

What Next? A Guide for SED and LDA graduates

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You are in your last quarter of college, graduation is approaching, and now you must start worrying about what comes next. Will you find a job? What jobs are you qualified for? Even after your extensive education and training there is self-doubt and hesitation to call yourself a professional and begin a real career. What do you do next and how do you find a job where you will be confident and capable? All graduates experience some form of panic, anxiety, and stress about what comes next. Some students have the luxury of returning to their parent's homes and taking their time finding a job but others have rent, bills, and student loans to worry about. This guide offers suggestions to help you move into your future career endeavors more easily.

First, create an extensive list of the things you really enjoy and the things you would rather avoid. What do you want to do? What do you like and what don't you like? This will help filter through possible jobs in your search. Job titles can be very misleading; use this list when reading through the details of a job's requirements and you will discover which jobs are more appealing to you. Reflect on the work you did while in college. Record the project and assignment tasks you enjoyed and the ones you would rather not engage in again. Be specific, for example:

LIKES

- Drawing
- Creativity
- Nature
- Interaction
- Math
- Science
- Animals
- Hands on

DISLIKES

- Research
- Writing long papers
- A lot of Reading
- Sitting at a desk
- Isolated Working
- Statistics
- Long Commutes
- Data Entry

This process of elimination will help you discover what jobs you prefer and will speed up your search. Next you should determine where you want to work. If you are willing to go to whomever will hire you then great, you have more opportunities, but most of us have an area in mind where we would like to stay close to, or at least areas we know we would *not* want to live and work. Create a list or even mark a map to establish your desired locations:



You now have the what and the where, but what about the how? How will you pay for your necessary expenses at your possible new location? Some places are costlier to live than others, but these areas usually have more jobs available. You should establish what job specifications and benefits you require or desire. Salary needs to cover the basic costs of living but what about benefits, sick time, paid vacation, and work hour flexibility? Are these important to your needs? Be sure to include these factors. Create your list of needs:

- Salary must be a minimum of \$ _____
- I need medical benefits that include dental
- I don't need paid time off
- I do not want to work weekends or holidays
- Etc.

You should now have a clearer layout of the career path you want to take. Next is creating a cover letter, resume, and portfolio or other sample work document.

Begin with the resume which will contain all your experience and qualifications and provide structure for the following documents. As a graduate, you likely have very little actual work experience in the field aside from your educational training. Format your resume as a 'skills' based document and only include work history that reflects desired skills for potential jobs. A professional resume should begin with a concise introductory paragraph that summarizes your status and qualifications such as: I am a recent *major* graduate from

educational institute with a focus in special interests. I have strong skills in ... insert a few of your best personal qualities like organized, resourceful, flexible, a good leader, great at time management, public speaker, etc. Following this paragraph, you can bullet point 4-10 of your professional skills. Be sure to keep them succinct and non-repetitive. Less is more here, but you do want to cover all of your strongest skills obtained in your schooling. Start by listing the highlights of everything you learned and then combine and compact the list into a short overview of skill sets:

I am good at and learned how to: hand draw, draft, use of cad, identify plants, ecology, research, writing, public speaking, science, graphics, group projects, community development, etc.

Bullet Points may include...

- High Level Artistry in Drawing, Drafting, and Design
- Proficient in CAD programs
- Plant ID and Taxonomy
- Ecological Restoration
- Research and Writing
- Wildlife Biology
- Community Outreach

Next you can be more specific in 2-3 short sentences of your unique training experience:

- Extensive independent research on subject for project type for this group in this location
- Constructed a design plan for this company to implement this type of project
- Worked hands on with this group for a type of project establishing this outcome to benefit the people of this location

Follow up with relevant work history, educational background, and any other involvements such as volunteer work or community/club associations.

Almost all professional job applications require a cover letter preceding any other documentation. This makes the cover letter extremely important as it is your “first impression.” A cover letter is usually different for each job as it needs to be relevant to the job qualifications for that particular job, but this can be very timely as you will be applying for a great number of jobs. Creating a base letter that covers your career interests will save you a lot of time when it comes to submitting applications over and over. This way you are only changing the name, address, and date each time. However, jobs for jobs that have varying qualifications or that you are extremely interested in, putting forth greater effort to include your talents in that area and your passion for that job will be better received.

The portfolio is also an important asset to your application as this demonstrates what you can do. For the Landscape Architecture program a portfolio is required so you may already have this done. Be sure to continue to update your work as you gain more experience. For other majors like Sustainable Environmental Design, a portfolio was not necessary so you probably didn't put in the extra time to make one between all your coursework. Gather all your work and select your best samples with a variety of your talents. Compile these into a well-designed PDF format portfolio. A short description of the work should be included with all samples. As designers, you may want to get creative with this but a simple and easy to read portfolio is better than an overload of design. Keep graphics to a minimum and be sure photos are large and clear.

There is only one more recommendation to take into concern before applying. With social media being a prime source of interaction and you will want to consider the sites you are involved with. Employers can and will often look through potential employee's social media sites. Be sure your Facebook, Twitter pages, etc. don't reveal any negative information or photographs. Pictures of partying or foul language can be discouraging to employers. Review your sites and clean them up before applying. Additionally, being on sites like LinkedIn can be beneficial to present your professional and educational background.

Ok you are now ready to apply for jobs! Here are some useful websites to find jobs for the Landscape Architecture and Sustainable Environmental Design majors:

<https://www.indeed.com>
<https://www.caljobs.ca.gov/loginintro.asp>
<http://www.ecojobs.com>
<http://www.conservationjobboard.com>
<http://www.conservation-careers.com>
<http://www.headhunter.com>
<http://www.conservation.ca.gov/jobs/Pages/why-choose-doc.aspx>
<https://www.governmentjobs.com>
http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/index_jobs.htm
<http://www.asla-ncc.org/job-listings/>
<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/internships/>
<http://www.beginningfarmers.org/internship-and-employment-opportunities/>
<https://farmscapedgardens.com/careers/>
<https://www.ffa.org/careers-at-ffa>
<https://www.aswm.org/news/jobs-a-training-opportunities>
<http://www.sercal.org/job-openings/>
<https://my.americorps.gov/mp/login.do>
<http://www.ecoemploy.com>
<https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/workwithus.htm>

ALSO:

- Craigslist
- City Pages
- University Pages
- Going directly to a company's website

UTILIZE NETWORKING:

- Meet-Ups
- Community gatherings and meetings
- Professionals Get-togethers
- City Council Meetings
- APA & ASLA gatherings

Keep in mind that you did receive the training and a degree and you are qualified to perform several entry level jobs in your field. However, you must also be prepared that you do not have all the how-to's yet, and you will need to continue to learn through your experience. Plant knowledge, CAD programs, design costs and installation bids, codes and policies, and performance of a design systems are just a few areas that may feel overwhelming in your first jobs. Don't hesitate to continue your education through programs like Master Gardener's, LEED certification, contractor's licensing, or other certifications within your interests. Here are a few websites for furthering your education if interested:

<https://www.landscapeprofessionals.org>

<https://www.usgbc.org/leed>

<http://mg.ucanr.edu>

<http://contractorschool.com>

<http://www.ashs.org>