Preparing You for a Future of Meaningful Work & Service

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.

For Sociology and Anthropology Majors

Vocational & Professional Development Plan

Assess

Assess, articulate and develop your strengths, interests and values. Begin to explore options for service and work that fit with your gifts and passions.

Explore

Gather information on career areas of interest so that you can make informed decisions about your future. 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 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.
Welcome!

We’re delighted that you have joined, or are considering, the Sociology and Anthropology major at Messiah College. We call it “SOAN” (rhymes with “snowman”).

SOAN is a fascinating area of study because we take up some of the big questions of life: “What does it mean to be human?”, “Why is there so much injustice in the world?”, “Why do people do what they do?”, and “How can we make the world more humane and just?” We answer those questions by investigating social structure, culture, race, gender, social inequality, globalization, and peace-making. We also bring the big questions down to earth, preparing students to make initial post-graduation steps in career and service, and to become adaptive, flexible, lifelong learners who can thrive in a fast-changing world.

SOAN students are “people people” who want to invest their lives in making life better for others. Many want to build cross-cultural competency through study abroad and classroom study of sociology and anthropology. Many blend SOAN with study of language, or another professional area such as business, athletics, or communication. SOAN is a relatively small major in terms of number of credits, so it stands well on its own, and it also offers room to bring a “people” perspective and cross-cultural competence to another area of study.

The SOAN program at Messiah College has been strong since its inception in the early 1980s. We continue to partner with Messiah’s Philadelphia campus, and with the Intercultural Office, the Messiah office that supports study abroad. The 1990s was an era of growth, and that is reflected in our course offerings and in our Ph.D. credentialed faculty. Criminal Justice was once a track within the sociology major, but it quickly grew into an independent major that is still housed in a shared department. Recently, we added anthropology to the mix and have built up some interdisciplinary programs too, so today the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice houses three majors: Criminal Justice, Sociology and Anthropology, and Ethnic and Area Studies. SOAN classes are also prominent in the Peace and Conflict Studies major, and the Sustainability Studies major. We also support several minors, including Criminal Justice, Sociology and Anthropology, Urban Studies, and Gender Studies.

SOAN graduates go on to work in a variety of areas. Our students successfully compete for jobs that require college degrees, and distinguish themselves with their people skills, cross-cultural competency, and understanding of human dynamics. Our top areas of graduate employment include the for-profit sector, education, human service, and ministry. We support students throughout their education with strong professional development, helping hone their vocational focus and the skills needed to succeed.

We’d love to talk with you about how SOAN can be part of your Messiah experience. Please stop by any professor’s office (we’re on the 3rd floor of Boyer), or contact us via the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice webpage on Messiah’s website.
Assess

Who am I & where am I going?
Gain insight into your unique strengths, interests and skills, particularly as they relate to 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.
- If you’re unsure that your major is a good fit for you, 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.

How can I learn about my options?

- Become familiar with relevant career paths by checking out the “[Explore Career Options](#)” section, and specifically, “[What can I do with a major in SOAN?](#)” on the Career Center’s website.
- 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 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 SOAN professors. Take advantage of office hours and department activities. Become familiar with the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice [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.

Reflection Q’s

- How would I describe my skills, interests, and values?
- Considering past and present experiences, what energizes me most? Be specific!
- What do I want most from my time at Messiah? Have I considered study abroad, coursework, co-curricular opportunities, service, and leadership opportunities?
- 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?

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**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 [résumé](#).

- Learn more about career paths that relate to your interests in 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.
  - Attend [Pizza with Professionals](#) events and other career development workshops.
  - Attend the [Career & Graduate School Expo](#) in the fall 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.

- Become familiar with [FalconJobs](#), a centralized database of part-time and full-time employment opportunities. Log-in with your Messiah username and ID number (without the zeros in front!).

**Reflection Q’s**

- Many students are busy, and all of their activities are worthy and important. **Which activities are really important to you right now?**

- **What experiences might be valued by a prospective employer or grad school?**

- **How can I apply what I’m learning in the classroom through service, ministry or employment?**

**How should I get engaged?**

- Join [Alpha Kappa Delta](#) (AKD), the local chapter of the national sociology honor society. Join at least one professional or honorary organization to make contact with professionals in the field.

