I WILL SPEAK FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOMEONE WHO HAS GONE THE NON-TENURE TRACK ROUTE AND INTERVIEWS/SUPERVISES PEOPLE FOR POSITIONS THAT RECENT PHDS SOMETIMES APPLY FOR.

MOST OF THE PHDS THAT APPLY ARE CLEARLY NEW TO THE IDEA OF PURSUITING A NON-TENURE TRACK JOB AND ARE CHOOSING IT OUT OF DESPERATION. THE DESPERATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT SHOWS THROUGH BOTH IN HOW THEY COMPORT THEMSELVES IN THE INTERVIEW AND THEIR LACK OF PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION.

NON-TENURE TRACK JOBS ARE STILL COMPETITIVE AND PREPARING FOR THIS DURING GRADUATE TRAINING IS CRITICAL TO HAVING THE GREATEST VARIETY OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES. THIS WON’T BE EASY AND STRAIGHT FORWARD FOR THOSE STUDENTS WITH AN ADVISOR OR IN A DEPARTMENT THAT DOESN’T SUPPORT PREPARING FOR BOTH JOB POSSIBILITIES, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE IF ONE INVESTS SOME TIME INTO THINKING ABOUT THE SORT OF NON-TENURE TRACK JOBS ONE COULD BE HAPPY IN.

I DID THIS NOT BY IDENTIFYING A SPECIFIC ALTERNATE CAREER PATH, BUT BY IDENTIFYING SKILLS THAT BOTH MATCHED MY INTERESTS AND TENDED TO BE VALUABLE IN A VARIETY OF NON-TENURE TRACK JOBS AND GETTING AS MUCH EXPERIENCE AS I COULD WITH HOW THESE ARE EMPLOYED ACROSS A VARIETY OF FIELDS.
As a T.A. while in graduate school, it occurred to me that academics in training were not that different from undergraduate athletes. Even the hardest working and most talented athletes and academics have no guarantee of a successful career. Stochastic events beyond their control can play a large role in shaping success. An athlete can have a career-ending injury. Your advisor can take a job at another university when you are close to finishing. This can have a devastating effect on your career success.
DEVELOPING A DIVERS SKILL SET WILL GIVE YOU MORE OPTIONS WHEN YOU START LOOKING FOR A JOB.

IT IS A MYTH THAT ACADEMIC FOCUSED PREPARATION IS SUFFICIENT FOR APPLIED JOBS

**YOUR PLAN B IS SOMEONE ELSE’S PLAN A**

FOR EXAMPLE: MOST BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGISTS ARE EXPECTED TO ANALYZE THEIR OWN DATA AND TO DO SO ARE USUALLY EXPECTED TO TAKE ONE OR TWO COURSES TO PREPARE FOR THIS, BUT THE EXPECTATION IS THAT THE ADVISOR WILL CLOSELY GUIDE THEM ON ANALYZING THEIR DATA. AT THE END OF COMPLETED A DISSERTATION, MOST WILL ONLY KNOW HOW TO MANAGE DATA JUST LIKE WHAT THEY USED FOR THEIR DISSERTATION AND WILL ONLY KNOW THE FEW ANALYTICAL METHOD USED IN THEIR DISSERTATION.

THIS IS INSUFFICIENT PREPARATION TO BE COMPETITIVE FOR JOBS INVOLVING DATA ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT.
THE LACK OF PREPARATION FOR THE ALT-AC MARKET SHOWS IN MOST OF THE PHDS WHO APPLY FOR JOBS IN THE LAB I WORK IN.

THEIR LETTER AND CV IS A TEMPLATE ONE THEY PREPARED FOR AN ACADEMIC CAREER, NOT THE JOB THEY ARE APPLYING FOR.

THEY OFTEN HAVE A STUNED OR SADDENED DEMEANOR DURING THE INTERVIEW, WHICH TELLS ME THEY DO NOT REALLY WANT THIS JOB AND ARE NOT SEE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY

THEY DON’T MAKE ANY EFFORT TO MAKE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THEIR ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND HOW THEY COULD APPLY IT TO THIS JOB.

**IF YOU CAN MAKE THIS CONNECTION, IT IS KEY TO MOVING YOU TO THE TOP OF THE LIST**

THEY HAVEN’T DONE THEIR HOMEWORK ON THE ORGANIZATION THEY ARE APPLYING TO

UNFAMILIAR WITH BASIC TERMINIOLOGY
  EXAMPLE: ANIMAL WELFARE VERSUS ANIMAL RIGHTS

AT THE VERY LEAST GOOGLE SOME KEYWORDS FROM THE EMPLOYER’S WEBSITE OR JOB AD AND READ A FEW WIKIPEDIA PAGES
TO PREPARE YOURSELF NOW FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ALT-AC CAREER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW YOUR CORE INTERESTS.

