

Planning for After Graduation: The Gap Year(s)

Some liberal arts students choose to take a transitional year or two to gain additional experience, identify and prepare application materials to graduate schools, volunteer, travel, or solidify career goals. Below you will find a sampling of helpful resources.

General Resources

- Idealist – www.idealist.org
- ServeNet – www.servenet.org
- One Small Planet - www.onesmallplanet.com/geninfo.htm
- Gap Work – www.gapwork.com

Volunteer & Service Opportunities

Domestic

- AmeriCorps – www.americorps.org
- Public Allies – www.publicallies.org
- Teach for America – www.teachforamerica.org
- City Year – www.cityyear.org

International

- Peace Corps – www.peacecorps.gov
- United Nations Volunteers – www.unv.org

Faith-Based

- Avodah: Jewish Service Corps – www.avodah.net
- Lutheran Volunteer Corps – www.lutheranvolunteercorps.org
- ELCA Global Mission – www.elca.org/globalserve/
- Catholic Network of Volunteer Service – www.cnvs.org
- Jesuit Volunteer Corps – www.jesuitvolunteers.org
- Vincentian Service Corps – www.vscorps.org

Teaching English Abroad

- Find a list of opportunities at www.stolaf.edu/services/cel/students/International_Search.html.

Short-Term International Work

- BUNAC – www.bunac.org
- Council on International Exchange – www.ciee.org
- AIESEC – www.aiesec.org

Fellowships and Scholarships

- Find a list of opportunities at - www.stolaf.edu/pipercenter

Post-Graduate Internships

- Find a list of opportunities at - www.stolaf.edu/pipercenter/

Academic Research

- National Science Foundation – www.nsf.gov
- University-specific websites

Temporary Work

- Grad Staff – www.gradstaff.com
- Fahrenheit 360 – www.fahrenheit360.com
- Aerotek Scientific – www.sciences.aerotek.com/Recruiting-Staffing
- Kelly Scientific Resources – www.kellyscientific.com
- Kforce – www.kforce.com
- OnAssignment – www.onassignment.com

Self-Funded Volunteer Work

- Global Volunteer Network – www.volunteer.org
- Peacework Development Fund – www.peacework.org
- Projects Abroad – www.projects-abroad.org
- Global Service Corps – www.globalservicecorps.org
- United Planet – www.unitedplanet.org

Other/Adventure Jobs

- Nanny Agency – www.greataupair.com
- Eckerd Youth Alternatives – www.eckerd.org
- Back Door Jobs – www.backdoorjobs.com
- Cool Works – www.coolworks.com
- Looking for Adventure – www.lookingforadventure.com
- Outdoor Adventure Jobs – www.oapn.net
- Fun Jobs – www.funjobs.com

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Helpful questions to aid your search and hone your focus before, during and after your gap year:

- **Why do I want to take a gap year?**

Thinking honestly about your motivation for taking the gap year(s) can help you decide what you want to do during that time. Some reasons for taking a gap year can include: gaining experience, building a résumé, gathering application materials for graduate school, traveling abroad, establishing residency for in-state tuition, having a unique experience, giving back to society, studying for graduate exams, taking graduate courses, paying off student loans and saving for graduate school, or just having fun. Think carefully about your gap year, and try to find a program, organization, or job that matches your goals—whether they are personal, financial, spiritual, or educational.

- **How will my experience impact my relationships?**

Leaving college in general impacts relationships; however, some gap-year choices have more drastic impact than others. What impacts will options such as community living, international travel, or unusual hours have on the people to whom you are close? Will it be difficult to be far from home? What about relationships with friends or significant others?

- **How will my gap year affect my career plans and goals?**

Oftentimes recent graduates take a gap year to discern their career plans and goals; other students may take a gap year to enhance their résumés or gain experience in an area of interest. Assess the potential gains or losses you might experience with regard to entering graduate school and starting a career in the future. How can you personally benefit from this year, and what are specific steps you can take to make it effective?

- **What impact will a gap year have on my finances?**

Payment or deferment of loans and health insurance are common concerns for recent graduates who take a gap year, especially those who volunteer, intern, or find a job that is unable to offer benefits. Check with your loan agency—loan deferment options can be available for full-time volunteers or those with extenuating circumstances. Estimate living costs for your gap year, including shots and other preparations if you are going abroad, and assess your financial situation to make sure it's feasible.

- **How do I navigate the options available to me during my gap year?**

What types of programs and jobs best match your goals for the year? Which meet your needs and gifts/abilities? Your considerations may be practical (i.e. urban vs. rural setting, domestic vs. abroad programs, length of commitment, start/end dates, time off, distance from home) or experiential (structured vs. self-directed environments, faith-based vs. secular volunteer programs, type of work/experience). Although researching these factors will take time and a lot of individualized research (and the path may not always be clear-cut), these considerations will help direct you toward options that are right for you. Think about the day-to-day work of each opportunity and whether or not it would help you reach your personal, career, self-fulfillment, or other goals. Take advantage of workshops and resources offered by the Piper Center by visiting www.stolaf.edu/pipercenter.