



# Career Services

*"Your journey to career success begins here..."*

Gwynedd-Mercy College • Campbell Hall • Ext. 230 • [careerservices@gmc.edu](mailto:careerservices@gmc.edu)

## GAP YEAR GUIDE

What exactly is a Gap Year? A Gap Year is a planned period of time after graduation and before a full-time career or graduate school spent traveling, doing volunteer work, or exploring career options. Think of it as a time where you can get to know yourself, clarify your personal and career goals, and gain varied experience for your resume.

### **Taking a Gap Year might be a consideration if you...**

- ❖ Are unsure about what to do after graduation...No full-time career path or plan to attend graduate school
- ❖ Feel like you need more time to figure out what your next step in life will be; to clarify your goals, values, and skills
- ❖ Need time to gain more experience or build up your resume
- ❖ Are up for a new or adventurous challenge

### **On the other hand, a Gap Year is not for everyone. Taking time off after graduation may not be for you if you...**

- ❖ Already have a good idea of why they would like to do after graduation
- ❖ Are ready for full-time employment or graduate school
- ❖ Are tired of "living like a student"

\*\*\* A challenging and rewarding Gap Year will not be achieved while sitting at home. To make the most of this experience, plan wisely to maximize how your time is spent. The options are limitless! If you are interested in taking a Gap Year, here are a few suggestions to help you begin planning:

### ***Service/Volunteerism***

Taking part in a service or volunteer project is a great way to spend your Gap Year. Not only would you be contributing to society or your community, but you would also be developing real-world skills and narrowing down a career focus. As a bonus, many programs offer a modest living stipend, loan deferment, tuition assistance and training activities for their volunteers. There are several established service programs that you can partake in during your time off, here are just a few to look into:

#### **Peace Corps**

The Peace Corps is one of the most recognized service programs out there. The Peace Corps is a 2 year commitment with projects in 76 countries around the world. Service projects could include: Education, community development, health awareness, agriculture, environmental issues.

### **Mercy Volunteer Corps**

In partnership with the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, lay women and men of Mercy Volunteer Corps, enter into relationship with people who are economically poor or marginalized. In a spirit of mutuality, volunteers cultivate mercy and justice in the world by embracing compassionate service, social justice, spirituality and a simple lifestyle in community. Mercy Volunteer Corps offer 1 year domestic and 2 year international opportunities.

### **AmeriCorps**

Each year, AmeriCorps offers 75,000 opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national nonprofit groups. AmeriCorps members address critical needs in communities all across America. As an AmeriCorps member, you can: Tutor and mentor disadvantaged youth, fight illiteracy, improve health services, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, manage or operate after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters.

### **Public Allies**

Is a program that identifies diverse young adults and prepares them for leadership through paid full-time nonprofit apprenticeships and rigorous leadership training. Public Allies partners with local universities and nonprofit organizations to meet the needs of specific communities.

\*\*\* These are just 4 of the many service programs out there. Try looking into specific religious organizations and other local volunteer opportunities. Keep in mind that you can also split your time doing volunteer work in a field that interests you while also working part-time (retail, serving, childcare).

### ***Working Abroad/Internships***

Going overseas for a specified period of time to do an internship is also a way to get more experience, clarify career interests/skills, and travel to a new location. Research into working abroad is required: living arrangements, work permits and/or visas, etc.

### ***Teaching English Abroad***

Teaching English abroad allows you to gain teaching experience overseas. Taking a Gap Year to teach English as a Second Language is a great way to:

- Gain valuable experience enhancing your teaching and language skills
- Experience a new culture
- Travel to other locations abroad

### ***Travel***

While some have the ability to take time off to just travel, it can be costly depending how long you go and where. Keep in mind that many of the established overseas service, teaching, or working programs allow their employees to take a designated amount of time off to travel.

### ***Adventure Jobs***

Taking a Gap Year could also include doing something a little out-of-the-ordinary. For example, if you have always wanted to work at a dude ranch or teach snorkeling lessons, a Gap Year might be the perfect opportunity to do so. You can find adventure here in the US or overseas. Tour guide, au pair/nanny, working at a resort

Here are a few sample Adventure Jobs to look into:

- Tour guide
- Teach adventure lessons (surfing, snorkeling, skiing, etc.)
- Au Pair/Nanny for a family abroad
- Work at a resort or on a cruise ship

\*\*\* A meaningful Gap Year experience doesn't have to mean traveling abroad to an exotic location. There are many great opportunities available here in the US (public allies)

### ***Prep work***

Things to keep in mind before heading off on your Gap Year adventure...

- Be thoughtful about what you would like to get out of your Gap Year and how you can use this time to clarify interests and goals, while also further developing skills.
- If you are at all considering the possibility of graduate school in the near future, we suggest taking any required standardized tests (GRA, MCAT, LSAT, etc.) sooner rather than later. That way, the material is fresh in your mind and your scores stay valid for a few years.
- It would also be a good idea to look into securing letters of recommendation for the same purpose. Most graduate school applications require recommendations; therefore, it would be helpful to have these secured by professors and/or former employers/supervisors before too much time goes by.
- Look into health benefits if you are not going to be employed full-time. If you are covered by a parent, check to see when coverage runs out after graduation.

### ***Life After Gap Year***

You want to be able to explain or describe your Gap Year experience in a constructive way to others (potential employers, grad school admissions counselors, etc.)

- What did you learn about yourself?
- What skills did you develop?
- How did it help clarify future goals?

### ***Online resources***

General Gap Year info:

<http://www.gapyear.com/>

<http://www.idealists.org/>

Service Opportunities:

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>

<http://www.publicallies.org/>

<http://www.americorps.gov/>

<http://www.mercycorps.org/>

<http://www.mercyvolunteers.org/>

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/>

Teaching English Abroad:

<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/work/esl/index.shtml>

<http://www.teachabroad.com/search.cfm>

<http://www.teflcertificatecourses.com/>

<http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/>

Adventure Jobs:

<http://www.coolworks.com/>

<http://www.lookingforadventure.com/adventurejobs.htm>

<http://www.backdoorjobs.com/>

<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/index.shtml>

Working Abroad/Internships:

<http://www.jobsabroad.com/search.cfm>

<http://www.internabroad.com/search.cfm>

<http://internabroad.usnews.com/usn-search.cfm>

Travel:

<http://www.startbackpacking.com/travel/>

<http://www.statravel.com/>

<http://www.letsgo.com/>

\*\*\* *These are just a few sites to help you begin thinking about and/or planning a potential Gap Year.*

\*\*\* *Make the most of your Gap Year by planning ahead...but also be open to new and different opportunities!*

