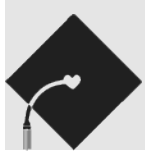


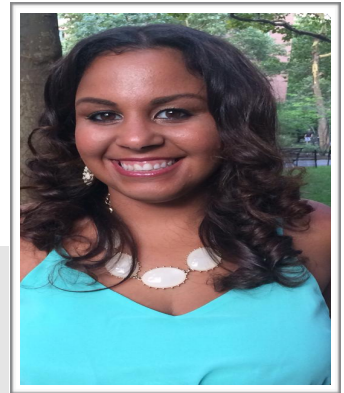
# Administrative Manager

Human Service Administrative Manager for the  
Houston Department of Health and Human Services



**Maria De La Cruz**

The College of New Jersey, Class of 2008



## **Describe your current position.**

I am currently an Administrative Manager for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services. In this position, I support the director and he puts me on special projects. (A lot more of the work Maria does is highlighted in the rest of her Job Profile.)

## **What is one project that is particularly meaningful to you?**

I get to oversee the See to Succeed program. In government, it can be so hard to get anything done. My director would not let that stop him. He started the Houston Health Foundation to raise money to do the things people wanted to do. See to Succeed works with school districts in Texas. There is a law that all first, third, fifth, and seventh graders get their vision screened. A lot of kids fail but do not have the access to eyeglasses or their parents cannot take them. It could also be a matter of not having insurance. We partnered with Walmart and we bus these kids to a central location, check their vision, and they pick the frames they want and get those glasses.

## **What does an average work day and year look like for you?**

It is different everyday. The projects depend on what the priority is at that time. For example, I worked on Harvey recovery initiatives six months ago. That included establishing neighborhood restoration centers and disaster case management. I was consistently coordinating and organizing those two pieces with other nonprofits. I also work with the See to Succeed program, which is only sixteen weeks, but we are constantly working with school districts and funding sources trying to get more resources. Currently, I also added leadership development to what I do, which involves making a curriculum and creating assessments. I want to improve trainings in the public health world.

## **What are the two best and two worst things about working in your current role or sector?**

Everyday I am helping someone and I can see it. With the health department position I have, I can say something and it gets done. That is, if it is a good idea. I am able to implement. That's amazing and I love that.

The downside is that it is still government, still bureaucracy. Because I am helping the citizens I feel like I have more leeway, but we are still held responsible for everything we do. Due to this, it is just so hard to get things done. Everything has to go through all of these steps and approvals to get things to happen. For example, I have to go to council which could take six months. Therefore, even though I am bringing in money, we may not be able to use that money for a year.



The other piece I am trying to fix is that there is no succession planning. There is no training for managers on how to be good managers, which is something that needs to be improved.

**If you had to name one decision, positive or negative, that has shaped your path. What is it?**

Everything was decisions. Staying in Bonner at Middlesex County College was a decision that completely changed my trajectory. I would be in New York right now making lots of money if not for that. I always told my mom that is not who I decided to be. Leaving Bonner was another decision that was really hard for me. I cried for some time. I loved my teams. My experience in Bonner at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) was that we were all this little family trying to make things happen. I also loved Pat. He is the one who got me into college. Without him, I would not have gotten into TCNJ. However, I knew I needed to leave Bonner to grow. I did not want to hate Bonner. I knew if I stayed I would.

**What do you wish you knew as a recent Bonner graduate preparing for this field?**

Bonner has a trajectory for students. There is curriculum and trainings centered around student development. I felt like when I was an administrator for Bonner there was no training for me. I think I naturally have some of the social skills needed to run a team, but I did not know what was next. This is a similar experience to what is going on at the health department now. We are trying to do so much in the nonprofit and government world. Everyone has the heart, but because we put all of our resources in the community, we tend to neglect ourselves. I wish I knew how big a factor that would be in my role now.

**How would you recommend interested students or individuals get involved in this field?**

I think just find internships. Find programs that get your foot in the door. The National Urban Fellows program is an amazing opportunity. You have to have been a leader for a few years and the Bonner experience provides you with that requirement. I recommend just going out there and finding ways to get in. Reach out to alumni and see if there are any opportunities they can help you with. Meet with a lot of people. It is who you know and what you know. I would say find people that you want to be like and see if you can take them out to coffee.

