

Preparing You for a Future of Meaningful Work

This tool is intended to assist you in effectively managing your career exploration, planning, and decision making. In order to prepare for success after graduation, it is essential to take initiative, be intentional, and have goals in mind. Through exploration and “testing out” ideas of interest, your plan may shift or change – that’s completely natural! Stay flexible, and take advantage of the rich resources and support persons who are ready to walk alongside you on your path to purposeful work.

Department of Visual Arts

Career & Professional Development Plan



Assess

Assess, articulate and develop your strengths, interests and values. Begin to explore options that compatible with your strengths and interests.

Explore

Research career paths in the arts, so that you can plan to incorporate relevant experiences into your Messiah education. Intentionally involve yourself in opportunities where you can apply and further develop your skill sets while growing personally and professionally.

Experience

Enhance critical professional competencies in order to successfully connect your professional goals with future opportunities. Take your experience to the next level by participating in meaningful opportunities that will differentiate you from the rest.

Transition

Synthesize your collective experiences from your academics and out-of-class involvement. Begin to articulate a plan and take action to translate your skills and experiences into meaningful post-graduate opportunities.

Assess

Who am I & where am I going?

Gain insight into your unique strengths, interests and skills, particularly as they relate to your major and various career options. Identify resources from the list below to begin building this important foundation to decision making.

What resources are available?

- [Self-assessment inventories](#) are available through the Career Center to help you begin narrowing down your interests, strengths, and values.
- Become familiar with the [major options](#) available in the Department of Visual Arts (DOVA). If you're unsure if your current major is a good fit for your strengths, consult the [Choosing a Major](#) guide.
- Attend the **Career Center's fall Open House** to learn about services and opportunities. You're encouraged to schedule a **"getting started" appointment** with a career coach sometime **during your first year on campus**.

How can I learn about my options?

- Consult the [Career Planning Resources for Arts Majors](#) on the Career Center's website.
- Find out what Messiah College [arts alumni](#) are up to.

How can I be proactive?

- Visit the [Career Center](#) early, and start customizing your **personal career and professional development plan** with the help of a career coach. Each person and major is unique!

Reflection Q's

- *How would I describe my skills, interests, and values?*
 - *Considering past and present experiences, what energizes me most? Be specific!*
 - *How are these aspects of myself shaping my decisions about a major and potential career path?*
 - *What options for involvement outside the classroom might allow me to gain experience while further developing my transferable skill sets?*
- Begin building relationships with your advisor and faculty within your department**, beyond the classroom setting. Take advantage of office hours and department activities. Become familiar with the [DOVA website](#).
 - Get started on your **portfolio**, where you will begin archiving highlights from your work and accomplishments.
 - Create a first draft of your [resume](#); what gaps do you need to fill? Use this as a guide to start constructing an **action plan** that includes relevant, sought-after experience by employers and graduate schools.
 - Learn about the value of a liberal arts education as it relates to the workplace by checking out information on **"transferable skills"** you are learning. These skills are **marketable to a variety of employers** and graduate schools, so be intentional about developing them.

Explore

Take your ideas for a test drive.

Gather information on potential career paths of interest so that you can make informed decisions about your future. **Intentionally** choose activities that will allow you to explore and grow personally and professionally.

Where and how can I gather more info?

- Meet with a [career coach](#) to discuss resources and opportunities that will help you further explore your career-related interests. Brainstorm ideas for **complementing your classroom learning with relevant experience** to start filling the gaps in your [resume](#).
- Learn more about career paths that relate to your interests the following ways:
 - **Job shadow** a [Messiah alum](#) or personal contact to get an insider's view into a career.
 - Conduct at least three [informational interviews](#) with professionals in your field of interest.
 - When possible, **attend local exhibitions, performances, and artist talks.**
 - Attend the Career Center's **Pizza with Professionals** events and other workshops that are relevant to your interests.
 - Attend the annual **Career & Graduate School Expo** to gather information and talk with various recruiters.
 - Invest time in **building relationships** with educators on campus with whom you share specific interests/passions. Consider seeking a mentor with whom to discuss your vocational path.
 - Connect with **upperclass students** in your major to learn about their experiences.
- Become familiar with [FalconJobs](#), a centralized database of part-time and full-time employment opportunities. Log-in with your Messiah email and ID number.

Reflection Q's

- *What experiences might be valued by a prospective employer or grad school?*
- *How can I apply what I'm learning in the classroom through meaningful experience?*
- *Am I focusing on quality rather than quantity?*

How should I get involved?

- Explore options for [involvement](#) outside of the classroom through offices such as [Student Involvement & Leadership Programs](#), the [Agapé Center for Service & Learning](#), [Study Abroad](#), [College Ministries](#), [Residence Life](#), [Multicultural Programs](#) and much more. Consider choosing at least one area to get involved.
- Strategically choose **activities** on campus and in the community that will allow you to [gain experience](#) and further develop your transferable skills. **Examples:** the National Art Education Association, Art League, [The Pulse](#), the [Student Activities Board](#), and opportunities with local [Harrisburg arts-related organizations](#).
- Consider doing an internship through Messiah's [Internship Center](#). **Data shows that employers highly value relevant experience, regardless of major!**
- Establish a profile on [LinkedIn](#). **See what Messiah alumni are doing** by joining the [Messiah College Professional Network](#).
- Begin thinking of **how you will spend your summer**. What experiences, paid and/or volunteer, will help you build on your experience and continue to develop marketable skill sets in your field of interest?
- Practice **articulating** the [transferable skills](#) you are developing – this will be important when articulating your qualifications to future employers or graduate schools.

