

Question 1: Can you tell us a little bit about your journey (and where your headspace was at) from your Emory graduation to your current role?

Response: My journey is a little crazy between graduation and my current role as a Product Designer. If you're not familiar, a Product Designer essentially just works with Software Engineers, also User Experience Researchers, Product Managers to create products. And in my case, digital products like mobile apps, or even sites that you use, like Amazon, that are both enjoyable to use, but also very useful. During my time at Emory, I was a pre-med student. And I had taken all the classes that you take as a pre-med student, so biology, chemistry, organic chemistry, all of that. And during this time, I actually used my French classes because I double majored in French, really, as a creative escape. And I had actually started a YouTube channel during my senior year. So this was really my creative outlet. And I realized that I was both a very creative person and also a very analytical person and logical person, which was what made me interested in medicine to begin with. And unsure about really what I wanted to do after graduation now that I was doubting medicine, I decided to go abroad and I accepted a position to teach English in a really small elementary school in Paris for nine months. And this really gave me the opportunity to travel, perfect my French, and reflect on who I was—because I felt like I really didn't know that—and also the type of professional that I wanted to be. So during this teaching assistant position, I had a student who was actually hard of seeing and he used an app called Be My Eyes to literally be that—be his eyes—and for him to be able to identify different objects in class. And so I was so impressed by the app that I did some research about the type of people who create these kinds of apps. And I found that product designers were actually a really important driving force for not just this app, but also apps that we use all the time, like Spotify, Instagram, Facebook, that kind of stuff. So when I came back from France, I took some time to really network with other Product Designers, or UX Designers, through LinkedIn, and LinkedIn was a huge resource for me. So feeling more sure about taking this leap of faith, I decided to enroll in a boot camp for digital user experience design at General Assembly. And after about four months and a lot of hours of work and projects and networking, I graduated from the program this past December 2019 and began creating my portfolio, which is really just the Product Designers way of showcasing their work and their skill. And I first took the opportunity to work as a UX Designer at a startup. After about three months, I was able to... I felt like I had more experience and that's when I landed my first corporate job as a Product Designer on an e-commerce team at The Home Depot. So that's where I am now. And yeah, that's where I started.

Question 2: Reflecting on your journey from graduation to now, what were things that were unplanned/unexpected but meaningful to your growth?

Response: The first thing that comes to mind is not getting my dream job right after graduating from the user experience design boot camp. So to be quite honest, I was not super excited to work at this tiny startup that I had accepted the role in as a UX Designer. But because I was the only UX Designer on this startup team, I really had to wear so many different hats and take on responsibilities that I definitely would not have learned in another type of work environment. So because I was the only UX Designer, I was doing things that most UX Designers don't have to do. So I had to learn a lot about the role of Product Managers, a little bit about coding, software engineering. And because of this experience, it

made me so much more competitive when I applied to a corporate job that was a little bit more advanced. And when I was interviewing, they were actually very impressed.

And then I guess the second one, which is very relevant to a lot of people right now, is COVID. COVID-19 obviously is not a good thing, but because of this unexpected event that no one really imagined would happen and affect us how it has, it really just encouraged me to slow down and focus on practicing some really important hard skills. So for UX design, this was learning to use other design software like Adobe XD and get more skilled at that. And it was something that I was honestly putting off. But because of COVID, I had so much more time. And also a lot of events that were in San Francisco. Before that, I was like, *Oh, man, I wish I could travel to San Francisco and go to this event.* I could now go to because it was virtual. So I really took advantage of that and just went to as many events that I could possibly go to. Yeah, those are the two main things that definitely were unexpected, but very important.

Question 3: What advice do you have for your younger self?

Response: A piece of advice I would give to myself is to really just trust the process. That's very cheesy, but it's very true. It's like, there's always a time for everything. And if you are going into a new career, or you're, you know, you're taking a leap of faith, you're gonna get a lot of no's. Like, I got a lot of rejections, a lot of people saying I need more experience. And then it's that vicious cycle of like *I can't get experience if I don't have experience* type of thing. But your time will come. And as long as you are really self-aware and making the necessary improvements that you need to make, whether that's improving your portfolio, changing your resume, networking a little bit more. Like I did go to a boot camp, if that fits you. I think that as long as you're doing that and you're continuously improving that your time is going to come. And it's just like, you just can't give up. You know, it's like you have to keep going. And if it's really something that you want to do, it's going to happen for you. You just have to, you know, trust that it's going to happen and work hard at the same time.

Something else I'd recommend to someone who is looking to change careers, especially post-graduation from Emory, is to definitely seek out other Emory alumni. LinkedIn is an amazing resource, as I'm sure a lot of students from Emory already use, but really just do more than just update your profile on there. Reach out to people, make one-on-one coffee dates with people to chat about your career change or your current career or any questions that you have. Even if you've already landed the job that you want, I think you should still continue to grow your network because you never know who's gonna be able to help you out, who's going to give you that one piece of advice that's going to change everything for you, you know. So definitely use Emory alumni as a resource. And seek them out because when someone sees that you went to Emory and they went to Emory, they're very likely to be willing to help you out or have a chat with you.