

Preparing You for a Future of Meaningful Work

This tool is intended to assist you in effectively managing the process of 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
Communication

Career and
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 career areas of interest so that you can make informed decisions about your future. Intentionally involve yourself in activities where you can apply and further develop your skill sets, grow your qualifications, and explore areas of interest.

Experience

Enhance critical professional competencies in order to successfully connect your professional goals with real world 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.

For access to online version with hyperlinks:

<http://www.messiah.edu/offices/career/careerplan/documents/Career andProfessionalDevelopmentPlan.pdf>



Welcome from the Department of Communication

Greetings from the Messiah College Communication department! Whether you have declared communication as a major or you're just checking it out, we are excited to share these resources with you. Our goal here is to help you connect coursework in the department with the incredible array of applied experiences associated with the communication field. Our graduates are using our highly adaptable and marketable majors to gain employment in public relations, advertising, event planning, writing, teaching, film, new media, broadcasting, journalism, web based communications, youth ministry, public speaking, grant writing, and in many other exciting occupations.

We are eager to listen to you, point you to resources, and help you create an educational experience that will enable you to secure employment in the communication related position of your choosing. Please use this document as a resource and a reminder of ways you can best prepare yourself for post-college work. Our prayer is that as you journey through college, you will discover ways to apply your unique gifts, interests, and education to serve others and to further God's kingdom.

Blessings,
The Communication Department

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 different [majors/minors](#) in the Department of Communication.
- 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 **within your first year on campus**.
- You will construct an **electronic and/or paper portfolio** in the COMM 107 course, where you can begin to store **artifacts**, including papers, projects, research, and other accomplishments from your classroom work and out-of-class activities.
- Stay connected through the [Department's Facebook page](#) and newsletter, [Commraderie](#).

How can I learn about my options?

- Become familiar with relevant career paths to the field of Communication by checking out the [Career Planning Resources specifically for Communication-related Majors](#) on the Career Center's website. Other resources include: [Careers in Communication](#) (S. Noronha) and [Career Opportunities in the Film Industry](#) (Yager).
- Get to know the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) and [O*NET](#) for specific information on career options.

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?*

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!
- Begin building relationships with your advisor and professors** within your department, beyond the classroom setting. Take advantage of office hours and department activities. Become familiar with the Communication [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 career areas 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 in the following ways:
 - Conduct research on career paths through resources such as the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) and [O*NET](#).
 - **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.
 - Attend the Career Center's **Pizza with Professionals** events and other 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 with whom to discuss your vocational path.
- 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 and organizations such as: [Admissions](#), [Public Relations](#), the [Agapé Center for Service & Learning](#), [Alumni and Parent Relations](#), [Development](#), [The Bridge](#), [Student Activities Board](#), [Student Government Association](#), [WVMM](#), [The Swinging Bridge](#), [Phone-A-Thon](#), The [Collaboratory](#), and more.
- Strategically choose **activities** on campus that will allow you to [gain experience](#) and further develop your transferable skills. **Employers and grad schools value quality over quantity**, so choose meaningful opportunities.
- Explore internship opportunities 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 summers**. 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 presenting 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 through acquiring 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 – internship, leadership position on campus, research project, service learning, study abroad, or a conference presentation.
- ❑ Communication majors are required to do at least one [internship](#). Consider the possibilities of doing more than one to diversify your experience!

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 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 [PR Society of America](#) (PRSA), the [PR Student Society of America](#) (PRSSA), the [International Association of Business Communication](#) (IABC), the [National Communication Assoc.](#) (NCA), the communication honor society [Lambda Pi Eta](#), the [Society for Film & Media Studies](#), the [National Assoc. of Broadcasters](#) (NAB), and the [Radio & Television News Directors Assoc.](#) (RTNDA).
- ❑ 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](#)!
- ❑ 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 my skills through examples 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 decisions. **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.

What are my transition goals?

- ❑ **Research and clarify your [top occupational](#) or [graduate school](#) choices** which are congruent with your skills and interests. Check out this [NCA list of graduate programs in communication](#) to explore your options.
- ❑ 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.

