

EDH5630 – Reflection

What are my career goals for 1, 3, 5, 10 years from now? What is my ultimate career goal? (Or, whose job on campus do I aspire, and why? How would I go about making myself qualified for that job?)

If life is like a river than the best plan would seem to be, go with the flow, because any resistance is sure to be met with a consistent and weathering fight. Life to my knowledge has an undefeated track record, and I cannot suggest I will be the one to change it – nor would I want to be.

A little over a year ago I had never worked with service leadership; six months ago amidst an assistantship in diversity, leadership, and service I was positioning myself for a career in Queer student support; today I have a full-time job in service leadership, navigating a departmental reorganization and potential redrafting of job duties, all while applying to a second graduate degree in the history and philosophy of education.

At least ten things happened in my immediate context today that I had no ability to predict. Each of those things will affect me in one way or another, perhaps in ways that I also cannot predict. How futile then does the exercise seem, to attempt to see into the future, whether 1, 3, 5, or 10 years from now?

There's another important fact that makes this a difficult question. Where perhaps others seem to live for work (through their apparent marking of career goals and daily actions toward those ends), I work to live. I resist defining the value of my life by my contributions to or spoils from capitalism.

What kinds of educational credentials (formal and informal) do I have? Will my current educational level get me to my career goal or ideal job?

At least the first half of this prompt I can answer. Formally, I am about to graduate as a Master of Science in Higher Education with 226 credit hours of undergraduate and graduate coursework. Informally, I am about to be 27 years old; I am approaching 4 years of full-time work experience (excluding a year as a graduate assistant); I have lived and traveled on my own; I am married; and I have arrived at the point in my life where I can laugh at my own previous youthful arrogance (only after passing through a period of personal disgust). Fittingly then, I'm left with more questions than answers.

Will my current educational level get me to my career goal or ideal job? I don't know. But, I assume that with life as my goal, the only credential I must pursue and preserve is consciousness. Not just simple awake-ed-ness, but an ability to see, observe, and critically consume my surroundings.

What experiences and skill sets, both job related and volunteer, do I currently have on my résumé? Are there experiences and skills that I think I need in addition to those?

I hope that my résumé tells a tale of pursuit. I restlessly pursue excellence both personally and interpersonally in my professional experiences. I always hope to leave a place having given as much, if not more, than I have received. It is not to suggest that I view development as transactional. But I believe that I learned at a young age that if you love something you should care for it. I love what I do.

A week ago, a presenter came to class and spoke about professional attire and her “choice” to live in discomfort every day. I cannot. I will not. I do not prioritize work in my life to a level where I could make such a choice. It is far more important to me that my work fulfills me, than that it pays me. No amount of money can replace personal (and interpersonal) enlightenment. It is as important to me that my basic living expenses are met as it is that my mind is fed.

Do I have a professional development plan? Do I know how to create one?

Yes. I have a professional development plan. Despite what above may appear as a lackadaisical approach to life, I actually live with purposeful intention. I do not presume to have access to spaces without effort. Of course, I understand that professional development is at its heart a mutual process of increasing capital utility while also meeting personal goals. I suppose this is why “fit” is so important in the job search. If for nothing else, fit seems to represent the same-ness of personal and professional goals.

While I am in a profession then, I will aim to find ways that I can be of benefit and benefit from employment. Reciprocity is fair and just, but considering pay (at least to the level of basic living expenses) as a component of that reciprocal relationship is neither fair nor just. The scales are inherently tipped toward the benefit of institutions and systems with far greater resources than the days of food and weeks of rent available to me at any given moment.

How productive could a professional relationship be when its transactions were made without even an unspoken suggestion of financial coercion?

Am I comfortable with networking or connecting? Why or why not? What strategies do I normally use in networking or connecting?

It is an extension of the point above that makes me uncomfortable with networking. Networking in the way that it is taught to collegians is imbalanced. It is a commodification of my experiences to the benefit of someone else. It is selling my “fit” with the potential consequence to me of food and housing insecurity. I prefer the potentially more egalitarian “connecting,” but I am less familiar with it as a professional concept. I do support relationship building without any prediction of need. I do support

being a good person, helping where able, and always remaining attentive to the collective wellbeing of the community around me. I think that those things will serve me just as well as any network or portfolio of “connections.” Beyond individual’s relationship with their work, I believe people can sense authenticity with those they encounter.

Do I frequently take time to reflect on my career? Do I assess where I am and where I would like to be and adjust my time and experience to reflect my goals? What strategies can I use to reflect?

I reflect to a fault. I continually attempt to bring myself back from such “radical” ideas as I’ve written here. I know that despite its many obvious flaws the world of work enables a greater and more globally aware level of social consciousness necessary for true enlightenment. I also try to remember that living is a verb. It is a process that there very well may not be a product to. Beyond me is the story of OUR process. It is a story that started long ago and will continue far into the future. And so, knowing that I am just a fleeting thing in the stream of life, I go with the flow. I live with the world, not for it.