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Assignment #1: Career Plan

For college seniors, the prospect of graduating and entering the professional world is increasingly becoming a reality. After four years of college, students have to make the decision of whether or not they want to enter the workforce or further their career prospects by attending graduate school. In terms of finding a job, they have to decide whether or not they want to pursue a job in the field they got their degree in, or do something completely different. A lot of these decisions are based on weighing the potential monetary compensation of each profession, but it also depends on lifestyle, work activities and work hours.

Unlike a lot of my classmates, I've known since I applied to college what career I wanted to pursue. I declared a pre-journalism major at freshman orientation during the summer before my initial college year. I've stuck with it and will be finished with my major requirements after this semester. Even though the journalism major requires students to take classes in only one of their three disciplines – print, online or broadcast – I've taken classes in all three to further develop my journalism skill set. I'm also a declared psychology minor and only have two classes left to complete next semester.

Over the course of my time of college, I've worked numerous jobs and internships relating to journalism. After freshman year, I started writing for Examiner.com covering sports in the Tucson and Los Angeles areas. During sophomore year, I interned at Wagerocity.com, writing game previews for the sports teams in the state of Arizona. After junior year, I did an

apprenticeship at the Arizona Daily Star, covering food and business for the second largest newspaper in Arizona. Currently, I'm the lead editor of Zona Zealots, which is the Arizona Wildcats affiliate of SI.com's FanSided network, and the editor-in-chief of The Tombstone Epitaph for my journalism capstone. I've also worked as an executive producer at UATV, the University of Arizona's television news station, and currently serve as the sports director for the network. Over the way, I've also founded two blogs, Tomahawk Talk, a blog devoted to the Atlanta Braves, and the now defunct College Grub Hub, a student recipe database for college students.

While I will be graduating with the majority of my fellow seniors this May, I actually will be returning to the University of Arizona next year as part of an Accelerated Master's Program. I was accepted into the program, which allows me to obtain a second degree in just one extra year, towards the end of last school year. Students working towards their graduate degrees can take classes in two tracks, an international journalism track and a professional track. The former allows students to take classes to enhance their prowess in international reporting, while the latter educates students who want to possibly become journalism professors down the road. I am currently taking classes in the professional track. More importantly, I will only be required to pay one extra year of tuition, which, accounting for scholarships, equates to roughly \$100,000 over five years.

Based off my current career path, I've narrowed my professional goals to two careers: journalist and journalism professor. Becoming a journalist is an obvious choice, considering my major and professional experience. However, as a result of my educational advancement in the professional side of journalism, I have also considered continuing with school and becoming a professor.

There were slightly more than 65,000 people working in text-based, online-based, television-based and radio-based journalism jobs in the United States in 2010, the majority of which were with daily newspaper, according to the Nieman Journalism Lab as part of the Harvard's Nieman Network (Doctor, The Newsonomics of journalist headcounts). However, within text-based jobs, this number was down 14,000 jobs from 2000 (Doctor, The Newsonomics of journalist headcounts). The fastest-growing number of journalism jobs came in online-only mediums, public radio, and niche-based channels, like business and sports-focused news networks (Doctor, The Newsonomics of journalist headcounts).

According to The Princeton Review, "those with unique skills, such as technological expertise or foreign language skills, should enjoy a distinct advantage," when it comes to keeping a job in journalism (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Present and Future). Journalism jobs are increasingly beginning to move online, as news mediums are attempting to publish content 24 hours a day and seven days a week (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Present and Future). Jobs should increase as a result, but the profession will still remain a highly competitive industry (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Present and Future).

The day in the life of a journalist is hard to pin down, according to The Princeton Review, and is by no means a nine-to-five job (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Day in the Life). This makes it difficult to incorporate family and hobbies into any regularly scheduled plans (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Day in the Life). Journalism jobs are extremely stressful, as they are based on deadlines, and journalists need to be ready to drop everything at a moment's notice to cover a breaking story (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Day in the Life). Journalists also need to be perfectionists because the simplest of errors in their jobs could potentially have many negative ramifications (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Day in

the Life). People usually leave the profession due to the uncertainties in lifestyle and long hours (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Day in the Life).

