

Meet & Greet with Legislative Director Jennifer Weintraub, M.A.

Friday July 9, 2021 at 12:00pm ET/9:00am PST

Jennifer Weintraub Biography

Jennifer N. Weintraub is a doctoral candidate in the School of Criminal Justice at the University at Albany, SUNY. Her research is broadly characterized within miscarriages of justice, in particular, regarding wrongful convictions, legal decision-making, and public policy. She currently serves as Legislative Director to New York State Senate Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, who represents Western Queens.

Jennifer Weintraub Contact Information

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Questions Asked during Meet & Greet

Background

1. You are currently ABD in the School of Criminal Justice at the University at Albany, SUNY, right?
 - a. What is the focus of your dissertation?
 - b. Where do you see your personal research agenda going?
 - c. Here's a small question for you (haha). Why were you interested in participating in the AltAc series?
2. Let's talk about the pathway you took to get to where you are today. I feel like working for the State Legislature is almost an exotic sounding sort of job. What sort of prior experiences, jobs, and volunteer positions have you had in the past that have set you on a pathway to where you are today?

Realities of current position

3. I'm just so interested in hearing some specifics about what your job is like. Can you tell us, big picture, what does "doing research" look like in your professional world?
 - a. Can you give us some examples of interesting projects you have been involved with?
 - b. Methodologically-speaking, are we talking mostly policy and program evaluation? Primary data collection or secondary data analysis? Qualitative v. quantitative? That sort of stuff.
4. This might sound basic, but how do you use your Doctoral training and subject matter expertise in your current position?

- a. Do you think your approach is different from colleagues that come from a different background? I guess this is an assumption on my part, but I assume there are a lot of lawyers, political science, folks with those sort of backgrounds that aren't as grounded in training in applied research methods. Would you agree that your approach is different? If so, how?
- 5. Chat with us about the logistics of working within the State Legislature.
 - a. What is the hiring process like?
 - i. Where do you even look for this sort of position? And how do you find the person (legislator) that you are going to be working with?
 - ii. Things that you were surprised about during the application, interview, or hiring process?
 - iii. Timeline for when positions are posted (meaning around the change in fiscal year, or more likely to be posted over spring/summer like University positions)?
 - b. OK so what about once you get the position, what's the "work" then like.
 - i. Pace of work? Everything dependent on when legislature is in session?
 - ii. Mostly done in a team setting/collaboratively or individual?
 - c. What about your audience? Are you always preparing materials for legislators and politicians?
 - d. What does research dissemination look like? What sort of deliverables are you preparing?
 - i. Similarly, what does a research agenda look like in your position? Do you publish? Do you need to get permission or run materials by some sort of communications office?

Work – Doctoral candidate balance

- 6. The last set of things we would love to chat with you about today revolve around your current dual-positionality as a Doctoral candidate still working on your dissertation while also working a pretty intense job. If you don't mind, I've got some pretty pointed questions for you about how you navigate this situation.
 - a. First and foremost, let's talk time. Do you find that you can make the time necessary to maintain progress in your program at SUNY Albany? How do you have conversations with folks on both sides (Doctoral program and colleagues in the legislature) about priorities?
 - b. At what point in the Doctoral program experience did you go on the market and then accept your current position? Looking back knowing hindsight is 20-20, do you think you would have made a different decision or are you happy with the way things are right now?
 - c. Are there things from either side – the Doctoral program or your work with the NY State Legislature – that you feel that you cannot fully embrace because of this dual positionality that you are navigating?
- 7. Anything else that you would like to share with the AltAc seminar participants?

Q&A Time