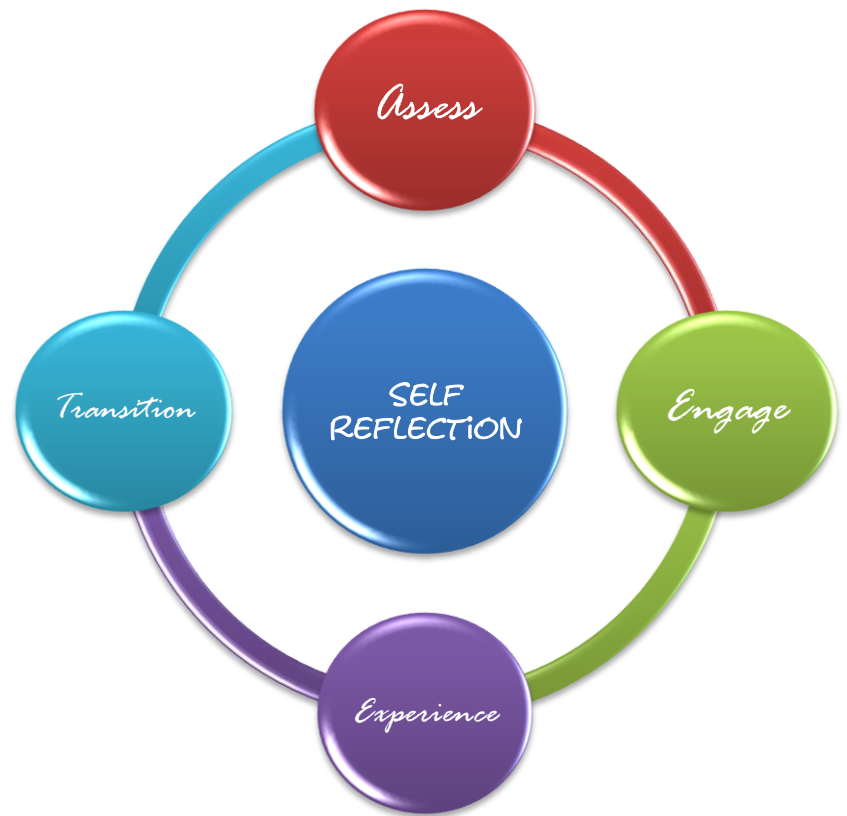


Preparing You for a Future of Meaningful Work

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.

Your Career & Professional Development Plan

Messiah College



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.

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 field of interest. 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.
- ☐ Begin to construct 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.

How can I find relevant opportunities?

- ☐ Check out the “**Explore Career Options**” section on the Career Center’s website (www.messiah.edu/offices/career).
- ☐ Learn what alumni and other professionals are doing with their degrees from your academic department or through FalconNet, the alumni directory (consult the Career Center for direction).
- ☐ Explore options for **involvement** outside of the classroom through offices such as Student Involvement & Leadership Programs, the Agapé Center for Service & Learning, the EpiCenter for Off-Campus Study, College Ministries, Residence Life and much more.

What resources should I be accessing?

- ☐ Visit the Career Center early, and start constructing a **customized career and professional development plan**.

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?*

- ☐ **Get to know your advisor and professors within** your department beyond the classroom. Take advantage of office hours and department activities. Become familiar with the 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 (www.messiah.edu/offices/career/liberalArts.html). These skills are very marketable to employers and graduate schools, so be intentional about developing them.

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.

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.). Note that for some majors, internships or clinicals are a requirement. **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, a work study position, and summer or part-time work.
- ☐ Practice articulating the **transferable skills** you are developing (refer to links in "Assess").

What can I do to test out my career interests?

- ☐ Conduct an **information interview** or initiate a **job shadowing** experience with a professional in your field of interest.
- ☐ **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?
- ☐ Consider **connecting with a Messiah alum** through the online alumni directory, FalconNet. Consult with the Career Center about how to do this.
- ☐ 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." If you're not thinking of pursuing a career specifically in a field 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?"

- ☐ **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, 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) 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!
- ☐ Connect with **professional associations and conferences** in your field. Ask your faculty members for referrals. You can also search online: http://dir.yahoo.com/Business_and_Economy/Organizations/Professional
- ☐ 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.
- ☐ Stay on top of **current events, trends, and hot topics** in your field through journals, magazines, and the news.

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 (stop by to schedule an appointment).
- ❑ **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 friend 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? Write them down! This will be the basis of your **personal marketing campaign**.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ 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** (messiah.edu/offices/career). 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** noted above.
- ❑ Connect with job boards through **professional association websites**.
- ❑ 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?*