

Professional Plan

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IAS 300 – Designing Your Life
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Executive Summary

This professional plan outlines a five-year trajectory that includes completing undergraduate studies at Brigham Young University, gaining practical experience through a Summer 2026 internship, and preparing for graduate study beginning in Fall 2027. Rooted in the interdisciplinary field of American Studies, this plan emphasizes intellectual development, communication, and public engagement. Over the next several years, my goal is to strengthen my academic foundation while also developing my work as a writer and communicator. My academic interests in culture, literature, religion, and human resilience have increasingly drawn me toward work that connects scholarship with broader audiences. Through writing, public speaking, and teaching, I hope to translate complex ideas into meaningful conversations that reach youth, students, and community audiences. By integrating scholarship, communication, and personal experience, I hope to pursue a professional path that combines intellectual work with meaningful service to others.

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Five-Year Timeline

Spring 2026 – Apply for internships and continue developing writing projects

Summer 2026 – Complete internship experience and assist with research and writing projects

Fall 2026 – Clarify graduate specialization and strengthen writing sample

Spring 2027 – Apply to graduate programs (depending on program timelines)

April 2027 – Graduate from Brigham Young University

Fall 2027 – Begin graduate study

2027–2030 – Continue graduate work while developing writing, teaching, and communication opportunities

Intellectual Direction and Academic Development

What excites me most about this professional direction is the opportunity to continue learning while also sharing meaningful ideas with others. Returning to school at BYU has awakened a deep interest in scholarship, research, and writing. My coursework in American Studies has helped me see how cultural analysis, literature, and history shape our understanding of human experience. Through this work, I have become especially interested in themes of resilience, faith, and the human capacity to move forward after hardship.

At the same time, I have realized how much I enjoy sharing ideas beyond the classroom. Teaching assistant work, collaborative research, and academic writing have shown me how powerful thoughtful communication can be when complex ideas are presented clearly and responsibly. Ultimately, I hope to develop a professional life that combines research, writing, and communication. Whether through teaching, speaking, or publishing, I want to contribute ideas that inspire thoughtful reflection and help others see possibilities beyond their current struggles.

Graduate study is a crucial next step in advancing this intellectual path. Programs in American Studies, communication, or related humanities fields would enable me to deepen my research skills while honing a specific scholarly focus. My current interests include literature, religious history, cultural narratives, and how individuals interpret hardship and resilience within their communities. Graduate education would offer the chance to explore these themes more thoroughly while learning advanced research methods, writing, and scholarly analysis. Instead of seeing scholarship as separate from the public sphere, I want to develop work that connects academic insights with broader societal conversations.

Writing, Publishing, and Public Engagement

One long-term goal I hope to pursue is to write and publish. My current experience helping Professor Mary Jane Searle with a book chapter and symposium paper has introduced me to the process of developing scholarly writing alongside experienced researchers. Participating in this work has strengthened my interest in producing thoughtful writing that contributes to meaningful conversations. Over time, I hope to develop my own writing projects that explore themes of resilience, culture, and human experience. These may include essays, articles, or eventually a book that combines scholarly insight with personal reflection. Writing allows ideas to reach audiences beyond a single classroom or conference, and I hope to develop the discipline and skill required to contribute meaningful work in this area.

Along with academic writing, I hope to gradually create opportunities for public communication and speaking. My life experiences and academic interests have fostered a strong desire to share messages of resilience and hope, especially with young people facing tough circumstances. Over the coming years, I want to start speaking in smaller settings, such as youth programs, firesides, educational events, or community gatherings. These early

experiences would help me refine my message and communication style while learning to present complex ideas clearly, responsibly, and supportively. In the long run, public speaking could become part of a broader professional life that includes writing, teaching, and research. Instead of being a separate career path, speaking would complement scholarly work by bringing meaningful ideas to wider audiences.

Challenges, Preparation, and Next Steps

Several challenges may arise as I pursue this path. The most immediate obstacle is managing my time. Completing my undergraduate degree while preparing for internships and graduate applications requires careful planning and discipline. Financial considerations must also be addressed thoughtfully. Graduate education often depends on assistantships or funding opportunities, so researching program structures and financial support will be an important part of my preparation. Additionally, pursuing ambitious academic and professional goals later in life can sometimes lead to feelings of uncertainty or self-doubt. However, returning to school has shown me that life experience can strengthen intellectual work rather than limit it.

My top priority is securing a meaningful internship for Summer 2026 that aligns with my academic interests. I plan to explore opportunities related to research institutions, archives, cultural organizations, or public scholarship initiatives. Faculty mentorship will play a crucial role in helping me identify opportunities that support my long-term goals. Meanwhile, I will start preparing for graduate school by strengthening my writing samples, clarifying my research interests, and building relationships with professors who can eventually provide recommendations. Continuing my involvement in research and writing projects with faculty mentors will also enhance my understanding of scholarly work and publishing.

Long-Term Alignment with Personal Values

As I think about my career path, one key question I keep asking is if my goals align with my core values. Academic success alone isn't enough if it harms family stability, personal integrity, or spiritual well-being. It's important to find balance between intellectual pursuits and personal responsibilities.

Ultimately, success over the next five years does not simply mean earning credentials. It involves developing knowledge, discipline, and communication skills that allow me to contribute thoughtfully to others' lives. If I can grow intellectually while maintaining balance and integrity, this professional plan will have fulfilled its deeper purpose: building a life focused on learning, writing, and meaningful service.

Over time, I expect this plan to continue evolving as opportunities and responsibilities shift. Graduate study, writing, and public engagement may take forms I currently do not envision. Still, the core commitments will remain unchanged: to keep learning, to communicate thoughtfully, and to serve in ways rooted in faith and compassion. As I look beyond the next five years, I hope to stay open to unexpected paths that still honor these priorities, whether that means writing for wider audiences, speaking at youth or women's conferences, or teaching in settings I have not yet imagined. In all these possibilities, I aim to let my professional life develop alongside my personal and spiritual growth so that learning, writing, and service continue to be at the heart of what I do.