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Q) How did you first get interested in the graphic arts, or decide to major in graphic communications in school?

A) I've been an aspiring artist since I was a kid, so art has always been a big part of my life. I practiced fine arts all four years of high school, but it didn't feel like the right fit for me. The interaction between the viewer and the work really intrigued me. Bringing people into a world you created on a two-dimensional object pushed me to become more of an empathic artist because I wanted the viewer to feel what I felt at the time the piece was created. So I was always stepping outside of myself to really get an idea of what the piece was communicating.

At the time I didn't really know much about graphic design other than the fact that logos and posters were a large output. I figured I wasn't creative enough to sustain an income through paintings and other fine art, so graphic design just felt like a natural and practical bridge into the corporate world. What I really loved about graphic design was the process. Starting with a rough idea and constantly crafting it, reworking it, tightening it, until it turns into the piece truly wanted.

Q) Did you take any courses in high school that were related to graphic communications, or that prepared you for your planned career?

A) Other than the fine arts classes I took in high school I took one graphic design course where we used Adobe Photoshop. Some of the projects were CD albums, a school anniversary logo, and funky stuff like expressive self-portraits. Outside of school I took a few summer classes at a small design school called The Art Institute of Cincinnati, where I learned about some new tricks in Photoshop and Illustrator.

Q) What course of studies are you taking now, or planning on taking, during the path of your school education?

A) Currently I'm doing a co-op at Apple as a print designer on their Marcom Team, and so far I really love it. Most of what I enjoy doing at work and outside of work focuses on print design. When I return to school in May I'll be taking 4 studio classes: Interdisciplinary Global Design Issues, Design Methodology 2, Design Systems 2, and Print Design 2. This summer semester is really going to be a research semester for my final capstone, which will take place in Spring 2017.

Looking to the Future

Q) Is there a particular area of the graphic communications field that is of special interest to you as you consider where you want to focus your future career on?

A) I thoroughly enjoy print design because it's something that is tangible and lives outside of the digital world. I already spend so much of my day on the computer, which is why UX or digital design doesn't excite me as much as print. That being said, I still experiment with motion/time-based design to encourage a different mindset of conceptualization or brainstorming. I would still like to try my hand at packaging design. Hopefully at my next co-op I'll be able to work on that a little more.

Q) What type of company would you like to work for after you graduate?

A) I've been fortunate enough to co-op at two other design companies during my time at DAAP. My first co-op was with KAO Brands, which is a global manufacturer of beauty care brands. The second was with a small environmental graphic design firm in Los Angeles called Selbert Perkins Design. I was at KAO for 8 months and really enjoyed the conceptual process for brand campaigns and collaboration between myself and other designers, marketing teams, and brand managers. Most of what I did there was print advertisements for regional usage.

Selbert Perkins Design was a different experience all together, but what I loved about it was the small team aspect of the company. I felt like I had much more personal responsibility for my work which made me feel proud to be a part of the team. I arrived in the middle of their production stage so I was responsible for scaling up plan drawings and signage designs. I think if I could find a mix between the two I would be happy. A place that works on a large scale, but relies on a small tight-knit team to pull it all together.

Q) What do you think employers are looking for in today's workforce and current industry environment?

A) I think employers are looking for designers who are well rounded in their design skill set as opposed to someone who just does one thing. My school does a great job of forcing us to think about design problems and solutions in so many different formats. Our classes are designed make us think outside of the box and stay away from what's already been done before.

Presentation is also a big thing I think employers are looking for in today's workforce. At every co-op I've worked for they've pushed me to be confident in articulating my ideas/opinions and present my concepts in a clear and digestible format. You have to be able to explain why certain things are on the page rather than what is on the page. Also you have to be able to explain ideas to non-designers and what the concept was from a strategic standpoint.

Since the landscape of branding is constantly evolving due to social media and other forms of digital consumption, designers need to be able to adapt more than ever. Brands and companies can't rely on the tactics they've used before to really capture people.

Q) Is there anything that you have found to be particularly different from what you initially expected now that you've progressed through your education process?

A) I think before I started design school I remember hearing professional designers talk about Photoshop and illustrator and just being so confused by all of the terminology. They would throw out words like DPI, rasterize, pixel ratio, and vector graphics. I imagined it being so hard to figure all of that out and really wondering if I'd ever get to that level of understanding or knowledge in my design career.

Even at my first co-op, after becoming familiar with all of those terms, functions, and varieties of software, I still questioned if I could reach the same level of skill as other professional designers. I remember noticing their speed in bringing concepts to life on the screen and how quickly they could punch in key-commands. It's one of those things that seemed untouchable and amazing to me at the time.

Now that I've been through several co-ops and semesters of school I feel like I'm starting to make my way up to their level. I'm not in any way trying to say that I could fill their shoes, because their level of experience trumps mine, but I feel like I'm starting to pick up on their work patterns and creativity. I still

have several more years of experience to get there, but I know if I keep my work ethic, dedication, and persistence I eventually will.

Q) Have you changed your plans or ideas about what area or type of job you might like to have since you first considered the graphic communications field and began studying for a career in it?

A) I had to interview a professional designer in the design field my sophomore year at my first design school. She was an environmental graphic designer at a company called Kolar in Cincinnati. She told me about her responsibility of getting people from point A to point B in the most logical way possible and how they can also bring a level of humanity to a space. My interview with her really inspired me and I thought I would pursue environmental graphic design after that.

However, I've noticed that there are design companies that practice more than one discipline of design, and the idea of that is more attractive to me. I like doing different types of design because it's a new challenge every time. Things like logos, branding, signage, packaging, apparel, books, etc., all inspire and challenge me to heighten my creativity, craft, and knowledge of design.

Q) Has being a recipient of a PGSF scholarship made a difference in your education, and if so, how?

A) I believe that it has made a huge difference in my education. By the time I am done with my Bachelor's Degree I'll have completed 7 years of college, mainly because of transferring schools. So with all that tuition to pay it's very rewarding and relieving to receive a scholarship like this in my major. It has forced me to be more aware of the career choices I'm making and how they're affecting my overall goals.

Since I'm not able to work during the semesters I'm in classes, due to inconsistent schedules, it really eases my mind knowing I have support in other places. So with the time I would be using for a job to make the money I received from PGSF, I instead use that time to work on personal projects and things that broaden my horizons outside of school.

Q) Anything else that you would like to add?

A) Thank you very much for making this questionnaire ;). Also I really appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this community and share my thoughts on the field of design.