INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on taking the next step in thinking about your career as a designer! Whether you are a freshmen or nearing graduation, now is a good time to start thinking about your future. This career guide is meant to give you lots of broad information to consider as you picture yourself working in different environments.

We hope reading through this will spark your own curiosity and that you will come meet with the Fine Arts Career Services office for a one-on-one appointment. We are highly skilled in helping you to find the perfect job, internship, or just to brainstorm different career paths.

ABOUT DESIGN

Design is about solving a problem and creating new processes, products, and services for people. It is human centered; the end-user’s needs, wants and limitations are explored at all stages within the design process and development lifecycle.

Though design has a long history, the internet, mobile applications, social media, e-commerce and now artificial intelligence have greatly increased both the opportunities available within design and the visibility and awareness of the field.

As you already know, there are many specialized areas of design. The design degree in COFA prepares students for graphic, interaction/UX, and systems/service design. Within each area, there are additional areas in which you could specialize, but we’ll focus on the larger areas of design in this guide.
TYPES OF DESIGN

**Graphic design** uses visual elements including, but not limited to, text and images to project information and concepts. Most graphic design is done on a computer, and Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign are critical tools for this field.

Graphic designers can work in just about any industry from non-profits to agencies to corporation or government.

**Interaction/UX design** is the process in which designers focus on creating engaging web/software interfaces with logical and thought out behaviors and actions. It is the design between users and products.

The goal of interaction design is to create produces that enable the user to achieve their objective in the best way possible.

**Systems and Service design** are the activities of planning and organizing people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service or system in order to improve its quality and the interaction. You design according to the needs of customers or participants, so that the service is user-friendly, competitive and relevant to the user.

Other related types of design include interior design, industrial design, set and exhibit designers, landscape design and textiles design. Though the design program in COFA does focus more explicitly in the areas previously mentioned, with the appropriate skillset, internships, and pursuit, you could pursue a career in any of these areas.

PORTFOLIO

The most critical tool during your job search process is your portfolio. If you don't have one already, you should start developing one online to get familiar with the best methods of presenting your work. Your portfolio should tell the story of who you are as a designer. Your portfolio should highlight your quality work rather than your quantity of work. You want to show your best designs.

Designers are in demand and can work independently or in full-time positions within corporations, agencies, non-profits or government. Design-led companies are some of the most successful today. Designers can be entrepreneurs and should understand the basics of business. It will help them whether they are independent contractors, salaried employees or entrepreneurs.

SKILLS

The study of design develops aesthetic, system and problem solving. A career in design also develops the ability to work cross functionally, think critically, communicate effectively, meet deadlines, and maintain composure when faced with the unexpected. Well-developed communication skills, along with an eye for spatial relationships, and functionality for the consumer, enable graduates to contribute to and succeed in many professions. An effective designer will have both strong technical skills and the ability to think outside the box.
**JOB NAMES**

Art Director  
Branding and Marketing Designer  
Character Design  
Content Designer  
Creative Director  
Design Director  
Design Manager  
Educator  
Environmental Designer  
Graphic Designer  
Information Architect  
Mobile Interface Designer  
Motion Graphics Designer  
Packaging Designer  
Principal / Partner / Owner  
User Experience Designer  
Web Designer

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**FURTHERING YOUR EDUCATION**

*Master of Fine Arts (MFA)* and *Master of Arts (MA)* are the most common design graduate degrees. MFAs are typically awarded for two to three years of academic and studio-based study in fine arts and humanities fields. A bachelor’s degree in fine arts is often required for admission to an MFA program. The emphasis in an MFA program is studio practice in a particular area or medium though a written thesis may be required in addition to an exhibition. Generally, the strongest design graduate programs do require a thesis. The MFA is recognized as a terminal degree, so it is possible to teach at a university with one. A Master of Design is equivalent to an MFA in Design but less widely awarded in the U.S.

An MA may be course-based, studio-based, or a combination of both. A thesis may be required for completion of this degree as well. The course of study is generally one to two years. Often a bachelor’s degree in the area of study is not required for admission.

Other related master’s degrees include the Master of Science (MS); , Master of Architecture (MArch), Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA), and Master of Industrial Design (MID).
...NOW WHAT’S NEXT?

Maybe reading this has left you with even more questions, and feeling even less sure about what career opportunities you may want to explore. That is okay!

Setting up an appointment with Fine Arts Career Services is a great place to brainstorm possible career pathways and help to make your application materials reflect you in the strongest way possible.