THIS IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM YOU ELEVATOR VERSION OF YOUR RESEARCH INTERESTS AND IT IS HARDER TO COME UP WITH THAN IT SHOULD BE

FOR ME IT IS:
DATA ANALYSES
WATCHING MONKEY
WRITING

PRETTY MUCH IN THAT ORDER

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU LIKE DOING AS AN ANTHROPOLOGIST. THE DAILY FUNCTIONS YOU THAT YOU LIKE DOING. IS IT TRAVELING, IS IT TALKING TO PEOPLE IN SPANISH?

IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE THESE BECAUSE THAT WILL LEAD YOU TO SKILLS WORTH BUILDING AND AN ALT-AC JOB YOU’D ENJOY DOING ON A DAILY BASIS.
Looking back, these experiences are most critical to my success in my current career path. There were others, but overtime these became most prominent and how I spent most of my time.

I've also found ways to make my academic preparation a competitive aspect in my non-tenure track job.

I use the primary literature on primate ecology and evolution to understand how we can improve captive primate welfare with key alterations that make their captive environments a better fit for the natural history of that particular species.

It seems simple, but it is a very underutilized resource in my current career working on captive primate welfare and I have twice been invited to speak at conferences to present a model for how to this.
THERE HAVE BEEN SOME UNEXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE ALT-AC PATH

TRAINING FOR ACADEMIA, WE LEARNED TO DEAL WITH SO MUCH CRITICISM OF OUR WORK AND SO LITTLE PRAISE, IT WAS ASTONISHING FOR ME TO BE IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE I HEAR MORE OFTEN HOW MUCH MY CONTRIBUTION IS APPRECIATED. FRIENDS I HAVE YOU ALSO WENT THE ALT-AC ROUTE REPORT THE SAME EXPERIENCE

I AM EXPOSED TO WAY MORE TYPES OF DATA AND METHODOLOGIES THAN I EVER WOULD HAVE LEARNED ON AN ACADEMIC PATH
YOU CAN BUILD AN ALT-AC PLAN BY

STARTING WITH WHAT YOU LOVE TO *DO*. NOT THE ACADEMIC VERSION BUT THE DAILY PRACTICE VERSION

THEN THINK ABOUT WHERE THE THINGS YOU LOVE TO DO ARE VALUED MOST OUTSIDE OF ACADEMIA

INVESTIGATE JOBS THAT WOULD BE A GOOD FIT FOR YOU
BEFORE RULING OUT A PATH, CONSIDER YOUR NEXT BEST ALTERNATIVE
WORKING FOR A PRIVATE FOR PROFIT COMPANY MAY BE UNDESIRABLE TO YOU, BUT IF YOU’RE NEXT BEST ALTERNATIVE IS TO GO BACK TO WAITRESSING AND THAT IS UNACCEPTABLE TO YOU, THEN DON’T CROSS OFF PRIVATE FOR PROFIT COMPANY JOBS

IDENTIFY WHERE YOU CAN ACCUMULATE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE YOUR DEPARTMENT AND THE UNIVERSITY
I TOOK THE ONE STATISTICS COURSE MY DEPARTMENT OFFERED, PLUS THREE IN THE MATH DEPARTMENT. AND I SAVED TA-SHIPS FOR THE END OF MY GRADUATE EDUCATIONS AND INSTEAD WORKED AS A RESEARCH FELLOW IN A DATA LAB HELPING GRADUATE STUDENTS AND FACULTY FROM A VARIETY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT WITH THEIR DATA. THIS ALLOWED ME TO WORK WITH A MUCH WIDER VARIETY OF DATA TYPES AND ANALYTICAL METHODS THAN I WOULD’VE BEEN EXPOSED TO IN ANTHROPOLOGY ALONE.
THIS EVENTUALLY LED TO A SMALL DATA CONSULTING SIDE-BUSINESS AS SOME OF THESE GRADUATE STUDENTS AND FACULTY LEFT MY UNIVERSITY, THEY WOULD LATER CONTACT ME AND SAY “I KNOW YOU’RE NOT SUPPOSED TO HELP ME SINCE I’M NO LONGER AFFILIATED WITH THE SCHOOL, BUT COULD I JUST PAY YOU TO HELP ME WITH THIS DATA?”
GOING FOR AN ALT-AC CAREER DOESN’T MEAN THE PHD WAS FOR NOTHING. IT IS A MYTH THAT A PHD IN ANTHROPOLOGY IS STRICTLY USEFUL FOR ACADEMIC PURSUITS. THERE IS AN INCREASING DEMAND FOR ADVANCE DEGREES AND IF YOU CAN APPLY THE THEORY YOU LEARNED AS ACADEMIC TO AN APPLIED JOB YOU CAN MAKE YOURSELF UNIQUELY VALUABLE AS A PHD DOING APPLIED WORK.

AN ALT-AC JOB APPLYING YOU SKILLS AS AN ANTHROPOLOGIST IS BETTER THAN A COMPLETELY UNRELATED JOB OR NO JOB AT ALL.