

8-2 Final Project: Professional Reflection

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When looking back at the process of this final project, I have a couple of years and a variety of classes on which to reflect. The culmination of classwork focusing on typography, print layouts, digital and web design, and color theory (to name a few), resulted in both print and digital portfolios as well as an entire website dedicated to my work. However, the true outcome of this capstone project was combining and showcasing such varied work and skills in a cohesive, fun, and exciting way. It was a delicate balance making sure my brand identity stood out versus just blended in (Kimbarovsky, 2022), while also ensuring each piece from my portfolio was able to tell its own story.

Choosing which design pieces to include in my portfolio did end up being an unforeseen obstacle at the beginning of this capstone project. I wanted my work to show that I could use different software and tools to create a variety of media that fit the needs of the client (Taylor, 2012), and I ultimately wanted my portfolio to show I enjoy the branding aspects of graphic design, but I had some pieces that I felt would distract from those objectives. It was hard to leave some designs out even though they were ones of which I was proud, either because it felt redundant next to other designs, or veered my portfolio too far away from showing my strengths and interest in branding. I did make sure a few designs showed a range of skills outside of branding, but for the most part I wanted to keep the “story” of my portfolio interconnected. When deciding the order of my portfolio, I made sure to place any of the pieces that were not necessarily branding examples in the middle of the sequence. It was an unexpected surprise at the end of the process to see that everything did fit together well and still told the story of my time in school in a way that best represents my skills and interests.

An identified strength and problem I encountered while completing this capstone project was while I was gathering the ideation/inspiration annotations of my portfolio. As a strength, I

could see evidence of what Lupton described as “a period of playful, open-ended study” (2011) on many of my projects. I saw that on the projects for which I felt the most pride, I had an abundance of examples of what had inspired me, and my passion was evident in not only the process but in the final product as well. On the other side of that coin, it was a problem that I could tell the projects for which I was not as excited because I greatly lacked any evidence of inspiration or development of ideas. I know that in the future, my level of excitement will vary depending on the project but completing my capstone project helped me see where I could better channel the strengths I do have during the ideation/inspiration phase to make sure every design is inspired and shows my passion for creating and providing a finish product of which I am proud.

This capstone project will be useful in the job market since I feel like it showcases the skills I acquired in my classes as well as effectively markets myself and my brand. I worked hard to make my branding representative of my personality, interests, and aesthetic and took to heart that “a successful brand identity is one of the company’s most valuable assets” (Kimbarovsky, 2022). Both my print and web-based portfolio are products that I am proud to put out into the job market and hope I can continue to add to them in a way that only enhances my ability to be hired for the jobs I seek. One of the only things I would change or do differently to make the experience of creating the capstone project of my portfolio better is related to the discussion of not doing enough research and discovery to gain inspiration for my designs. I would want to have always spent substantial time gathering information and inspiration before jumping into a project, only to finish it as quickly as I could.

I received very valuable feedback on my print-ready portfolio and portfolio website, and I chose to incorporate much of it into those projects. Some examples include feedback on how the typography could be more fun and feel better connected to the rest of the design on my magazine

ad or adjusting the sizing on some designs as well as placing them in mockups to show context. I even received feedback on the smallest details like adjusting stroke size and kerning, but when incorporated, those small changes made big differences. Another useful piece of feedback I received reinforced Kimbarovsky describing a brand as being “the total of [the] customers’ and customers’ prospects’ experience with [the] business” (2012). It was suggested I add more calls-to-action to a brand collage, like a website or social media handle, to engage the audience and drive them to discover more about the brand. I added those elements as well as a QR code and not only did those additions create more opportunities for prospects to interact with the business, but they also helped to balance and finalize the collage in a way it had not been previously. I am also a fan of using white/negative space to benefit the design and guide the viewer’s eye to important information or visuals, but I received much appreciated feedback on some pieces where the white space had become more of a distraction than an enhancement and I was able to adjust those designs to have the impact I initially had hoped to have. Applying these critiques helped me to communicate even further through my designs how my ideas can come to life (Lupton, 2011).

When looking back on all the invaluable feedback I received throughout the process of creating my capstone project, collaboration was an important factor regarding the improvement of my works. Being able to have multiple pairs of eyes look at my designs and either confirm that I had successfully accomplished what I had intended to do, or suggest things I could adjust, add to, or remove from my designs to better accomplish my design goals, was instrumental in my producing print-ready and web portfolios I could use for job applications. Also having the opportunity to see how other people offered critique and on what design elements they focused not only informed me on how I could better review and offer feedback on the work of my peers

but gave me insight into the questions I could ask myself while creating my designs and using my creativity and skills to cater to the needs of the audience (Taylor, 2012).

I feel like there are many ways to apply what I have learned to my future professional life but continuing to seek out opportunities to have my peers review my work is a skill I hope to always carry with me. Having people who are not so emotionally invested in a project and who have different perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds help to make my work well-rounded. This will also help make sure I am being ethical and culturally appropriate in my work. Many professors have taught us how to effectively defend our creative decisions, but to also accept feedback graciously and to not take it personally. Applying what I learned about the importance of feedback will also help me in my goals for my professional life. I would love to work on developing brand identities for small businesses and I know that being able to solicit and accept feedback from peers and clients will help me grow and stand out as a collaborative partner. Another goal I have for my professional life is to make sure that, whatever that life may be, it allows for my own personal creative growth outside of the work week. I saw throughout my time in school that I did much better at my assignments when I had opportunities to be creative outside of the dictated directives and deadlines. Much like Taylor mentioned, “there will always be opportunities to connect in an informal setting” (2012), and I take that to mean that development and growth can also happen outside of the office.

Along those lines, I know that finding balance and mitigating creative burnout are all skills and abilities I worked to have while in school and that will also need to be displayed professionally. I also feel that a dispositional requirement I tried to display during school was always being open to feedback and open to trying new things (even if they do not work out in the end). This will also need to be exhibited when working with peers and clients in the future. I

expect to build and apply these skills moving forward by making sure I am building trust with those with whom I am collaborating and show them through my actions that their feedback is important to me and can be seen in the drafts I present. I also want to continue building creative relationships outside of the professional workspace. I can seek out peers and mentors who can help me hone my technical and interpersonal skills, and in turn, I hope to help build and apply my skills of supporting others in their creative endeavors.

References

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