Assess

Assess, articulate and develop your strengths, interests and values. Begin to explore options that are congruent with your awareness of self.

Engage

Purposefully engage in opportunities and with resources that will set you on the path to personal and professional development. Target opportunities where you can apply and further develop your skill sets, grow your experience base, 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, internships and other experiential learning, service, leadership, and co-curricular involvement. Begin to articulate a plan and take action to translate your skills and experiences into meaningful post-graduate opportunities.

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 PHILOSOPHY

Your Career & Professional Development Plan

Messiah College

CAREER CENTER: GUIDANCE & DEVELOPMENT
This brochure provides general guidelines on preparing yourself for a career after graduation. It should be used in conjunction with the career and vocation section of the Philosophy Major’s Handbook, which provides detailed information and guidelines specifically geared toward philosophy majors.

We are thrilled that you are part of our department and want to help you succeed in any way that we can. Therefore please feel free to consult with us as you prepare yourself for postgraduate opportunities.

-The Philosophy Department
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 your philosophy major. Identify resources from the list below to begin building this important foundation to decision making.

What tools are available?

- **Self-assessment inventories** are available through the Career Center to help you begin narrowing down your interests, strengths, and values.
- Consider constructing an **electronic portfolio** where you can begin to store artifacts, including papers, projects, research, and other accomplishments from your classroom work and out-of-class activities.
- Look over the list of “vocational tracks” in the Philosophy Major’s Handbook. With which areas are your skills and interests aligning?

How can I find relevant opportunities?

- Check out the “**Explore Career Options**” section on the Career Center’s website – and, specifically, “**What Can I Do with a Major in Philosophy?**”
- Learn what philosophy alumni and other professionals are doing with their degrees through FalconNet, the alumni directory (consult the Career Center if you need assistance).
- Explore options for **involvement** outside of the classroom through offices and organizations such as the Philosophy Club, the Internship Center, Student Involvement & Leadership Programs, the Agapé Center for Service & Learning, the EpiCenter for Off-Campus Study, College Ministries, Residence Life and much more. (See Philosophy Major’s Handbook for additional options.)

What resources should I be accessing?

- Visit the Career Center early, and start constructing your customized career and professional development plan.
- Get to know your advisor and professors within the Philosophy department beyond the classroom. Take advantage of office hours and department activities. Become familiar with the Philosophy department’s website.
- Create a first draft of your résumé; what gaps exist? Use this as a guide to start constructing an action plan that includes relevant, sought-after experience.
- Become familiar with the “**transferable skills**” you are learning. These skills are very marketable to employers and graduate schools, so be intentional about developing them.

**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 related to my 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?
Explore & Engage

How do I choose?

Don’t just become involved. **Intentionally** choose activities that will allow you to grow personally and professionally. Target opportunities and experiences where you can apply and develop transferable skill sets while exploring potential areas of interest. Consider the following options to stay on track.

Who can help?

- Meet with a Career Center professional 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 résumé.
- Take the initiative to **build relationships** with your academic advisor, faculty members, and RD. Discuss and gain ideas about **potential career interests** and **plans to gain experience**. Invest in faculty members with whom you share specific interests/passions. Consider seeking a mentor.
- Get in touch with philosophy alumni who are employed in areas that are of interest to you. Ask your advisor for specific names and email addresses or consult FalconNet, the online alumni directory (contact the Career Center for assistance.)

How do I choose from so many options?

- Strategically choose **co-curricular activities** that will allow you to gain experience and further develop your skills. **Employers and grad schools value quality over quantity**, so invest in meaningful opportunities. Seek feedback from your supporters noted above.
- Begin talking with your advisor, the Career Center and/or the Internship Center about **experiential learning opportunities** (internships, professional development experiences (PDE), job shadowing, etc.). **Data shows that employers highly value relevant experience!**

**Reflection Q’s**

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

- **Other options for involvement may include:** potential internships, fellowships, research opportunities, **work study options, study abroad programs, student clubs and organizations**, volunteering or **service learning**, and summer or part-time work.
- Practice articulating the **transferable skills** you are developing.

What can I do to test out my career interests?

- Conduct an **information interview** with a professional or philosophy alumni in your field of interest; do an internship or practicum in a related field.
- **Research career fields of interest to you.** What is the nature of the work and work environment? What skills and experiences are highly desirable? What are some of the behind-the-scenes tasks?
- Begin thinking of **how you will spend your summer**. What experiences, paid or volunteer, will help you build on your experience and continue to develop **marketable skill sets**?
Experience

How can I differentiate myself?
It’s time to take your experience to the next level. Increase your marketability and uniqueness through investing in your experience base. Consider the options below as you develop and enhance your “brand.” Research those fields you are considering finding employment in; then think about how your philosophy background will prepare you for making unique contributions to it. Make sure to write this out and be prepared to present this in an interview with a prospective employer. If possible, include it in your cover letter or résumé.

What constitutes “relevant experience?”

- Every professional field is unique. Do research and talk with professionals who share your interests to know what is valued in your targeted field.
- Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with relevant experience. This may be gained through research experience, an internship (visit the Internship Center) or practicum, international experience, or volunteer positions. Talk with your advisor about how this fits into your schedule.
- Think creatively about how your experiences, philosophy major, and the skills you’re demonstrating might be transferable to your targeted field. How are you conveying this on your résumé?

What professional competencies are important?

- Learn how to effectively market your qualifications through your résumé and cover letter. Stop by the Career Center during drop-in hours or schedule an appointment to receive personalized feedback.
- Strengthen your interviewing skills by scheduling a mock interview in the Career Center.
- Practice your networking skills with faculty, alumni, and at Career Center events.

- Build a professional web presence through vehicles such as social networking sites (ex. LinkedIn, Twitter) and e-portfolios. Document your experiences in your electronic portfolio as a way of showcasing your skills and accomplishments.

What tools and resources will help me to get connected professionally?

- Attend job and graduate school fairs and other career-related events throughout the year. Start early; remember, you don’t have to be in the job-seeking phase to attend!
- Develop “networking cards” with basic contact info and a summary of your goals and qualifications (use business card template in Microsoft Office). Have these available as you meet new contacts who may serve as critical resources in the future.
- Save your best papers with professors’ comments on them, to hand back to them if you ask them to write letters of recommendations.

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?
- How am I practicing the skills that will be marketable to my target?
- What will set me apart from the average candidate in my chosen field?
- Have I considered stepping into a leadership position?
Transition

Am I ready?

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 and the Career Center (schedule an appointment or utilize drop-in hours).
- 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 alumni directory, FalconNet, and your social networks such as LinkedIn.
- Stay on track for accomplishing your goals by devising strategies and timelines for making them happen. Consider doing it with a peer and holding one another accountable.

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? Practice articulating examples through a mock interview in the Career Center.
- Refine and tailor your application or admissions materials, including your résumé, cover letter, essays, and interview responses to include specific examples and stories 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 (three to four weeks).
- If you haven’t already, consider building a professional portfolio (i.e., yola.com). This should incorporate a bit about you, your résumé, transferable skills and experiences, and anything else that might be important to your field of interest.

Where can I find opportunities?

- Use an eclectic mix of resources. View job opportunities posted exclusively to Messiah students through FalconJobs. Participate in career events related to important transitional topics.
- Attend job and graduate school fairs locally and in your geographic area of interest.
- Consult career and graduate school resources on the Career Center website.
- Connect with job boards through professional association websites related to your field of interest.
- 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 résumé accurately reflect my transferable skills and experiences?
- How have I demonstrated the skills that will be marketable to my target?