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, [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 for approximately 3-4 weeks.

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.
- ❑ Review [comm-specific job search sites](#).
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ **Take a targeted, strategic approach.** For example, connect with job boards through **professional association websites**. For Broadcasting, search job opportunities posted on the [Broadcast Education Association](#) (BEA) and the [College Broadcasters, Inc.](#) (CBI) 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 accurately convey my transferable skills and experiences?*
- *How have I demonstrated the skills that will be marketable to my target?*

Reflections from Communication Alumni...

"The communication major at Messiah prepared me with practical skills for my career path in music business. Working in artist management essentially means that I work alongside bands/artists to communicate effectively to both their fans and industry partners. I love that it combines my passion for music and my strengths of organization, writing, and public speaking. Studying communication at Messiah really helped grow and develop these skills. The courses also provided me with a working knowledge of public relations, marketing and mass media, all of which have served me well!"

-Jennifer Shaver, '07

Marketing and Brand Manager, Thomas-Vasquez Entertainment

"The Communication major at Messiah College didn't just introduce me to the rich complexities and paradoxes of human interaction - it transformed the way I position myself within an ever-changing, mediated world. It exposed me to a rigorous academic environment that challenged my naive, sometimes erroneous, presuppositions as much as it encouraged me to follow my ideas wherever they might lead."

-Nathan Taylor, '07

Doctoral Student in Communication Studies, Teaching Fellow
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

"Making films is a collaborative process, and for me, one of the most beneficial aspects of Messiah's program was the tight knit group the film studies students had. Along with the easy access to equipment, we were able to work on each other's projects constantly, providing me with much more production and collaboration experience than most of my peers in Graduate School."

-Krista Hamlen Imbesi, '09

Graduate Student in Media Arts/Documentary Film,
University of Buffalo

"I loved my experience as a Communication major at Messiah College. As a PR student, I was encouraged to gain real world experience throughout my college career. In my internships and classes, I worked on materials that became integral pieces of my portfolio for job interviews. My experiences led to my first two post-college jobs - a testimonial to the power of internships.

Beyond my classroom and real world experiences, the most significant and beneficial part of my Communication degree has been the relationships that I formed - with professors and classmates. The small class sizes and one-on-one attention that I received have created lasting friends and mentors that will last far into my life as a Messiah College alumnus."

- Rachel Crownover Alden, '09

Director of Development, Paxton Ministries

Sample Internships for Communication Majors

Communication

Internship opportunities include specific areas such as

- Account Management
- Administration
- Administrative Support
- Advertising Solutions
- Archival / Fundraising
- Business Development
- Campaign Organizer
- Client Profile Assistant
- Client Profile Assistant
- Event Coordinating/managing/planning

Film & Media Arts/ Digital Media

Internship opportunities include specific areas such as

- FM Radio Production
- Interactive Designer
- Cinematography
- Media Ministry
- Media Relations
- Multimedia Communication

Broadcasting

Internship opportunities include specific areas such as

- Broadcasting Television
- Cinematography
- Sports Broadcasting
- FM Radio Production
- News Reporting

Journalism

Internship opportunities include specific areas such as

- Investigative Journalism
- Photojournalism
- Political Journalism

Public Relations

Internship opportunities include specific areas such as

- Advertising Solutions
- Public Relations/Affairs
- Marketing
- Event Planning

Communication students at Messiah have completed internships at:

- Friday Night Football Broadcasting; ABC 27 News
- Media Specialist; Your Home Supply
- Public Relations; CURE International
- Senior Chair of Homecoming Committee; The Office of Alumni and Parent Relations
- Assistant to the Assignment Editor; NBC Channel 40 News
- Advertising, Promotion, Planning; Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra
- Student Writer/Editor; Suasion, LLC
- Production Assistant; Center City Film and Video; Backseat Conceptions
- Public Relations; The Partnership CDC; RG Group
- Head Photographer/Owner; LeighG Photography
- Team in Training Assistant Marketing and Event Coordinator; The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society