



## Career Development Office | Vassar College

# Making the Most of Summer 2020

*Given the mandatory closure of many organizations, social distancing recommendations, and “shelter in place” orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that many students will be unable to complete their summer 2020 internships on-site, as previously planned.*

*It is important to consider how you can make the most of your summer in light of these realities. While organizations will recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to secure summer internships, they will be looking to see how you made the most of the time that you had over the summer. This summer presents a great opportunity to build skills, expand knowledge, or pursue creative projects and independent research that will give you something to talk about in future interviews.*

*What follows are some ideas of what you can do if your summer plans have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in any way. Not every student will be in a position to take advantage of the ideas in this list. Students will have different capacities for taking on new projects. You might need to help care for a sick family member, provide childcare for siblings, or work full-time in an essential service position to help support your family. Remember, this too is a story to tell. It can still go on your resume or in a cover letter!*

### Remote/Alternative Internships

- New opportunities continue to be posted to [Handshake](#), including remote opportunities (type the word 'remote' in the search bar).
- The CDO has also compiled a [spreadsheet with links to remote work opportunities](#).

- See if a previously confirmed internship that was canceled might let you do a shortened stint over Winter Break
- Have you had an internship before? Try contacting them and letting the company know that you are available and interested in any remote work they may have available for you. Since you have already been trained for this company, they may be more willing to work with you.

### Micro-Internships/Projects

Micro-Internships are short term projects you can do right now. In partnership with [Parker Dewey](#), a platform where 100's of companies and non-profits go to hire students for short-term (5-40 hours) paid projects, the Career Development Office has arranged for Vassar to have its own portal where alumni, parents and friends can add their own paid projects. This is a great way for you to gain valuable work experience and earn some money starting right now. Sign up for your account at <http://info.parkerdewey.com/vassar>.

### Summer Jobs

This might have been the summer that you were hoping to have an internship or job 'in your field.' Don't despair if that's proving hard to accomplish. Pairing a paid job with an unpaid internship or volunteer opportunity is another good way to expand your experiences this summer.

In need of quick cash? [Here are some places that are looking for employees](#). Generally, places like grocery stores are going to be the best places to get hired quickly. Don't forget, having customer service experience will help you grow and is great for a resume.

- Work a **summer job** to earn money if that is possible in your community.

While not all camps and summer programs will happen this summer, [Handshake](#) has a number of camp counselor positions posted, often seeking counselors with specific areas of expertise (sailing, drama, tennis, art, soccer, etc). Search ‘counselor’ and ‘sailing’ under jobs, to see what comes up. You can also search for camp counselor jobs by location.

## Summer Volunteering

Whether you are looking for a full-time opportunity, or something to do for a few hours or days per week, volunteer or community service opportunities are a great way to add experience to your summer. You can find volunteer work in the jobs section of [Handshake](#) by selecting ‘volunteer’ under the ‘job type’ dropdown, and ‘and then and to find specific volunteer programs or offerents. Select ‘temporary/seasonal’ under ‘duration’, and even refine search by ‘location.’

- Explore these ideas for Virtual Volunteering:
  - [volunteermatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org)
  - [omprakash.org](https://www.omprakash.org)
  - [30 Community Service Project Ideas](#)
  - [Smithsonian Digital Volunteers](#)
  - [Translators Without Borders](#)
  - [United Nations Online Volunteering Service](#)
  - [Amnesty International Decoders](#)
  - [Crisis Text Line Volunteers](#)

Looking for something closer to home, but not sure where to start? Consider contacting the following types of organizations in your community. Check websites for established volunteer programs, or contact directly to see how you can offer your time.

- [American Red Cross](#)
- Animal shelters, farms
- Art museums / Historic homes
- Food pantries and/or soup kitchens
- Habitat for Humanity
- Local libraries
- National parks, state parks, town- or city-run parks
- Political campaigns
- Retirement homes
- YMCA

From

<https://www.moneycrashers.com/good-places-volunteer-opportunities-organizations/>

## Tutoring

Even if you’re not planning to go into teaching, tutoring is a great experience that expands your resume. Jobs for online tutoring services can be found online, or you can reach out to people in your community to help elementary or high school students in your area. You can find tutoring jobs in the jobs section of [Handshake](#) by putting ‘tutor’, ‘tutoring’ or ‘virtual tutoring’ in the search bar. Select ‘temporary/seasonal’ under ‘duration’ to assure that they will accommodate short-term hires for summer.

