

From Fresno Pacific University WebSite

Careers in Conflict Resolution

Prospective students often wonder what their career options are with a master of arts degree in the field of conflict resolution. Well, to be completely accurate, it is usually the spouses of prospective students who are most concerned about career opportunities. The field is broad, and ranges from private practice to employment with agencies. The student's background is a critical factor. This page will provide links and information relating to careers in alternative dispute resolution.

The December 11, 2009 issue of *US News and World Report* is devoted to careers, [and they listed "mediator"](#) as one of the 30 top careers, with \$66,800 median pay. Remember that means that about half of all mediators make less and about half make more. One of our former students who spent 20 years litigating in a prestigious law firm says he makes more money since he went out on his own and devoted his practice to mediation. We also have graduates serving around the world in very low paying positions that have a large impact on people's lives.

Full-time mediation jobs are not common, although the number is growing rapidly. There are such positions, just as there are lawyers who spend most of their time in the courtroom. Most lawyers spend most of their time alone at a desk, and in the same way most people in conflict resolution careers have other responsibilities as well. Those who work for non-profit organizations which use volunteer mediators spend most of their time making it possible for others to do mediation. University-based mediators usually have teaching or administrative loads as well. Like most interesting and fulfilling work, conflict resolution has a lot of boring parts, no matter what a person thinks is boring. This is not the field to aspire to if you only feel good going 600 miles an hour with your hair on fire. The movie *Top Gun* is about naval aviators, not mediators. On the other hand, a conflict resolution practice has enough adrenaline-laced moments for most people. For the others, central California offers rock climbing and white water rafting.

Universities are now hiring conflict resolution practitioners as Assistant Dean of Students, or some similar role devoted to working through the many campus issues that arise. Positions that used to be seen as the disciplinarian are now seen as conflict resolution positions. The same goes for high schools and corporations.

Relief and development organizations are rapidly adding conflict specialists to their teams, usually known these days as peacebuilding specialists. Nearly every major international NGO is trying to fill such positions. This is an area where people with prior experience in relief and development and education in conflict resolution have many opportunities. Language abilities can be important and those with experience in less common languages have special opportunities. The United Nations and its programs have many openings that fit such people, as does USAID. Our program prepares people for these roles.

United States government agencies are regularly advertising for conflict specialists to work in their alternative dispute resolution programs.

Those interested in the restorative justice field will find many opportunities with probation or social service departments, in addition to the more expected non-profit organizations.

In the specific area of university teaching the field has changed rapidly, and it is now rare to see a U.S. or Canada university teaching job advertised that does not require a Ph.D. or J.D., even though there are still very few people with a Ph.D. or J.D. specifically focused on conflict resolution. PACS offers a [cooperative J.D. / M.A. degree](#) which allows for a balance in conflict resolution and law training. There is also a great divergence between those who read books and those who practice conflict resolution. Jobs seeking candidates who only read books will want a Ph.D. while those wanting someone who has experience doing conflict resolution will be more open to various paths of preparation. Those interested in teaching outside North America or Europe have a very different situation, particularly in less developed countries, where international NGOs may want to place workers with an M.A. or less in universities and local programs.

Those who want a private practice need to realize that it is a slow and difficult process to develop any professional practice. Your background may be the most important aspect of developing a successful practice, with your training being much less interesting to potential clients.

For a scholarly article on the market for private practice mediators see "[Making Peace and Making Money: Economic Analysis of the Market for Mediators in Private Practice](#)" by Urska Velikonja. This cautionary article makes many of the same points noted above.

Jobs links

- [Restorative Justice, Mediation and Peacebuilding Jobs](#) maintained by PACS Director of Graduate Academic Programs Duane Ruth-Heffelbower. This page is updated constantly. Sign up on the page for email alerts of the changes. Many international positions make it to this page. The quirkiness of the page you are reading is also his fault.
- [Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences employment bulletin](#) - primarily academic jobs in criminology or criminal justice
- [Association for Conflict Resolution Career Center](#) (requires registration)
- [Chemonics International, Inc. development jobs](#).
- [CRInfo Jobs/Careers page](#) - info on careers, not a list of jobs
- [Global Recruitment Specialists](#)
- [National Association for Community Mediation \(NAFCM\) jobs page](#)
- [New York State Dispute Resolution Association, Inc. jobs page](#) overlaps the PACS jobs page to some extent but also has a broader range of jobs listed.
- [Peacebuilding Jobs](#) by Jill Sarah Moscowitz. Focus on conflict resolution with a tilt towards ombuds, and nonprofits in general.
- [Reliefweb vacancy announcements](#) for relief and development organizations
- [Restorative Justice Job Openings](#) from restorativejustice.org
- [United Nations Development Program Jobs](#) in civil society, governance and related areas.
- [United Nations Peace Operations Jobs](#)

- [USA Jobs](#) the US government jobs search engine. Search on "conciliation specialist" or try something else.