sciences might just be it for you.

**Kara:**

Well, thank you for that insight. I think that's so helpful from somebody on the inside. And Anna, we are going to finish with a speed round. So just go with your first instinct on these questions, are you a morning person or a night owl?

**Anna:**

By nature, a night owl, but I have to be a morning person because of my life. Now,

**Kara:**

that's fair. I always like to say I'm a self made morning person. It was not instinctual,

**Anna:**

yes, definitely forced out of me, not voluntary.

**Kara:**

What's for dinner tonight?

**Anna:**

Oh, wow. Well, you know, we just had our regulatory inspection last week, and we are actually going out as a group here, of my team to dinner locally here at our restaurants to celebrate the great scorecard that we got. But back at home, my husband's making pizza, so that's what's for dinner at home.

**Kara:**

Sounds like everybody wins tonight, then play great. Yes. What are you currently reading or listening to? Anything you would recommend to us?

**Anna:**

So I don't have an exciting list right now for leisurely read or listen, because most of my attention is now on the on the doctoral studies. So the book I listen to right now is about Blue Ocean Strategy. It's exciting and interesting, but I don't think it's for your everyday reading. However, one of my favorite podcasts is American scandal by Lindsey Graham, and I recommend it to just about anybody I can. I can share that with because it's some history of our country, exciting stories and kind of like a an easy lesson on the commute or or, you know, during house chores, whatever it is that that you do that you need something to occupy with. Really good listen. So I would recommend that up the top of my head, it's really the only one I can think of. If you give me some time, I'll think a few more

**Kara:**

That's great. We will add it to our list. And can you describe your perfect day, if you had a day that was completely free, and I know that's probably hard to imagine, between your doctoral studies and family and all of the other demands on your time, but if you had a free day, how would you spend it?

**Anna:**



You know, I would like to say before I answer, that I intentionally create those days for myself, and even though it's not always easy, I would challenge anyone out there who is struggling to balance that work and life and school and all the other things that we got going on to really intentionally create that day off for yourself and have some self care. If you don't, you're going to burn a candle at both ends, and everything is going to become a little too overwhelming. So I intentionally create those days for myself. In fact, I just had one last week. I just took a day because we had that inspection. I just needed some time with my family, with my dog, and it was very therapeutic. So when I do have that day, it depends on the season, because when it's warm, I immediately go into my garden. It turns out I really like to garden, which I would never would have guessed that in a million years when I was younger. But I like to garden, whether it's a vegetable garden or just mess it around and clip plants and just listen to birds. But I love the outdoor calm environments, listen to nature and kind of spend some time. On that kind of not doing anything really. I do like to read a good book, but a lot of times my quality time and my relaxing time ends up being with my kids and my husband. We also have a dog. So we have, you know, now we have five kids, so it's a big family time to spend together and sit outside and grill and catch up and see what's going on. We don't get to do that very much because my kids are busy too. So is my husband. So when we have an opportunity to just sit down, either outside or inside and share a pizza and or play some cards or just watch a movie, those are my moments of pockets of peace and happiness that I really cherish. I am a homebody, so I don't care to go to Disney or Florida or any other place. I truly find peace at home, and that's my happy place.

**Kara:**

I appreciate you being so intentional about setting aside those days and setting aside that time for yourself, especially coming from somebody in a service industry where, when you're in healthcare, I think you can tend to get in the mentality where you just give and give and give to others. So I applaud you for intentionally setting aside time for yourself. I think that's really important.

**Anna:**

You know, it's something that did not come to me naturally. It's actually something that my husband kind of forced out of me, if you will, because I was spinning in circles, and he finally said to me, you need to slow down, or you're gonna drive yourself silly here. And I started really reviewing how I run my days. And it really was from morning till bedtime, it was constant, go, go, go, and I was getting to the point that it was just so much and so exhausting, and I had no

energy for him and my kids. And when I started making those intentional days, and I don't do that very often. I don't, you know, it's maybe once a month, maybe once every two months, but whatever I feel like I'm getting to that point, you know what I need a day. I took a day. And the fabulous thing is, I have a wonderful boss who is very forward thinking in terms of talent management and team management, so she does the same things that she just takes a quality day for herself along with my fellow leaders here at DMH. So it's we're making them more of a culture, I think now, particularly among the younger generation of leaders, and I think it's really driving a change in the workforce. Because I know this might sound like such a millennial thing to say, but the world is changing, that the work demands are changing. We're working. We're doing more with less, and it really can drive quality of life down so rapidly, and it's our job to not let that happen. So a little bit of self care or or time intentionally spend with your family, or, you know, with a book, or whatever it is that you like to do, really can transform your your your life, your performance at work, you come back regenerated, rejuvenated, and you have the energy to tackle the next challenge.

**Kara:**

That's so true. That's fantastic advice. Thank you for that. And I have to ask you. I ask everybody that comes on the podcast, Avanti gondola, or pub two cheese balls.

**Anna:**

Well, so my kids will say, hands down, Avanti gondola. They will take Avari Scandola any day of the week for dinner, lunch, breakfast, whatever it is. They love, love, love these gondolas. And I do too, but I love cheese balls. So for me it has to be cheese balls. But when it comes to family dinner, it's definitely Avantis.

**Kara:**

They're both institutions here, so...

And one last question for you, if you could give one piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

**Anna:**

I would say, Find your passion and find a way to make money out of it. It when you do what you love, every day is Play Day, and no day is ever a day in office, whether it's being an entrepreneur, a nurse, a med tech, an office manager, a sales person, whatever it is, find what drives you, find

what your strengths are, and fine tune that to identify what can you function in the professional world where you can maximize those strengths, because there is nothing worse. And this is something that I see a lot. Unfortunately, when you put yourself out there and you get this degree, and then you find a job in this degree, and then you find out that you hate every minute of it. In fact, I've had colleagues in my department that I helped navigate towards other careers, because lab wasn't for them. I've had students that I've worked with at a college that I was part of, that thought they wanted to be in lab. Turns out that's just not what was for them, and going into something purely for I don't know, because the. Job sounds cool because you might make good money. That really is not the way to drive your future. If you can, if you have that ability, take your time, take classes. Take different classes, something that maybe you wouldn't think it's something of interest to you, but take different classes and fine tune what you're good at and what you enjoy, and when you find the combination of both, you can really find something that you will spend the rest of your life doing that won't feel like work and every day will be so much more enjoyable than having to do the daily grind doing something you simply don't like.

**Kara:**

That's great advice. So thank you for that, and thanks again for being here. That was Anna weisbrook, Healthcare Administration doctoral student, join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our cast, alumni.