

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 Chemistry & Biochemistry

Career & Professional Development Plan



Assess

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

Explore

Gather information on research possibilities as well as potential career and graduate programs of interest. Intentionally involve yourself in activities that will allow you to explore and grow 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?

There are several options available to assist you in the process of assessing and developing your strengths, interests and values related to Chemistry and Biochemistry. 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.
- ❑ Learn about the various [degree options](#) the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry offers as well as what makes each one distinct. If you're unsure if your 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 in your first year on campus.**

How can I learn about my options?

- ❑ Check out the [career planning resources by major](#) on the Career Center's website. This includes information on possible career paths and a look into what Messiah alumni have done with their majors.
- ❑ Get to know the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) and [O*NET](#) for specific information on career options.

How can I be proactive?

- ❑ Visit the [Career Center](#) early, and start constructing a **customized career and**

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?*

professional development plan with the help of a career coach. Each person and major is unique!

- ❑ **Begin building relationships with your advisor and [faculty](#) within** the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department, beyond the classroom setting. Take advantage of office hours and department activities. Become familiar with the [Biochem/Chem Department's website](#).
- ❑ 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 **very marketable to employers** and graduate schools, so be intentional about developing them.

Explore

Take your ideas for a test drive.

Gather information on potential graduate programs and 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 where you're at and any adjustments that should be made to your customized career and professional development plan. 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 in the following ways:
 - Conduct research on career paths through resources such as the [American Chemical Society](#) and [ASBMB](#).
 - **Job shadow** a Messiah alum (explore the "[Alumni Profiles](#)" page on the Chem & Biochem website) 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.
 - Attend the Career Center's **Pizza with Professionals** events and other related workshops.
 - Attend the annual **Career & Graduate School Expo** to gather information and talk with recruiters.
 - Invest time in **building relationships** with educators on campus with whom you share specific interests/passions. Consider seeking a mentor to discuss your vocational path.
- ☐ Become familiar with [FalconJobs](#), a centralized database of part-time and full-time employment

Reflection Q's

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

opportunities. Log-in with your Messiah email and ID number.

How should I get engaged?

- ☐ Explore options for [involvement](#) outside of the classroom through offices such as [Student Involvement & Leadership Programs](#) (specifically, the Chemistry Club), [Agapé Center for Service & Learning](#), [Study Abroad](#), [College Ministries](#), [Residence Life](#), [Multicultural Programs](#) and much more. Consider choosing one area to get involved.
- ☐ Strategically choose [activities](#) on campus that will allow you to [gain experience](#) and further develop your transferable skills. **Grad programs and employers value quality over quantity**, so choose meaningful opportunities.
- ☐ Consider becoming involved in a research or doing an internship through Messiah's [Internship Program](#). **Data shows that employers and grad schools 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? The Chem/Biochem Department offers [on-campus](#) and [off-campus](#) summer research opportunities!

Experience

How can I differentiate myself?

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

Increase your marketability and uniqueness through seizing the opportunities available to you. This is also the time to develop and enhance your professional image. 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 chemistry or biochemistry, 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 – research project, an [internship](#), [leadership position](#) on campus, [service learning](#) or [studying abroad](#).

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.
- ❑ **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 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 to get connected professionally?

- ❑ Attend [job and graduate school fairs](#) throughout the year. Start early; remember, you don't have to be in the job-seeking phase to attend!
- ❑ Consider applying for an [Into the City](#) career immersion program through the Career Center.
- ❑ Connect with [professional associations](#) and **conferences** in your field, such as the [American Chemical Society](#) and [American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology](#). Other useful sites can be found on the Department's [website](#).
- ❑ 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 a professional [wardrobe](#) according to what is most 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 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 is 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, consider carefully what you have to contribute to your next step.

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 a career coach (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 graduate school or employer? In what **practical ways** have you demonstrated these strengths? **This is essential preparation for application and resume writing and interviewing.**
- ☐ Refine and tailor your application or admissions materials, including your [resume](#), cover letter, [essays](#), [LinkedIn profile](#), and [interview](#) responses to include **specific examples** and accomplishments from your experience.

- ☐ Secure graduate school or employment [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**. 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** noted on previous page.
- ☐ **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 and qualifications I have to offer an employer or graduate school?*
- *Does my resume/application accurately convey my transferable skills and experiences?*
- *How have I demonstrated the skills that will be marketable to my target?*