Breaking into the industry can initially be difficult, as most journalists work as freelance writers for their first couple years after graduating college (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Quality of Life). However, journalists who have clips – or have experience writing for publications – usually don't have a lot of trouble finding jobs (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Quality of Life). Within five years of graduating college, journalists typically have held at least two full-time, salaried jobs, which likely pay in the low \$30,000s per year (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Quality of Life). They are usually handed a beat, or a niche, which they cover extensively for their publication (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Quality of Life). For the journalists who are able to make it 10 years in the industry – less than 40 percent of journalists reach this point – they usually still work long hours, but have developed strong readership and have secured a job they are comfortable doing (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Quality of Life). While the pay doesn't increase by much, the aforementioned benefits are considered enough to appropriate a journalist's efforts (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Quality of Life). Those who do not reach the mark commonly turn to other jobs in the profession, including editorial and teaching jobs (The Princeton Review, Career: Journalist, Quality of Life).

Journalists usually don't pick their profession based off their salary. Journalists in small markets initially make anywhere between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per year (Rogers, Journalism Salaries). For print journalists, as you move up to a larger media market, salaries increase to between \$35,000 to \$50,000 for medium-size markets, before they plateau at \$60,000 and up for the largest markets (Rogers, Journalism Salaries). For broadcast journalists, these numbers are

similar for small and medium-size markets, but once you hit the largest media markets, salaries skyrocket and could be well into six figures (Rogers, Journalism Salaries). Some daytime anchors make more than \$1 million every year (Rogers, Journalism Salaries). According to Nielsen Media's 2013 Local Television Market Universe Estimates, the five largest markets are New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia and Dallas-Ft. Worth, while Phoenix (Prescott) is 12th and Tucson (Sierra Vista) is 71st (TVB, Local Television Market Universe Estimates).

While it isn't required, people who have degrees in journalism find it a lot easier to find a job in journalism than those who do not (Rogers, Should You Get a Journalism Degree?). However, as journalists attempt to find better jobs, it is a lot easier to find a new job if they majored in something besides journalism because it shows diversification (Rogers, Should You Get a Journalism Degree?). As a result, some people recommend that you double major in journalism and something else, so you can learn the basics of the profession, while also diversifying yourself (Goudreau, Top 10 Tips For Young Aspiring Journalists). Regardless, Rogers says that, in terms of journalism, "what counts most at this point is your knowledge and job experience," and that the best way to learn journalism is through experiential learning (Should You Get a Journalism Degree?).

Overall, becoming a journalist is a high-risk and high-reward profession (Goudreau, Top 10 Tips For Young Aspiring Journalists). A lot of your success is based on who you are and who you know, so only a small percentage of journalists are able to succeed in the profession (Goudreau, Top 10 Tips For Young Aspiring Journalists). For those journalists that are able to accomplish this feat, they end up enjoying what they do and are allowed the opportunities to talk to a wide range of people, travel all over the world and communicate with a lot of people in the industry (Goudreau, Top 10 Tips For Young Aspiring Journalists).

The second job that I would be interested in pursuing is becoming a journalism professor. I've already noticed that I love to talk to the journalism students younger than me and offer advice on what they should do before graduation. I like to view myself as a resource to my younger classmates, so I feel that a job as a professor would be a good option for me down the road.

Dissimilar to journalists, professors are in complete control of their everyday lives, as they are allowed to coordinate everything pertaining to their classes (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Day in the Life). In addition to teaching between three and 16 hours per week, professors spend the majority of their time conducting research, preparing class material, meeting with students, etc. (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Day in the Life). Once tenured, teachers gain even more control, as they are able to have pretty much complete professional freedom (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Day in the Life).