Here are some websites for tutoring services:

- <https://www.learntobe.org/>
- <https://www.tutor.com/apply>
- <https://teensgive.org/>
- <https://upchieve.org/volunteer>

## Career Exploration

Career exploration comes in many forms and we encourage you to find the exploration format that works best for you. Here are some recommendations:

- Listen to podcasts
  - [Glassdoor's Top 10 Career Podcasts to Listen to This Year](#)
  - [Feedspot's Top 20 Career Podcasts You Must Follow in 2020](#)
  - [PlayerFM's Career Development Podcasts](#)
- Watch interviews with professionals
  - [CandidCareer](#): A library of 8,000+ video interviews with professionals across a range of industries. Each interview gives viewers insight into what a profession is about and why the individual being interviewed has chosen that path.
- [FOCUS2](#): The FOCUS2 is a self-assessment tool that evaluates your work interests, personality, skills, values, and leisure interests, and generates a list of careers in line with your results. Though you can take the FOCUS2 on your own, the CDO's career counselors are always happy to review and discuss your results. To create an account, click “Register” and use the following **access code: vassarcdo**
- [Vault's Career Insider](#): A comprehensive online career resource which includes downloadable Career Guides and Industry Guides for a wide variety of career fields. To access Vault, go to Handshake and click on “Career Interests” at top of the page. On the next page, click on “Resources” where Vault will be listed.

## Major Exploration

If you're early on in your time at Vassar, you may be thinking about possible majors, adding a major, or changing majors. Something that could help you along in deciding is to explore various resources that can help you make connections between different majors and various professions.

- [What Can I Do With This Major](#): A long-time resource published by the University of Tennessee that contains links to popular careers and industries by major.
- [VassarNet](#): There is often no better inspiration for what can be done with your Vassar degree than exploring the paths of those who came before you. [VassarNet](#) is searchable by a variety of criteria, including undergraduate major.

## Networking

The summer is a great time to connect with people in your field of interest and conduct informational interviews. An informational interview can help you build a professional network of contacts for internships and full-time positions. They are a helpful tool for gathering information about an industry you would like to join, a graduate school you are considering applying to, a city you want to move to, etc.

Vassar alumnae/i are a wonderful resource for informational interviews. There are several ways to locate and connect with Vassar alumnae/i and others in the Vassar community:

- [VassarNet](#), Vassar's online community of alumnae/i, students, parents, faculty, and friends of Vassar, will help you build a network and find Vassar-connected opportunities.
- There are more than 23,000 alumnae/i on [Vassar's LinkedIn "University" Page](#), where you can search for alumnae/i by employer, location, industry, and more. You can also use LinkedIn to connect with professionals outside of the Vassar community, like friends of parents, parents of classmates, former teachers, and neighbors.
- The [Alumnae/i Directory](#) lists for Vassar alumnae/i, including people who may be willing to share career advice.

For more information on how to prepare for an informational interview and what to expect, visit the [Informational Interviewing](#) section of our website. Unsure of how to reach out to alumnae/i during a pandemic? Visit the CDO's [COVID-19 FAQs](#) for sample

language. It may take time for people in certain professions, like healthcare, to get back to you, but don't let that discourage you!

TIP: Consider asking if you can virtually job shadow someone. Job shadowing involves observing professionals while they work. Ask if you can sit in on zoom or phone calls or be walked through a typical virtual day on the job. For insight into your field of interest, go to [Candid Career](#) for videos from professionals across a range of industries.

## Expand Subject Matter Knowledge

The summer can be a great time to deepen your knowledge on a subject matter that is of interest to you. We recommend asking faculty, mentors, alumnae/i, and previous internship supervisors what they are reading now, what some of the foundational texts in the field are, and what knowledge they think is critical to excel in your field(s) of interest.

[Massive Open Online Courses](#) (MOOCs) are a great way to continue your learning over summer. Sites like [Coursera](#), [edX](#) offer free or low-cost courses on a wide range of topics. [General Assembly's Free Fridays](#) has free classes in tech, career development, marketing, and more during May and June. In light of COVID-19, many Ivy League courses are also hosting free courses online through [Class Central](#). You can choose to sit in on classes that may help advance an idea you have for independent research or for your eventual senior thesis, or you can sit in on a class that touches on a topic you've always wanted to understand better.

