

What do you worry about?

Translating your philosophy major into a meaningful career

“A humanities education offers very few skills except for those that can’t be automated.” And it “offers very little job security except for the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.” Furthermore, “You should study philosophy only if you’re interested in creating the explanatory frameworks within which everyone else lives.”

Eric Liu, former speechwriter for Bill Clinton

What is a Career?

Define “career” as the activities that give your life meaning and purpose. Career is not only paid work; for most people, career is a combination of employment, citizenship, and personal relationships.

What is a Career Plan?

In addition to completing academic requirements for graduation, Gustavus wants every student to graduate with a career plan. That means that students have:

1. Thought intentionally about how they will engage to be a force for good in the world,
2. Named their gifts and talents and see how to use them in the world
3. Identified what they will do immediately after graduation to move toward meaningful and purposeful life activities.

Usually career plans of new college grads fall into employment, continued education and service.

How do you create a Career Plan?

1. Identify problems you want to work on in the world: Good news is there are LOTS of problems and all of them need a wide range of skills!
2. Name the skills, qualities, and knowledge you will bring to the world.
3. Gain experiences to be prepared to engage in addressing world problems.

What do you worry about?

One way to think about a career or a job, is to ask yourself “what do I worry about?” Our world is full of opportunities and responsibilities; put another way, it’s full of very complex problems that require all creative hands on deck. Pay attention to the things that you worry about. You may start with three or four problems; the goal is to focus your interests. Your ideas will evolve and change over time. The idea is to move from general, “I am worried about the health of people” to greater clarity and specificity, “I am committed to improving child nutrition in schools.”

The philosophy major: organized worrying

As a philosopher, you’ve been trained to think—another name for “organized worrying”—about problems. How can you put that skill to work, on problems that matter to you?

Your college career: building experience about your worry

Your philosophy major is one piece of your education. But it won’t stand on its own. If you *need* experience to *get* experience, what do you do? Here are some ideas:

- ✓ **Job shadow:** If you know what types of positions or career fields you are interested in, seek out employers and/or people to job shadow for a day or part of a day. Send a thank you note within 2 working days.
- ✓ **Informational interviews:** Find people who are doing jobs of interest to you or employers of interest to you. Call or email them and ask for a 15-30 minute conversation

about their work. Dress professionally and show up on time with prepared questions. Respect their time! Send a thank you note within 2 working days.

- ✓ **Explore careers:** Learn about careers that might interest you. Check out www.iseek.org and check out Spotlight on Careers on the Career Development home page.
- ✓ **Volunteer:** Check out www.mncn.org and www.idealists.org to find volunteer opportunities. Especially a great idea if where you volunteer is connected to your career interests! Interested in the environment? Check out the Department of National Resources volunteer opportunities. Enjoy working with kids? Check with churches and youth centers. Volunteer at special events, community celebrations or local fairs. You don't have to get paid for experiences for them to go on your résumé.
- ✓ **Learn:** What skills would make you a better candidate for the careers of interest to you? Better writing? Check out The Loft Literary Center (www.loft.org) for writing classes and groups. Interested in the arts? Check out Springboard for the Arts (www.springboardforthearts.org) for workshops on skills to make a living as an artist. Learn new software, create a website or start a blog! Take a class or study on your own.
- ✓ **Study:** Thinking about graduate school (www.ets.org/gre), law school (www.lsac.org), or medical school (www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat)?
- ✓ **Go online:** Find organizations, websites, and blogs that are related to your interests. Read them, “like”, re-post, comment, find individuals to follow. Create a www.linkedin.com profile so that those looking for people with your interests and skills can find you!
- ✓ **Project Work:** Put the word out to family, friends, faculty that you are looking to volunteer, work, study a topic or issue. Ask for help finding opportunities.
- ✓ **Follow Your Interests:** If you are interested in architecture— visit great buildings! If you are interested in international cultures – visit the cultural exhibits, celebrations and events over the summer. Interested in the environment? Visit parks and nature areas.
- ✓ **Create Job Search Tools:** Write a résumé. Write a cover letter. Create a LinkedIn profile. Update your GustieJobs profile. Practice your interviewing skills on Interview Stream. Buy an interview suit.

Your resume: building an argument for your worry

The objective on your résumé functions like a thesis in a paper. The rest of the résumé must then function as “evidence” for that “thesis.” How do you go about proving that you have a passionate commitment to working on issue X? Here are some ideas:

- ✓ Your academic coursework is one kind of evidence, but in philosophy, the relation between those courses and your objective might be very oblique.
- ✓ How about your extracurricular work? Does it illustrate your interest in X?
- ✓ Have you been a T.A. in a relevant class?
- ✓ Have you done service learning in a course?
- ✓ Have you written a paper or done a project on the topic?
- ✓ Have you volunteered, worked, attended events related to your interests?
- ✓ Remember that both paid and unpaid experiences *count* and can be on résumé.

Start worrying today!

Begin thinking *now*—whether you're a senior or a first year student—about how the things you are involved in are building a record of evidence for your interest in something.