

## Statement of Purpose

I have finally figured out what I want to do when I grow up.

One would expect this epiphany to come eventually, but for me this is quite an achievement. You could say that, up until now, I have been running a little behind in the “life plan” area. It’s not that I am lazy or inert ... I am just your classic liberal arts major.

I play four instruments, but won’t be applying for conservatory any time soon. I speak three foreign languages, but none well enough to stop natives from practicing their English with me. One week while I was in high school, I had 15 extracurricular-activity meetings to attend. Half way through my junior year in college, I had to choose from four majors I had enough credits to pursue (Middle Eastern studies, Geology, Theater, and International Relations / Russia, with the last winning out.)

I do one thing well, and that is, well, doing things well. The cliché “jack of all trades, master of none” sounds great on paper, but it is frankly pretty aggravating in practice. Viewed through the prism of a “career,” the cliché turns ugly.

When I graduated neigh on a decade ago, I took a job doing the one theme that kept reoccurring in my existence. Since birth, I have been “the guy who knows about computers.” Now, I don’t know enough about computers to become a Microsoft Certified network geek – that would violate the laws of physics that govern my liberal arts existence – but I know enough about computers that I can provide translation services when said geek tries to communicate with a mere mortal.

My career as a “guy who knows about computers” began in 1994, when I built a website for the Interfaith Council at the College of William and Mary – an organization which serves as the United Nations of religious groups at the College – to promote Council activities, provide basic information on member groups, and to promote religious tolerance on campus. In 1996, while in Russia to research my Honors Thesis, I volunteered with a non-profit human rights organization that was looking for a “guy who knew computers,” helping make their website more accessible to an international audience.

After graduation, I accepted an entry level job for a Congressman on Capitol Hill, where I quickly became “the guy who knew computers” and was handed the website. With a free reign, I reorganized the site, turning the front page into a progressive news portal, designed to attract repeat viewers from the Member’s national audience. I experimented with issue-based campaign sites – websites with a distinct look and feel dedicated to a particular issue – in order to appeal to constituents who otherwise wouldn’t vote for the Member if he ran for dog catcher. In three years, the site went from 2000 unique visitors a month to 20,000. Our email distribution list also increased ten fold.

In 2000, I saw a job notice looking for a “guy who knows about computers” and applied. The firm specialized in building websites for non-profit organizations, and was contemplating expanding its D.C. office. I was hired, and quickly put to work for a wide range of clients, building websites and providing advice to state political organizations, choice groups, environmental activists, labor unions, political candidates, and Capitol Hill offices. Sites I worked on have won a range of awards, including a couple Golden Mice, a Pollie, and even a Webby.

All the while I had very little idea what I wanted to do with my life.

Now it would be slightly Capra-esque to say that on the eve of my thirtieth birthday, some great event transpired which brought everything into focus. This was not the case. Bucking my usual trend for tardiness, it was my twenty-ninth birthday. Further bucking my penchant for the grandiose, it wasn't an event, just a simple connecting of the dots.

I want to make the world a better place. This sounds trite, hackneyed, and the exact sort of vague statement that you should never include in a college application essay, but it's true. Also, I am good at helping people use technology, and even better at bringing technology to people who aren't geeks by nature. Finally, I have the gift of leadership, internal drive, personality, and people skills that can really make a difference for a non-profit organization.

It was at this point that I realized: A plus B plus C equals “life plan.”

I can continue to do a lot of really great, groundbreaking work with non-profits, and help them make the world a better place. I can become a Chief Technologist, a Director of New Media, or an Internet communications strategist who uses his skills and expertise for good. I finally have a career path where the possibilities for personal and professional satisfaction seem limitless. My days of being just a “guy who knows about computers” are finally drawing to a close.

The only thing that is really missing for me to succeed is formal education in this arena. I have 10 years of work experience in Internet technology, so it is not as if I am uneducated, but I am beginning to stagnate creatively. I need exposure to new ideas, to a vibrant community of individuals with professional experience maximizing the communication return on technology. Also, not to be crass but having a piece of parchment with a degree relevant to my planned career is attractive.

When I found out about JHU's Communication in Contemporary Society program, everything seemed to fit. Your focus on political communication, as well as the changing way in which we communicate, could not meet my needs any better. As a veteran of Capitol Hill and the non-profit sector, I have seen first hand the benefit that coordinated technology driven campaigns have on the greater good.

The courses Hopkins offers, especially within the Political Communication and Public Relations concentration, will serve as the “communications” yin to my “technology” yang, providing me with the last piece of my career puzzle. In short, Hopkins offers the degree I want, on a timeline that I can work into my 60 hour work weeks. It is my first and last choice, and I am very excited about the possibility of joining your program.

And I should be excited ... now that I know what I want to do with my life, I can concentrate on actually doing it!