

introducing the contract for success



Back in the day... (the story goes), it was simple: you got a college education and there was a job and a career waiting for you on the other side. It was never really like that (sigh...) and it's certainly not like that today. So what can you do? How can you invest in your university education and really make it worthwhile? Consider committing yourself to the *LSA Contract for Success*, a collection of actions for which *you* can take responsibility, which will influence your success and your future right now.

Okay, so it's not a *real* contract. We can't exact a penalty if you fail to live up to your end of the bargain. It's a contract you make with yourself—and perhaps to those offering material and emotional support for your Michigan career. And while most of it seems like common sense—and a lot of it reflects things you're doing anyway—we want you to make it *intentional*, with a focus on developing your skills, and in the process developing the story of your career at Michigan. There's two parts:

ENGAGEMENT

- *Solid academic performance demonstrating an aptitude for learning in a rigorous environment.* Getting the grades at Michigan can sometimes be tough. But you know what you have to do: work hard and smart. The better you do academically the more options you'll have! Investigate the expectations for grade point averages in the fields that interest you. Understand the standards by which you will be measured, and commit to doing the kind of academic work that will get you there.
- *Involvement on or off campus.* Ironic as it seems in relation to the first piece of the contract, a 4.0 GPA—on its own—is one dimensional. If it is the only thing you have to share about your experience, well... it isn't enough. You may be super smart, but with no demonstrated aptitude for people or any interests or commitments outside the classroom, why would you be the type of person an organization would be seeking? That's not you. It can't be. So stretch yourself in other ways, through active involvement in one or more student organizations, volunteer experiences, or on-campus employment opportunities.
- *Take initiative...be a leader.* It's the difference between attending the rally and getting others to rally with you. Don't be Machiavellian about it, but budget your energy in such a way that you have time to really dig deep into one of your activities. Serve as a committee chair, a group leader, a peer tutor, a shift supervisor, a team captain... whatever it is, step up, take responsibility and make something happen. In other words, find communities that matter to you and contribute to them in meaningful ways!
- *Test your intellectual interests and abilities outside the classroom.* That means taking on a research or service-learning experience. Or an internship. Or an international experience... Push the edges of your classroom instruction, and then find all the possible connections.

- *Take your second (or third) language seriously.* Despite LSA's strong language-instruction capabilities, fourth semester proficiency still leaves room to get better! Find a way to make that happen. Whether it's a language table, a summer language intensive course, travel, or a conversation partner, gaining facility in other languages is a key part of your education, and in our increasingly global society, will really pay off down the road.
- *Commit to understanding at least one current issue that you care about.* Follow that issue on a regular basis. Develop the knowledge and skills to talk about it, intelligently and at length, with anyone you meet. In other words, make yourself expert at something! You'll be amazed at how interesting you will be!

SELF AWARENESS AND REFLECTION

You could read that list the same way that some people prepare themselves for college applications, treating it as a crude checklist. But you probably didn't do that the first time around, and in any case, you're older and wiser now. It's not enough to just *do* things; you have to understand why you've done them, and why they are personally meaningful to you. You need, in other words, to *practice* putting together your experiences to create your unique University of Michigan story. So the second part of the Contract is this: Anytime you find yourself engaged in one of the experiences listed above (and any other experiences as well!) commit yourself to asking *The Three Questions*. It doesn't take long:

- Through this experience, what have you *discovered* that you did not know before?
 - about yourself
 - about your interests
 - about your strengths
- What *impact* has this experience had on you? How has it *changed* you?
 - Your attitudes and beliefs
 - Your skills and abilities
 - Your plans and possibilities
- As a result of this experience, what have you *committed to* (or what will you commit to) as a next step?

Don't just hope things will work out for the best in four years. Have aspirations instead! Approach your Michigan career with *intention*, and the outlines of a plan will eventually become a clear roadmap. Your future success is not determined by your concentration choice. It's about who you want to become. It's about your skills and abilities. It's about the story you craft for yourself as the result of *your* choices. And in the end, it's about how well you understand just how cool your story is and how well you articulate it to others.

It's Your LSA Contract for Success!