Vassar is also a collaborating college with [Harvard Business School's Credential of Readiness](#) (CORE) program and they are offering all Vassar College students the opportunity to take May or June CORE for \$450 (80% discount), regardless of financial need. CORE is a rigorous online program designed to help you achieve fluency in the language of business. The curriculum developed by Harvard Business School faculty covers Business Analytics, Economics for Managers, and Financial Accounting. The May 10 week term starts May 19 (apply by May 11) and the June 10 week term starts June 23 (apply by June 15). Email [cdo@vassar.edu](mailto:cdo@vassar.edu) to get the coupon code to take advantage of this great deal.

Summer also presents an opportunity to learn a new language or to enhance your understanding of a foreign language. Depending on your field of interest, knowing an additional language can often give you an advantage when you are searching for internships and jobs in

subsequent years. Sites like [Duolingo](#), [Open Culture](#), [Learn a Language](#), and [Babbel](#) provide free or low-cost language instruction.

### Develop Skills or Enhance Existing Skills

Summer can be a great time to shore up a gap you've identified in your skill set or to take an existing skill to another level. In your conversations with faculty, mentors, alumnae/i, and previous internship supervisors, be sure to ask them what skills are in demand in the field, what skills will give you an advantage over other applicants, and what skills you personally need to improve upon. Use this summer to begin working on or enhancing these skills so that you can leverage them in the next application cycle.

All Vassar students have free access to LinkedIn Learning. [LinkedIn Learning](#) is an online educational platform that helps you discover and develop business, technology-related, and creative skills through expert-led course videos. With more than 13,000 self-paced courses and personalized recommendations, you can discover, complete, and track courses related to your field and interests. You can also add these courses and related skills to your LinkedIn profile once you've completed them. Go to <http://one.vassar.edu/> to get set-up to use this resource for free. [Microsoft Learn](#) is a free online training program that offers training and certifications on specific Microsoft products. In addition to these resources, many organizations, especially those related to tech and finance, are providing free access to their training, courses, and resources right now in light of COVID-19.

Summer can also be a great time to expand your knowledge around personal finance (budgeting, credit cards, savings, etc.). In addition to providing free standardized test preparation materials (LSAT, MCAT, GMAT) and expert-created academic and professional development courses, [Khan Academy](#) has a great module on [personal finance](#). Additionally, [CashCourse](#) and [Realworld Ready](#) support students through online training modules on personal finance, health care, retirement savings, employer paperwork, student loans and more. Real World Ready is offering free access to all graduating seniors through May 15. Visit [Real World Ready](#) to enroll and where it says "Add Coupon" type in: REALWORLDREADY.

### Research Graduate/Professional Schools

The CDO recommends using multiple resources and speaking with different individuals for researching

graduate school programs. Begin your search of advancing your education with your faculty advisor or a faculty member that knows your academic interests and performance well. They can help guide you to programs that they believe would fit your particular interests. Beyond faculty, it is a good idea to see where Vassar alumnae/i have advanced their education by researching on [VassarNet](#) or [LinkedIn](#). Lastly, don't forget to chat with your peers, mentors, and college administrators who may also have recommendations for you.

Online resources such as The [U.S. News and World Report's Graduate School Rankings](#) allows you to explore grad schools, grad rankings, and best values. Email us ([cdo@vassar.edu](mailto:cdo@vassar.edu)) with your name and graduation year to receive access to premium content. Please note that the validity of college rankings is a subject of debate.

[The Peterson's Guide](#) is an excellent comprehensive database of graduate programs, and is searchable by a variety of criteria. [GradSchools.com](#) and [GradProfiles](#) also provide searchable databases that may be helpful. More recommendations on exploring advanced degrees can be found on our [Researching Graduate Schools & Programs of Interest Page](#).

### Study for Graduate/Professional School Entrance Exams

Most graduate and professional degree programs require some form of a standardized test to be completed as part of the application. The below list are some of the most commonly required standardized tests. If your graduate/professional program requests one that is not listed below, please feel free to reach out to the CDO with your questions.

- [GRE](#): The most widely used and accepted entrance exam for graduate and some professional school programs. The test is broken into verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing.
- [GRE Subject Tests](#): Some Biology, Chemistry, Literature in English, Mathematics, Physics, and Psychology graduate programs require applicants to take a GRE Subject Test in addition to the GRE. Each of the subject tests is meant to measure an applicant's knowledge in a particular field of study.
- [LSAT](#): The most widely accepted entrance exam for law school that measures applicants on analytical reasoning, reading comprehension, logical reasoning, and writing.

