Projecting Forward

Reflection Paper

Career Conversation

1. Even though I chose to do the career conversation, I had taken the PathwayU assessment a while back. According to my results, my primary values are achievement and support. I think these actually go hand in hand in relation to my major career goal, which is to become a UX designer. In this position, achievement is not measured by metrics, but by support from your users. Simply designing a product is not enough to gain achievement; it has to be usable and actually enjoyed by the people who end up using it.

To elaborate on my professional goals a little more: I want to create products that change the lives of others. Technology is such a broad landscape, and it’s constantly evolving - there’s so much potential to help those who can’t help themselves. I’d love to join a big tech company as a UX designer and work towards making that happen.

2. When evaluating my career options, I again turn to my PathwayU assessment results to see my primary workplace preferences. My top priorities are stability and performance.

Stability in the workplace refers to working in a position with job and financial security. Based on some past research of UX designer salaries, it’s a decent starting pay. The average pay then depends on the organization, but overall, UX designers are in demand so salary will often reflect that.

Performance means a workplace that has high expectations, is organized well, and is results oriented. Based on my value of achievement, this makes sense. And in relation to my career goals, I’d say this a fair assessment. I would imagine that UX designers typically work in high-stakes environments considering that their designs are pushed out to an abundance of users; this sounds like something that, while challenging, would push me to do my best work.
3. For my career exploration, I had a career conversation with [redacted], an interaction designer at Google.

The main idea I took away was that you don't have to major in a specific field to get a job in said field. I have been so adamant about majoring in interaction design at UW because I want to go into UX as a career. However, [redacted] is in a top position at Google with a degree in creative writing and a set of self-taught skills. This was really inspiring for me to hear, because at UW getting into many majors can be very difficult, including the one I'm hoping for. I've now realized that no matter what I major in, as long as I have valuable experience and skills, I can get the job I want.

Another main takeaway I had from my career conversation was about the skills needed for a design position. [redacted] noted that critical thinking is probably the most important skill you can bring to a tech job, yet it's not something we ever take a class on, like math or science. Instead, I've realized it's helpful to practice critical thinking in all aspects of your life - ask questions, be curious, and know that there are no right answers to everything are all important things to consider when creating a design.

From my conversation, my career goals didn't change, but grew stronger. Talking to somebody in pretty much the exact position I want to be in someday was very eye-opening and insightful into the real work of UX design.

4. After the Mapping your UW Experience assignment, I'd like to look into doing research a bit more. I previously had a hard time finding research opportunities that looked interesting to me (UX, AI, HCI, etc.), but I didn't realize the variety of opportunities there are at UW. As I mentioned before, I found from my career exploration that you don't have to major in a design field to get into UX design. So even if I end up majoring in something non-design related, doing a more focused research project could help me gain insight into the career field a little more. And even if I do a design major, taking part in research would be beneficial anyways.