

LDR 606: Leadership Seminar- Internship/Field Experience Reflection- Michael Medlock

This J-term I have seized the opportunity to initiate conversations and explore new avenues related to my future vocational goals. Recognizing the unique talents God has given me, I feel called to help bridge the societal gap or distance between art and football. My current vision for my future is to teach art and coach football, regardless of the institution or school. I am committed to finding a role that allows me to do both simultaneously. A key component of this master's program is providing space for reflection, encouraging us to deepen our "call to curiosity." In this context, I've begun to reflect on what truly matters to me as I consider my career path. After careful thought, I've come to the conclusion that I would not only be happy but also effective as a high school art teacher and football coach. However, I recognize that this might be the easier option. As I find myself today in a unique position, teaching and coaching in higher education and working alongside the very people who taught me, I don't want to waste this opportunity. I feel a deep love for this institution and should the chance arise I would be beyond grateful for the opportunity to stay here full-time. While I don't have the expectation that something may happen, I want to make sure I don't let this chance slip by me. For this reason, I believe it's important to use this J-term to engage in conversations with colleagues here on campus, as well as with other creatives I trust, who can help me discern what God has in store for me.

This month I have reached out and set up one on one meetings with eight disciplined creators. Those individuals include Jeremie Riggleman, Assistant Professor of Art and Metcalf Gallery Coordinator; Mark Masuoka, Assistant Professor of Art and Director of Boren Art Gallery; Matthew Hermann, Assistant Professor of Photography; Hannah Richardson, Assistant Professor of Art Education and Pre-Art Therapy; Laura Stevenson, Assistant Professor of Art

and former Department Chair; Jonathan Bouw, Department Chair and Professor of Art; Rudy Medlock, former Professor of Art at Asbury University; and finally, Kara Pinkerton and Angela Thompson, art teachers at Eastbrook High School. In addition to these names I have plans to meet with Dr. Rachel Smith, Professor of Art and Gilkison Chair later this month.

These conversations were extremely fruitful for two reasons: one, it was interesting to unpack what happens when creativity meets discipline; and two, hearing their insight on the action steps I should be considering in order to propel my future career. During my reflection time in this program, I have come to learn that leadership is less about an individual being fearless and demanding things from followers and more about being self-aware of one's strengths and blind spots, while facilitating and rallying a group toward a shared common goal. Being self-aware of my personality, whether shaped by nature or lived experiences and through introspective consideration of myself as a leader, it leads me to believe that the learned traits of execution, routine, structure, and discipline from football, paired with the traits of innovation, ambition, free-spiritedness, and creativity from art, complement each other and make me the leader I am today. Thinking through this with the other creators reminded me of a quote from Prof Hermman that I will never forget and will now stand by forever. "Good creators wake up at the same time as the farmers". I loved hearing his perspective as he grew up in this area and took his pastoral, blue collar upbringing to the streets of New York. When discussing how creativity meets discipline he was able to speak on this topic extensively.

In tandem with these conversations I asked them all what action steps should I be considering or people should I be speaking to in order to stay in higher education, more specifically at Taylor. In the sections to follow I will discuss the small nuggets of insight or considerations that I learned from each conversation.

When speaking to Jeremie Riggleman he informed me that it is vital that higher ed art professors are “practicing” artists, meaning that they are not only creating their own body of work but showing it. He offered me a list of four websites that have calls to entry so that I can be getting my artwork out in galleries. I was unaware of this critical step before discussing it with Prof Riggleman.

When speaking with Mark Masuoka he explained that he is currently part time Gallery Director and part time Art Prof. He explained that the university was in need and made his position a full time deal. This was an interesting perspective as I wonder if creating a part time coach and part time art prof could become a full time deal. I believe it hinges on the “need” of the art department.

When discussing with Prof. Richardson she explained that some needs of the department include the “aesthetic literacies” or “participation in the arts”. Due to the current enrollment of Taylor there are not enough offerings of these courses for students to graduate on time and are mandating students to take visual art courses online. This sounds as a potential “need” of the art department in which I would be able to assist.

When discussing this with Prof. Stevenson, she explained that an MFA is a necessity for Taylor and that she sees this as not being a feasible option without one. She advised me that even if I do not pursue this degree this year, I should have a plan for when, where, and how to obtain the degree, so that I am not reacting to that decision. Furthermore, she asked insightful questions that helped me revisit what’s most important to me. She asked, “Is it Taylor, or is it higher ed that you want?” I believe the answer is Taylor because I do not think I would take another job on campus outside of the art and football department just to stay at Taylor. I believe the combination

of art and football is more important than being at Taylor. In the end this two hour conversation with Prof. Stevenson was extremely beneficial.

When discussing with Prof. Bouw, I walked away feeling slightly rejected and worrisome. He explained to me that Taylor is not a university that often makes decisions like this and most of the time academic decisions take too long for a procedure like this to happen. He advised me that I write up a petition or plan of probable cause to Nancy Dayton, the Dean of Arts and Humanities. He stated that this would not hurt and that she would be more apt to say yes if she heard it straight from me. In order to accomplish this task effectively I believe I would need to have a whole plan or multiple plans written as opposed to offering an idea.

When I was on the phone with my Uncle Rudy, he took me in a totally different direction. He informed me that he has plans for his current house and studio once he passes. He has a dream that his 10-acre land would be transformed into a residency for artists, specifically Christian artists. He hopes that Christian artists could come to this community to grow in their skills while deepening their faith. He explained this vision and asked that I be on the board of this project. If I had not been in the process of opening conversations about my future vocational goals, I would not have thought to call my uncle and I would have missed the chance to hear his vision. This phone call was a reminder to stay connected and reach out to the people you trust or who can offer guidance.

The last person that I have met with before writing this reflection was the two high school art teachers at Eastbrook, Kara Pinkerton and Angela Thompson. I did my student teaching and was hired for a Summer Academy: Art & Clay Camp in this school district. These two teachers were super responsive to my situation and were avid in trying to help. Mrs. Pinkerton offered to call the art teacher at Blackford High School and Mrs. Thompson informed me that the middle

school art teacher at R.J. Baskett is retiring after this year. These two stated that it's smart for me just to put my application into school I care about even before jobs open, before this conversation I would have never considered that route. Walking away from this meeting I thought it would be super cool if the opportunity arose for me to teach art at a local high school, coached for Taylor Football and did the Participation Ceramics classes at night. This would be a full time vocation that I love, coaching for a program that I love, in a community that I love, helping an institution's needs that I love. This combination sounds like that fits everything I want out of my vocational goals.

Overall, this J-term has been refreshing, rejuvenating, and rewarding. I was unsure what these conversations would bring or what they would become; however, I feel more settled now that I have had them. I recognize my situation and do not have the expectation that something will happen; however, I want to advocate for myself so that I do not miss out on an awesome opportunity. This month reminds me of the quote to start the book *In the Name of Jesus*, in which it said "Jesus sent his disciples two by two". This quote hits two fold as it touches on how leadership requires more than one person and that life is more abundant when done with others. This J-term taught me that I should seek Godly guidance from the ones I trust and have in my corner. I feel like I have been living out Proverbs this month as I am seeking counsel and going wisdom through Truth seekers. In the end, it's important for me to recognize that nothing is wasted and that all has been good up to this point in my life. Reminding myself of this, I am not anxious of what God has planned for me next but rather am open to where he wants me to steward the talents he has given me. Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."