- [MAT](#): A standardized test used by some graduate programs to measure logical reasoning.
- [MCAT](#): Additional information about the MCAT can be found in the [Office of Fellowships and Pre-Health Advising](#).
- [GMAT](#): An adaptive test which assesses analytical, writing, quantitative, verbal, and reading skills used for admission to most MBA programs.
- [Praxis Tests](#): Used almost exclusively by graduate teaching programs, this test measures the academic skills and subject-specific content knowledge needed for teaching.

## Independent Research/Senior Thesis Prep

The summer break is an excellent time to ramp up progress on your research projects, which can include independent research or preparation for your senior thesis.

### Senior Thesis / Project

The summer break presents an opportunity to start on your senior thesis so that you aren't overwhelmed in the fall. Here's some suggestions for what to do during the summer:

- Consult your department's website for information on the process for the senior thesis. If your department's website does not have a senior thesis section, reach out to your faculty advisor or the departmental admin for information.
- Reach out to faculty that you would like to supervise your thesis before the academic year ends in May. Doing a senior thesis does require at least one faculty to support you during your senior year.
- If you're not completely sure what you want to research, use the summer to narrow down your interests. Make sure that what you are choosing to explore truly interests you since this will be an extended endeavor. Your chosen topic should not be too broad, rather there should be a central question or theme (for creative work) around which your thesis is focused. A central question/theme will help to keep your project manageable.
- Start collecting relevant articles/sources for your literature review. The literature review is one of the most time-consuming parts of a thesis so starting to read and identify those articles and sources that you may want to use will relieve some stress in the fall.
- For creative senior projects, make sure that you are taking time during the summer to view/listen/read work related to your chosen media and style of work. This will help you to identify

materials and possible modes of execution for your senior project.

### Independent Research

Use the summer break as an opportunity to expand your research but also to reflect and reevaluate what has been done thus far. Here's some suggestions for what to do during the summer:

- Before launching into your progress, take a moment at the beginning of the summer to see where you are and evaluate what needs to be done. It's important to have regular moments of reflection when doing research so that you're not forgetting your research objective and the bigger picture.
- Set a research agenda for the summer that maps out what you would like to accomplish. Depending on the nature of your research this could be setting weekly or daily tasks.
- Set aside time regularly to explore what's going on in your field. This could mean checking different academic journals, book publications, exhibitions, or staying on top of news from your chosen field through academic or professional organizations.
- Writing up your results or creating the final product of your research/experimentation requires time as well. Developing this final piece is significantly aided by journaling during your research process or making sure to take copious notes of what you're doing. This is so that you accurately present your research/ideation process and also remember details that you want to share or other research that you want to reference in your final written or created piece.

### Enhance your Online Presence

A simple way to enhance your online presence is to update your professional profiles on [VassarNet](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Handshake](#), and other professional/academic platforms and forums that you may be on. By filling out your profile(s) completely, you allow potential employers to understand your knowledge and skills better, and for employers to "discover" you through these platforms candidate search functions for employers. Check out the [LinkedIn Profile Checklist](#) for more details on completing your profile on LinkedIn and other professional platforms.

### Be Active!

After updating your profile(s), dedicate time to being active on your platform(s) or professional network(s) of choice. This means sharing interesting articles, linking to relevant talks/video content, and sharing updates on projects that you/your team completed. Active

members of professional platforms/networks look more attractive to potential employers because they are clearly engaged with their field(s) of interest.

### Update Your Career Interests on Handshake

If you didn't update your Career Interests when you set up your Handshake profile, take a moment to do so because this will make Handshake work for you. By identifying what your interests are, your Handshake landing page, which will list internship and/or job opportunities will change based on what you identified. To make these updates, log into Handshake and look for the circle icon that contains your initials at the top right of the screen. Click on this icon and select "Career Interests" from the dropdown menu, then proceed to selecting your interests.

### Online Portfolios

Some professions require more than a resume and cover letter when applying for an internship or a job. Creative fields may require you to submit a portfolio, which is a collection of work that visually and/or auditorily displays a candidate's artistic, design, performative, or technical skills. A portfolio is not a complete archive of all of your work, but should be thought of as an edited and curated collection of your best work. The below websites can help you house and build an online portfolio to share with potential employers and/or graduate school programs.

