There is more than one right answer to the often-asked question, “What are you doing this summer?” One option is to use your summer to clarify your career direction and increase your professional preparation.

The CCPD has developed a “Top Ten” list of things current students might do during time off in the summer:

1. **Work: Make your summer work (any work!) valuable.**
   With a little planning and initiative, any job can develop transferable skills (problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, teamwork, communication and interpersonal awareness, strong work ethic, flexibility/adaptability, attention to detail, etc.). Ask your supervisor how you might contribute. If you’re working in an office, offer to cover the front desk at lunchtime in order to gain customer service expertise. As a restaurant server, offer to create a better system for sharing tips with staff. As a lifeguard, offer to write a manual for the next year’s pool staff.

2. **Intern: Industry experience is key.**
   Internships allow you to gain career knowledge and training related to an industry of interest while learning under the guidance of a mentor and developing new skills. Review the internship job description with your supervisor to identify projects or opportunities which will add meaningful accomplishments to your experience. Ask a work colleague to lunch/coffee and conduct an informational interview to learn more about their work and build connections. Apply academic theories in the workplace by using your research skills to perform a detailed literature review for a project at your internship site.

3. **Volunteer: The life you change might be your own.**
   You might Google local service organizations and make a list of those that match your skills and/or interests, noting ways they suggest to get involved. Coaching an inner-city youth rugby team might lead you to realize that you enjoy developing and empowering young people.

4. **Network: Expand who you know (and who knows you).**
   Seek out job shadow opportunities with acquaintances whose work uses knowledge related to your major, passions, or interests. Use LinkedIn and the Guilds to find Kalamazoo College graduates and reach out. (If you’re stuck, the CCPD can help!) Reconnect with friends who may have new, interesting perspectives, advice, or opportunities. Request informational interviews from professionals in your field of interest. Ask a family friend, “Is there anyone you know with whom you think I should connect?”
5. **Create: Make (and sell) lemonade.**
   Develop your entrepreneurial and marketing skills. You might start a business mowing lawns, tutoring, painting homes, creating websites, baking, repairing bicycles, or caring for children. You might freelance using skills such as writing or crafting to build your portfolio. Develop your market research skills by identifying a need and offering a concierge service for busy people, such as a dog-walking business, and you’ll add to your bank account and gain practical business skills.

6. **Study: Develop your lifelong learning habit.**
   Non-credit courses may give you a new skill or provide a healthy outlet: first aid, photography, painting, welding, etc. Online or local classes may help fill a gap, increase confidence, or help position you for a future opportunity (think computer classes, foreign languages, marketing or accounting). Ask someone you admire for a book recommendation (and then read the book!).

7. **Update: No one is a finished work of art.**
   Revise your resume and request feedback from someone in your network (or someone you would like to have in your network). Revisit and improve your LinkedIn profile. Add a reflection to your K-Plan Commonplace. Check your closet and add professional attire appropriate for your industry or the image you’d like to create.

8. **Engage: Showing up may be the first step to tomorrow’s opportunity or insight.**
   Job fairs or career events in your hometown can provide knowledge and practice. Community lectures, workshops, or discussions open to the public add layers of understanding. You might research and join a professional organization in your field of interest. As a chemistry student, for example, you could join the American Chemical Society for a reasonable, undergraduate-level, student membership fee and then explore the many benefits of the organization.

9. **Focus: Know thyself.**
   Create personal goals and commit to self-improvement. Make time to relax, recharge, and/or get fit. Try something new, even if it is just a new food! Increase your self-awareness and identify your work values. Keep a journal, write letters, reflect on personal strengths and weaknesses.

10. **Prepare: Increase your “life skills.”**
    Improve your financial literacy by developing a budget for the summer and the upcoming school year. Consider a free online course or talk with trusted family and friends about your goals. Make a list of practical things you want to know, but haven’t learned yet. Examples might include: negotiating your first contract, purchasing a vehicle, making a budget, doing basic vehicle or household maintenance, planning for retirement, etc.