

Alternative, Transitional and In-the-Meantime Jobs

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Career Services

“Transitional, Alternative or In-the-Meantime”?

- Not a new concept – “Gap Year”
 - very popular in countries such as the UK
- Experience completed between graduation and long-term career position or graduate school
- Typically lasts one to two years
- No employer expectation that you stay on longer
- Formal programs and independent opportunities
- Paid, volunteer or fee-based
- Diverse options depending on your purpose

pros of taking time off

- Build resume and/or solidify career goals
- Graduate applications
 - In-state residency, study for entrance exams, additional coursework to increase GPA, pay loans or save for tuition
- “Make a difference” or “give back” to society
- “Once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity before joining the world of 9-to-5 workdays or grueling graduate studies

cons of taking time off

- Limited access to job search assistance
 - Career services is open to all alumni!
- Difficulty organizing graduate school applications and materials once away from campus
- Remuneration for the “time off” experience tends to be low or non-existent.
 - Some programs are fee-based
- Health insurance
- Pressure from family to “get a real job”

things to consider

- Your motivations and needs
 - Timeline
 - Current responsibilities/concerns
 - Financial, family, healthcare,
 - Future educational and/or career goals
 - Geographic preferences
 - Urban/rural, local/travel, USA/international
 - Issues/areas of interest
 - Your strengths/weaknesses
 - Your community/organizational needs
 - Independent or group
 - Structured or unstructured
 - Comfort zone (language, culture, etc)

ACTIVITY # 1

- Brainstorm your motivations and needs
- Share in a group
- One or two examples

identifying opportunities

- Options seem unlimited!
 - Can be difficult to narrow it down...
- Decisions, decisions
 - Identify interesting opportunities
 - Compare options to your list of needs
 - Narrow down your choices
 - 5-10
 - Research, research, research
 - Program contacts and websites, general websites, people (alumni, faculty, advisors)
 - Ask questions!

questions to ask

- Program's focus
- Different from organization X
- Supervision style
- Application process
- Benefits/costs
- Program's alumni

identifying opportunities

- Organized program
 - Ready-made
 - Networking opportunity
 - Flexibility may vary
 - May be paid, volunteer or fee-based
 - May have to apply and be selected/prestige?
 - Process will vary by program (centralized vs. decentralized)
- Create your own
 - Flexibility/Creativity
 - Networking opportunity
 - Likely unpaid or requires fundraising
 - Takes a lot of time and planning!

identifying opportunities

- Service/volunteer
 - “Term of Service” or “Service Corps” (i.e, Teach for America, Peace Corps)
 - Stipend, education incentive, established programs/networking
 - Volunteer; self-funded or fee-based
 - Variety of issues; ESL, Environment, Youth, Community Development, etc.
 - Domestic, international, faith-based opportunities
 - Application process; centralized vs. decentralized
- Recreational/adventure jobs
 - Pubs, organic farming, resorts, childcare, photography, ecotrips, movie extras, cruise ships
- International/travel jobs
 - Variety of fields; most opportunities are recreational/adventure.
 - Visa requirements
 - 3rd party organizations arrange for fee; i.e. BUNAC
 - Limited assistance for job search
- Scholarships/Grants and Fellowships
 - Career- driven or academic; i.e. Rotary, Fulbright, Kiwanis, government/nonprofit agencies
 - Stipend, education incentive
 - Application process; often competitive

identifying opportunities

- Resource sheets
- Others
 - Books in CRC
 - Google searches
 - Directories
 - Job Bank series
 - Internship directories
 - Nonprofit & volunteer directories
 - Yellow pages
 - Local Newspapers

identifying opportunities

- Professional associations
 - UTK Library Subject Guides
 - <http://www.lib.utk.edu/refs/>
- Internet job sites
 - Hire-a-Vol – <http://career.utk.edu>
- Chambers of commerce
- Network
 - Friends, family, faculty, advisors, alumni association, fraternities/sororities, clubs, previous employers, etc.
 - What do they know about ____? Who do they know who would know anything about ____?
 - Social Networking sites
 - Professional networking site – www.linkedin.com

minimize the cons

- Start early!!!
- Graduate school plans?
 - Do research on programs and gather materials beforehand
 - Contact professors or references while still on campus or in town
 - get letters in advance if possible
 - Stay in touch if possible to keep them up-to-date
 - Consider taking relevant entrance exams beforehand, if possible
 - Improve GPA by taking courses during time off
- Job seeking?
 - Finalize and have resume/cover letter critiqued so it can later be updated and “tweaked” easily
 - Contact references beforehand and keep up-to-date
 - Do industry and employer research beforehand, if possible
 - Consider volunteering in field of interest if transitional job is unrelated

minimize the cons

- Research costs
 - Save money and/or fundraise
- Investigate short-term health insurance
 - Some programs require you buy their insurance
- Share your goals and research with family
 - Organized, professional goals and plans can go along way to minimize concerns

maximize the pros

- Start early!!!
 - Allow time for goal setting, research, applications and preparation
- Explore career options
 - Talk to people, ask questions
 - Meet as many people as possible
 - What are entry level jobs? Do you need an advanced degree? What experience is required? Who hires?
 - Stay connected, follow up, say “thank you”
 - Take advantage of opportunities
 - Work hard...IMPRESS!
 - Get involved - volunteer for extra projects

maximize the pros

- Be prepared to explain it...
 - Employers and graduate schools
 - Resumes, personal statements, interviews, networking
 - Do your best and know why it was valuable
 - Collect example stories (STAR)
 - Some employers/graduate schools may ask:
 - Why did you do it? What did you learn? Challenges? Best part?
 - Some may not seem to notice:
 - Be prepared to bring it up when relevant and educate on the value of experience

ACTIVITY #2

- Group of two or three
- Brainstorm and share ideas
- Share one or two

Questions?

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