- Visual/Video Portfolios: [Squarespace](#), [WIX](#), [Behance](#), [Carbonmade](#), [Format](#), [Weebly](#)
- Video Portfolio Platforms: [Vimeo](#), [YouTube\\*](#)
- Writing Platforms: [Blogger](#), [Medium](#), [Wordpress](#)

If you have the ability to build your own website to host your portfolio, do it because it will separate you from others and will show your website architectural abilities.

TIP: Avoid having Tumblr, Instagram, or YouTube as the sole hosting site(s) of your creative content. Creative professionals like forming their own opinions and comment culture can distract from the content you've spent so much time developing and curating on a more social platform. Moreover, a hosting website or self-built website does not have the content of others mixed in with yours as is the case with Tumblr. Lastly, a website also has the benefit of showing an employer how you "curate" your own content, which is an extension of your portfolio. Most social media platforms don't allow you to curate layouts, typeface, titles, etc to this degree.

### Self-Care/Fun/Passion Project

Consider using this time to create and invest in a project you are passionate about: Gather literature around a subject of interest, write a research proposal, design an app, write code, develop your own marketing campaign around a product or idea, identify a business problem and develop creative solutions to the problem, etc.

Summer can be a great time to embrace creativity. You could start writing fiction, non-fiction or songs, play music, create a documentary video, build a website, start a blog, etc. The opportunities are endless! Maybe this summer is a good time to take up journaling or exploring the [bullet journal trend](#).

Most of all, use your best judgment for how to proceed this summer. For some, this summer will be an important time to focus on self-care. Your health must always come first. What follows are some resources to assist you in taking care of yourself during these uncertain times.

- [Self-Care Outline](#)
- [Self-Care Essentials](#)

**The New York Open Center** has many free opportunities including live webinars and introductory courses. Their [toolkit](#) provides you with stress management tools to improve resiliency, relieve anxiety and restore energy and focus while you are home, including yoga, qi gong, tapping and breathing techniques that are designed to save as quick exercises that you can do at any time (average 10-20 minute videos).

- [Free – ½ Hour Lunchtime Meditation Series](#)
- [Free – ½ Hour Lunchtime Sound Healing Meditation Series](#)

**Hudson Valley Healing Centers** offers free on-line qi gong and yoga instruction with John and Mary Platt of Peaceful Postures:

- [Hudson Valley Healing Center Yoga and QiGong Videos](#)
- [Peaceful Postures](#)

### Mindful Online Learning

Free, but expires June 2020

30 days of mindfulness to calm anxious thoughts, strengthen emotional resilience, and cultivate compassion and connection at your own pace:

- [Find Calm and Nourish Resilience](#)

### The Reflective Mind

Free - Mindfulness course to regain control of your thoughts and emotions and also

learn to manage stress effectively, create healthy lifestyle changes and become the best version of yourself! Free guided meditation videos are also offered.

- [The Reflective Mind – Free Online Course](#)
- [The Reflective Mind – Free Downloads](#)

### **Coursera Online Learning**

Coursera provides hundreds of classes in all topics of interest. You can get free access (or financial aid for any fee attached to a low-cost class) on topics such as guided imagery, aromatherapy, herbal medicine and the science of well-being:

- [Guided Imagery](#)
- [The Science of Well-Being](#)
- [Aromatherapy: Clinical Use of Essential Oils](#)
- [Herbal Medicine](#)
- Meditations submitted for my Coursera Capstone Project:
  - [Part I: Introduction and the Relaxation Guided Meditation](#)
  - [Part II: The Focused Guided Meditation](#)

### **Resources for Pure Essential Oils and Herbs**

These sites offer oils that are therapeutic grade:

- [Snow Lotus](#)
- [Elizabeth van Buren](#)
- [Mountain Rose Herbs & Spices](#)

### **Other Resources**

- [John Kabat-Zinn's Body Scan Exercise](#)
- [10-Minute Guided Morning Meditation](#)
- [TEDx - Quick Mindfulness Guided Meditation by Jessica Amos](#)
- [Journey Dancing](#)
- [Relaxation Music for Stress Relief](#)
- [Virtual Walk Through the Washington State Woods](#)

## **Conclusion**

What we hope you take away from this handout is that summer doesn't have to be thought of as one thing, but can be a myriad of opportunities to build valuable skills and knowledge for your future aspirations. You can add any of these experiences to your resume, cover letter, LinkedIn profile, or discuss during an interview to show employers or graduate school programs how you made the most of your summer. This will demonstrate that you've taken the appropriate steps to prepare yourself for the next opportunity and your future.

5/4/20