- Explore options for [involvement](#) outside of the classroom through offices such as [Student Involvement & Leadership Programs](#), the [Agapé Center for Service & Learning, Study Abroad](#) (most SOAN majors study abroad, once or even twice!), [College Ministries](#), the [Internship Center, Multicultural Programs, Residence Life](#) and much more.

- Many SOAN majors spend a semester at Messiah’s Harrisburg [SALT House](#).

- 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?
Simply earning a college degree is a huge step forward. But, how do you make yourself stand out as a Sociology and Anthropology major? Professional development experiences will help build your skills and knowledge, and just as important, learn to articulate who you are, what you have to offer, and what makes you unique.

What constitutes “relevant experience?”

- Employers and graduate schools are looking for candidates with relevant experience, yet every professional field is unique. SOAN majors tend to emphasize interpersonal skills, cross-cultural competency, language, experience with service to a particular population, international immersion, and participation with national professional organizations.
- 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, studying abroad, or service learning.
- Visit the Internship Center to learn about excellent opportunities for workplace 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 what you have to offer in writing (resume) and verbally (mock interview) with a career coach.
- Utilize drop-in hours or schedule an appointment to receive personalized feedback.
- Build a professional web presence via LinkedIn. 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!
- Connect with professional associations and conferences in your field, such as the American Anthropological Association; American Sociological Association; and the Network of Christian Anthropologists. Consider a student membership!
- Develop “networking cards” with basic contact info and a summary of your goals and qualifications.
- Start building your professional wardrobe!
- Stay on top of current events, trends, and hot topics in your field through journals (via AAA & ASA), magazines, and the national/international 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?
- How am I practicing the skills that will be marketable to my target career path? Can I articulate this meaningfully?
- 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. There is no single path for SOAN graduates, though common ones include service professions, graduate school, and international service or missions.

What are my transition goals?

- Research and clarify your top occupational or graduate school choices.
- 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, 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 accurately reflect my transferable skills and experiences?
- What do I most want for the next few years of my life?
Distinctives of SOAN

- SOAN takes up big questions such as, “What does it mean to be human?”, “Why is there so much injustice in the world?”, “Why do people do what they do?”, and “How can we make the world more humane and just?”

- SOAN attracts students who are “people people.” Our students want to make the world a better place by strengthening human rights, reducing social injustice, and crossing cultural boundaries in service of humanity.

- A major with relatively small credit total, which encourages students to double major, study abroad, or double minor. Many students choose to pair their SOAN study with a complementary subject such as language, business, athletics, or even philosophy – all of which lead to careers working with people and improving society.

- Virtually all of our students study abroad, in areas as diverse as Thailand, Oregon, San Francisco, Cairo, and England. The SOAN program maximizes Messiah College’s distinctive approach to study abroad, which makes it affordable and accessible to all students. Department advisors work with students to choose and customize a study abroad experience that will bring back credits in the major, in general education, or a semester of elective credits.

- SOAN showcases a scholarly approach to the social sciences. Students take a core of department courses that move from introduction to the disciplines, then methodology, then theory, and a culminating Senior Thesis in which the student proposes, executes, and presents a research project that is consistent with graduate and post-graduate standards for research. They graduate with a strong understanding of scholarly ethics, methods, and epistemology. In addition, students often focus in a specific area of interest, often related to their minor, double major, or study abroad.
Professions of SOAN Graduates

*Data on professions of SOAN graduates since 2004.

**For-Profit (31%)**
- Director of Community Life
- Accounts Receivable Coordinator
- Rural Health and Sanitation
- Product Support Specialist
- Research Technologist
- Research Analyst
- Research Assistant

**Non-Profit and Ministry (12%)**
- Refugee Project Director
- Connecting Peoples Coordinator
- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) Supervisor
- VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America – AmeriCorps)
- Director of Home Repair Ministries
- Language Surveyor Missionary
- Pastor
- Church Business Administrator

**Law (13%)**
- Federal Law Enforcement
- Police Officer
- Criminal Investigator
- Corrections Counselor
- District Attorney

**Education (12%)**
- ESOL Teacher
- Prevention Ed. Specialist
- Middle School Math Teacher
- Spanish Teacher

**Human Service (22%)**
- Behavior Analyst
- Family Care Home Liaison
- Veterans Service Representative
- Counselor in Mental Health/HIV
- Nutrition Counselor

**Other (10%)**
- Homemaker
- Organic Farmer
- Soccer Trainer
- Administrative Assistant