UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCES

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We asked graduating undergraduates to write about their time as a student and their plans after graduation. These are the inspiring responses we received.

CAYLA KEY
BDes, Interaction Design

I was a transfer student, and deciding to go back to school after so long was scary. Going back to make art was doubly scary! However, I have flourished here. I have learned how to apply design principles to what matters most to me and to combine design and research in a way that can have a real impact on human lives.

After graduating I will be moving to Europe to start a PhD in philosophy of design. I will be studying human relationships to computers through the lens of design and design research. My studies in interaction design at UW have laid a foundation of critical thinking and discourse that I will further develop as I continue my studies.

After that, I will decide if I want to work in the private sector or possibly go into teaching myself. I have enjoyed my role as a teaching assistant here at UW and will continue to build my skills as an educator. I have known the most amazing professors and mentors here at UW and I would be proud to have the opportunity to give to future generations the kind of support I have known from them.

I certainly am not a typical design student, but this institution, the alumni, and faculty all recognize that, when supported, any student can achieve success.

JACKIE MIXON
BA, Art (Painting + Drawing)

When I first came to the University of Washington I had no direction that was fueled by my own desires. I came with a vague notion that I should be doing something in the medical field and signed up for Introduction to Chemistry, my writing credit, and a random drawing class as a schedule filler. I had the entirety of my year mapped out for a nursing degree, a degree I had absolutely no passion for.

Fast forward to my first day of drawing class, and something just clicked while I was holding the pencil to paper. I actually liked what I was doing. For once in my academic career, I wasn't just going through the motions or preparing for a test, I was invested in my own personal development, without thought to the results. It's also important to mention that I was absolutely terrible at drawing. This may sound arrogant, but it was the first time in my life I was truly bad at something, and I didn't care. I slowly started putting all of my energy into the class and quickly realized the medical field was not for me. That's the moment I knew I wanted to be an artist, because art made me feel like myself, a self I didn't know existed.

My professors in the art school were so different from what I had before. They focused on students as individuals, gave direct criticism, and pushed me to the point of tears more than once. But for every time I was frustrated, angry, or just straight up a wreck, it made me a better artist and a better person. The last time I cried over a piece was the moment I knew I wanted art to be my life.

RACHEL CONNELLY
BDes, Visual Communication Design
Ever since I was young, I've always loved to create. I remember going through rolls of scotch tape, taping household objects together just to show my parents that I made a new "invention." This passion carried through to my freshman year at UW, where I explored a filmmaking track. I was introduced to design through my friend Dana Golan. I downloaded Photoshop and instantly became obsessed with making digital graphics. I realized design provided the opportunity for me to fuel my creative need and also put purpose to it.

Through my time in the design program, I learned not only design fundamentals but also how to think beyond technical skills. Critique taught me how to remove my ego from my work, how to build up others, and to question everything. Ideating taught me that there's always another way to achieve something, always more to be done. User testing taught me how to listen empathetically and focus on other individuals' needs rather than my own. Collaborating with others made me realize how to marry multiple ideas into one and create something no one of us could achieve alone.

My post-graduate plans include interning at a newly founded branding startup studio called Good Luck where I will be the first in-house designer! I'll subsequently be leaving my hometown for the first time and moving down to the Bay Area to work as a full-time Product Designer for Intuit. Down the road, I would love to open my own design studio or possibly even work in academia as a design professor.

My time spent with my classmates and professors has been unforgettable, I would be nowhere without them. I will cherish this experience for the rest of my life. Thank you.

REES WALTER

BA, Art (Interdisciplinary Visual Arts)

I entered the School of Art at the beginning of my junior year, after transferring from the engineering program. It was a daunting switch, and it took me a few quarters to figure out what I wanted to do in art.

A key thing I'm glad I figured out early on is that I prefer to work in three dimensions rather than two. I spent my first two quarters doing printmaking and drawing, and while I enjoyed them, they just didn't call to me. It wasn't until I was introduced to glass in spring of 2018 that something really clicked inside me. That was the first class where I spent every waking moment working on projects that I genuinely wanted to make and treated them as my own work rather than just an assignment. By the end of spring quarter, I was completely obsessed with glass.

That made all the difference for me. In the fall, I focused all of my energy on classes offered at the CMA, which rapidly became my favorite place on campus. I got to start glass blowing, which only fueled my obsession with glass, and took sculpture classes so that I could utilize wood and metal alongside my glass work. The top-notch machinery and the amount of knowledge shared with me by my professors and peers were the greatest resources that I could have possibly hoped for.

Regarding my plans post-graduation, I'll be staying in Seattle for a while to continue pursuing glass blowing.