While professors will always be in demand for all universities and two-year colleges, there will always be a limited supply of positions available at each individual school (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Present and Future). However, this demand has slightly increased as of late because the baby boomers are reaching retirement age and their children are just entering college (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Day in the Life). As a result of these phenomena, the number of professor jobs is expected to grow by 30 percent over the next 10 years (CNNMoney, MONEY Magazine's Best Jobs: College Professor). However, demand in humanities-based disciplines, like journalism, is not expected to grow as much as in technology-based subjects (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Day in the Life).

As a result, humanities-based professors have a harder time finding jobs than professors seeking employment in other disciplines (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Quality of Life). Fifty percent of Ph.D. graduates do not find academic work shortly after graduation, while

only 20 percent find tenure-track jobs and 30 percent find non-tenure-track jobs (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Quality of Life). If they are able to secure a tenure-track job and maintain it for five years, professors typically begin teaching upper-level classes in their specialized subject in preparation for tenure (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Quality of Life). By 10 years post-graduation, a professor has either already achieved tenure at their university, found another university that will give them tenure, or left the profession completely (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Quality of Life). If they leave the profession, they typically become adjunct professors, or move into other positions of power, like running for government (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Quality of Life). For those professors that stick around, they usually find their quality of life to be very satisfying (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Quality of Life).

Obtaining a Ph.D. is now a requirement to become a professor at a four-year university (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Day in the Life). Becoming a professor generally takes around seven years to complete, which includes two to three years of coursework, a minimum of three years teaching graduate students and completing an original piece of research and then one to two years of post-doc work spent writing backlogs for publications (The Princeton Review, Career: Professor, Day in the Life).

According to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 43 universities – not including the University of Arizona – in the United States offer Ph.D. programs in journalism (AEJMC, Ph.D. Journalism Program Listings). Getting accepted into these programs is extremely competitive, and typically requires high GRE scores (Columbia Journalism School, Frequently Asked Questions). As a result, GRE tutoring should be considered, which typically costs a little over \$1,000 (Roell, Kaplan GRE Courses). Ph.D.

programs in communication subjects typically cost anywhere from \$8,000 at public universities to over \$30,000 at private universities (How much do PhD programs cost?, Online PhD Programs). Adding these costs together, a Ph.D. program could be estimated to cost well over \$100,000.

A university professor, on average, makes \$81,491 per year and is considered to hold the second best job in America, according to CNN Money (MONEY Magazine's Best Jobs: College Professor). More than 75 percent of professors earn more than \$60,000 per year and 25 percent of professors earn over \$100,000 per year (CNNMoney, MONEY Magazine's Best Jobs: College Professor). Therefore, despite the large cost of time and money it takes to become a university professor, the expected payoff might be worth it.

If I eventually decide that the time and money commitment is not worth it, there is another way to become a college-level educator, which is by becoming an adjunct professor. Often times, universities hire people who are currently employed in their relevant discipline to educate their students (Cherwin, The Challenges and Opportunities of the Adjunct World). This allows people to continue working at their job, while also gaining the opportunity to educate college students (Cherwin, The Challenges and Opportunities of the Adjunct World). While adjuncts typically only serve as part-time lecturers, they cite that they enjoy what they do because the feeling of educating the next generation is better than any monetary benefits (Cherwin, The Challenges and Opportunities of the Adjunct World). Academic year adjunct lecturers typically make \$35,000 per year (Indeed.com, Adjunct Faculty Salary).

After evaluating two possible career choices, I definitely feel that it would be in my best interest to begin my after-graduation professional career as either a print or broadcast journalist. If I'm not finding enough satisfaction in that profession, I can always return to school to get a

Ph.D. and begin a career as a professor. However, I would love to be financially stable before I pursue this option, or it potentially could end up backfiring on me. Therefore, it likely makes more sense for me to pursue a career as an adjunct professor if I really have a strong desire to teach collegiately. Regardless of which job I pursue or where I end up, I'm just happy that I was able to find a discipline that I enjoy doing and would not mind working in for the remainder of my professional career.

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