Experience

How can I differentiate myself?

It's time to **take your experience to the next level!**

Increase your marketability and uniqueness and build your portfolio through real world, relevant experience. This is also the time to develop and enhance your professional "brand." In other words, **what do YOU have to offer** to a prospective employer or graduate school? If you're not thinking of pursuing a career in a field traditionally related to your major, research the field(s) you're considering. Think about how your academic background will prepare you for making unique contributions to your field of interest.

What constitutes "relevant experience?"

- ❑ Employers and graduate schools are looking for candidates with relevant experience, yet **every professional field is unique**. Do [research](#) and [talk with professionals](#) who share your interests to know what type of experience is valued in your targeted field.
- ❑ Determine and **take action** toward gaining experiences that will help you grow personally and professionally, such as – an [internship](#), [leadership position](#) on campus, research, [study abroad opportunities for arts majors](#), or [volunteering/service learning](#) in the local community.

What professional competencies are important?

- ❑ **Think creatively** about how your experiences, major, and the **skills** you're demonstrating might be transferable to your targeted field. How are these being **conveyed through examples and artifacts** in your portfolio?
- ❑ **Practice communicating your professional image** through [social media](#), in writing ([resume](#)) and verbally ([mock interview](#)) with a career coach.
- ❑ **Utilize drop-in hours** or schedule an appointment to receive personalized feedback.

- ❑ **This is so important:** expand your [network](#) and connections at relevant events and with professionals in your field, [Messiah alumni](#), and at other campus and Career Center [events](#). Continue doing [informational interviews!](#)

What tools and resources will help me get connected professionally?

- ❑ Attend [job and graduate school fairs](#) throughout the year. **Keep in mind that recruiting for arts-related positions doesn't always occur through traditional methods.** Personal and professional connections are very important!
- ❑ Connect with **professional associations, conferences, exhibitions, and trade shows** in your field. Ask your faculty members for referrals.
- ❑ Develop "[networking cards](#)" with basic contact info and a summary of your goals and qualifications. Have these available as you meet new contacts who may serve as critical resources in the future.
- ❑ Start building your [professional wardrobe](#) according to what is appropriate for your field of interest!
- ❑ Stay on top of **current events, trends, and hot topics** in your field through journals, magazines, and the news.
- ❑ If you're **considering graduate school**, read through the [Grad School Planning Guide](#). Also, attend events such as the **Personal Statement Workshop, Practice Admissions Exams, and Graduate School luncheon.**

Reflection Q's

- *What specific experiences are highly desirable in my targeted field?*
- *Have I "tested out" my area of interest to know it's a good fit?*
- *Can I articulate the skills (with supporting evidence) that will be marketable to my target?*
- *What type of leadership position might I consider?*

Transition

The next move is yours!

Transitioning to post-graduate life, whether that involves graduate school, employment, a gap year, or full-time service, includes many aspects. Keep in mind that career development is a lifetime process. That said, consider it your “first destination.” As a steward of your strengths, carefully consider what you have to contribute to your next step towards a future in the Visual Arts.

What are my transition goals?

- ❑ **Research and clarify your [top occupational](#) or [graduate school](#) choices** which are congruent with your skills and interests.
- ❑ Discuss your **goals** and ideas with and receive feedback from your faculty, mentors and the Career Center (stop by to schedule an appointment).
- ❑ Work with a career coach to devise a job search or graduate school application **strategy**. Stay on track by developing a **timeline**.
- ❑ Gather information on realistic [salary](#) expectations.
- ❑ **Stay active in the process** by engaging your network of personal and professional contacts. Communicate your goals and ideas about what might be next for you. Reach out to additional contacts through the [Messiah College Professional Network](#).

What do I have to offer?

- ❑ Reflect on **the totality of your experiences** both inside and outside of the classroom. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do you have to offer a prospective employer or graduate school? In what **practical ways** have you demonstrated these strengths? **This is essential preparation for resume writing and interviewing.**
- ❑ Refine and tailor your application or admissions materials, including your [resume](#), cover letter, portfolio [essays](#), [LinkedIn profile](#), and [interview](#) responses to

include **specific examples** and accomplishments from your experience.

- ❑ Secure employment or graduate school [references](#) from those who can speak to your proven strengths and potential. **Don't ask for recommendations at the last minute!** Plan ahead and give adequate time.

Where can I find opportunities?

- ❑ Use an **eclectic mix of resources** in your job/grad school search strategy. Review the [Job Search](#) and [Graduate School](#) Guides.
- ❑ View job opportunities posted to Messiah students and alumni through [FalconJobs](#).
- ❑ **Networking!** Invest in relationship-building and connecting with professionals in your field of interest. The [Messiah College Professional Network](#) is a great place to start.
- ❑ Attend **job and graduate school fairs** on campus and in your geographic area of interest. Review a [tip sheet!](#)
- ❑ Consult career and graduate school resources on the [Career Center website](#) noted above.
- ❑ Connect with job boards through **professional association websites**.
- ❑ **Social media:** Follow employers of interest on Twitter; engage in discussions within professional groups on [LinkedIn](#).
- ❑ Remember to **follow up**, say “[thank you](#),” and track progress.

Reflection Q's

- *What are my top strengths I have to offer an employer or graduate school?*
- *Does my resume and portfolio accurately convey my transferable skills and experiences?*
- *How have I demonstrated the skills that will be marketable to my target?*