**Projecting forward**

My top five personal values are faith, perseverance, integrity, diversity, and family. I believe my values align with my professional goals because I see myself working in the nonprofit sector with underrepresented communities through faith-based organizations. Through this project I have learned that is an amount of emotional burnout working with disenfranchised communities. I understand this kind of professional life would require perseverance because it could be emotionally draining. I have persevered through my financial and mental health struggles as a young mother and I believe that the passions that brought me to public health will help me persevere through rough realities and seemingly unmoving structural constructs that I will undoubtedly face in my career.

When looking at career options I will be looking for an organization whose mission statement aligns with what I want to give back to the community. I would like to work for an organization that is not just helping people but helping to dissolve the barriers to justice and equity. That is what integrity means to me; that an organization is working for change, not just a helping hand.

In my career exploration I interviewed Veronica Finscher, a director of planning and development at Seattle Public Utilities. She is the waste prevention program manager and runs the “Love Food, Stop Waste” program that connects restaurants and grocery stores to organizations that help people facing food insecurity. The two important take-aways I received were to begin to explore other areas of interest while in college and to refine my communication skills by listening. A wide range of experiences will make me stand out among other candidates for a position. Veronica recounted that her own experience of starting in administration coupled with her work in helping to create the Environmental Justice and Service Equity (EJSE) division at SPU set her apart from other candidates that had 20 more years of experience. Her experience with EJSE highlighted the need for communication skills that went beyond merely being able to speak the same language as someone but in truly listening to the person and/or community in need. Because Veronica is involved in the hiring process for her program, she gave me advice about what she looks for in an employee. The biggest attributes she looks for are someone who pays acute attention to detail, someone who is organized and someone who is self-motivated. Someone who not only can take an idea and build on it, but someone who creates the ideas. Veronica offered advice that if I wanted to go into the non-profit sector, seek a position there first, because government-based positions offer more money and it would be hard to take the pay-cut if I started in government first. This interview did not change my career goals, but it did help me understand that there are positions available that align with my values even within organizations that are not usually thought of synergistic with systemic change.

Based on the Mapping Your UW Experience and Projecting Forward Assignments, I would now like to explore RSOs that are out of my comfort zone. Before my interview with Veronica, I had only been interested in food system related RSO’s but now I am exploring other organizations that interest me that will round-out my skill set. I am interested in the behaviors and drivers of food consumers so I would like to investigate research opportunities in marketing. There is an RSO called the Foster Marketing Association and I am currently contacting them to see if I am eligible to join even without being in the Foster School of Business. I am also inputting marketing classes into My Plan as part of my electives and scheduling an appointment with a Foster advisor to talk about minors in marketing. They have drop-in advising hours Monday – Thursday beginning at 11:30 am. After speaking to Veronica, I
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would like to explore internships offered through Seattle Public Utilities. She told me those usually open in March.