

# Navigating what's next with your Arts degree

Alicia Flatt  
Career Advisor, UG Students  
Centre for Career Development



UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**

Centre for Career  
Development

UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**



# Who am I?

## Alicia Flatt – Career Advisor

(she/her)

- Bachelor of Arts: Psychology, History, and Theatre Arts
- Career Development Practitioner diploma
- Master of Arts in Higher Education



Residence Life and custodian -> Financial Aid officer -> Transfer Credit Officer ->  
Admissions Coordinator

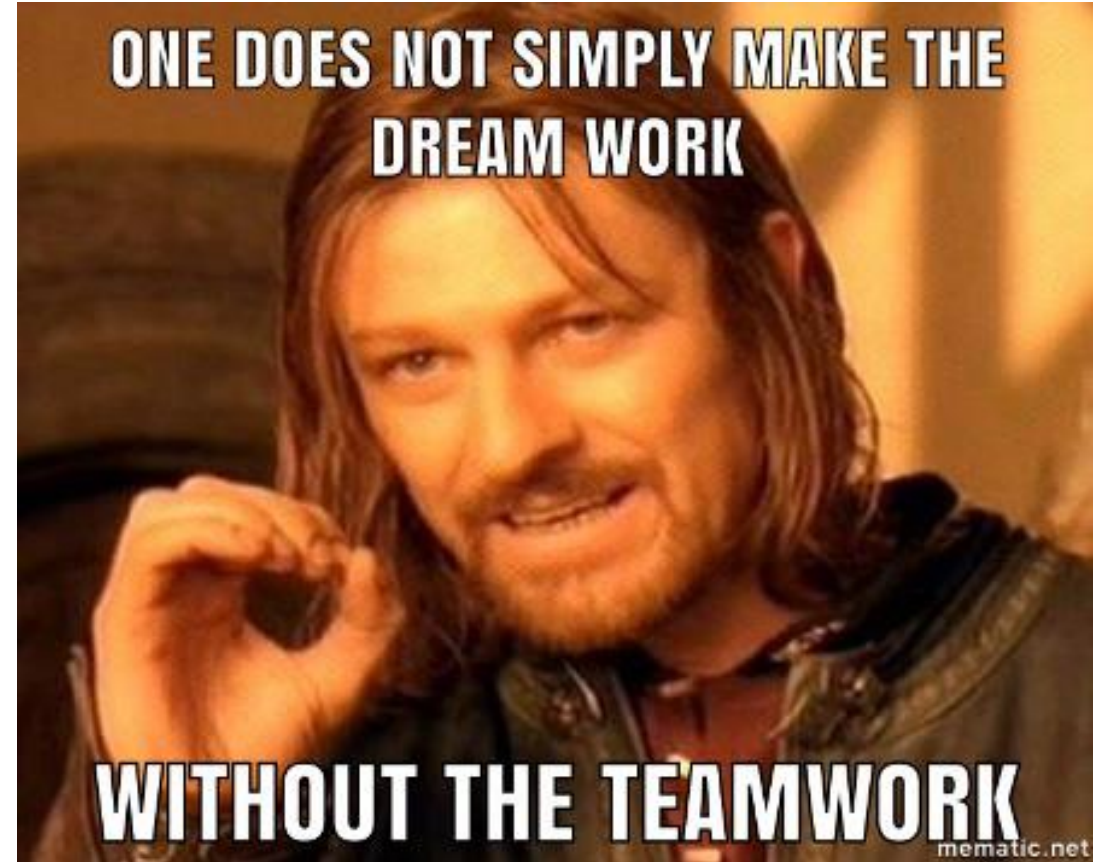
# Territorial Acknowledgement

*The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is co-ordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.*



# What to expect during this workshop

- How to participate
  - Take what works; leave what doesn't
  - Treat each other with kindness & respect
- Please have a piece of paper & a writing tool ready at hand





# **WHAT ARE YOU HOPING THIS WORKSHOP COVERS TODAY?**

# Agenda

- Reframing 'What's next with your Arts Degree'
- Learn a way to think through career options: Design Thinking
  - Ideating
  - Prototyping
  - Testing

# REFRAMING 'WHAT'S NEXT WITH YOUR ARTS DEGREE'



UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**

Centre for Career  
Development

PRESENTATION TITLE

10

# What does the word 'career' mean?

- **Traditional View:** A career is a permanent profession aligned with your education, like a degree in medicine. This makes job searches for arts students challenging.
- **Modern Reality:** AI and pandemic changes mean 1 in 16 workers will switch occupations by 2030. Employers now focus on "the sense of purpose work provides" (McKinsey) and reskilling.
- **New Perspective:** We can't expect a single, unchanging career path. "Career" comes from words meaning "wheeled vehicle." Your career is the vehicle, not the destination.



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)





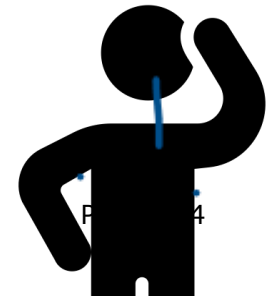
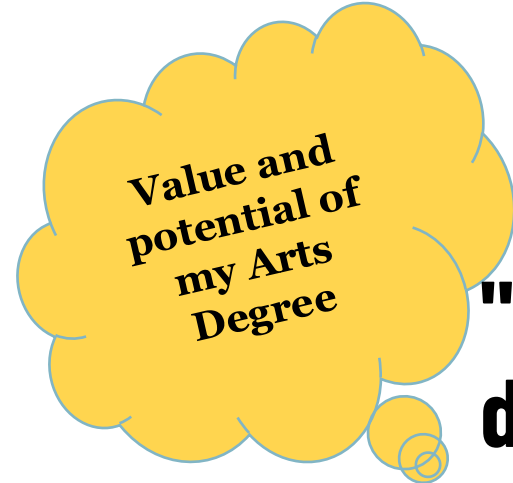
~~“What do I want to be?”~~

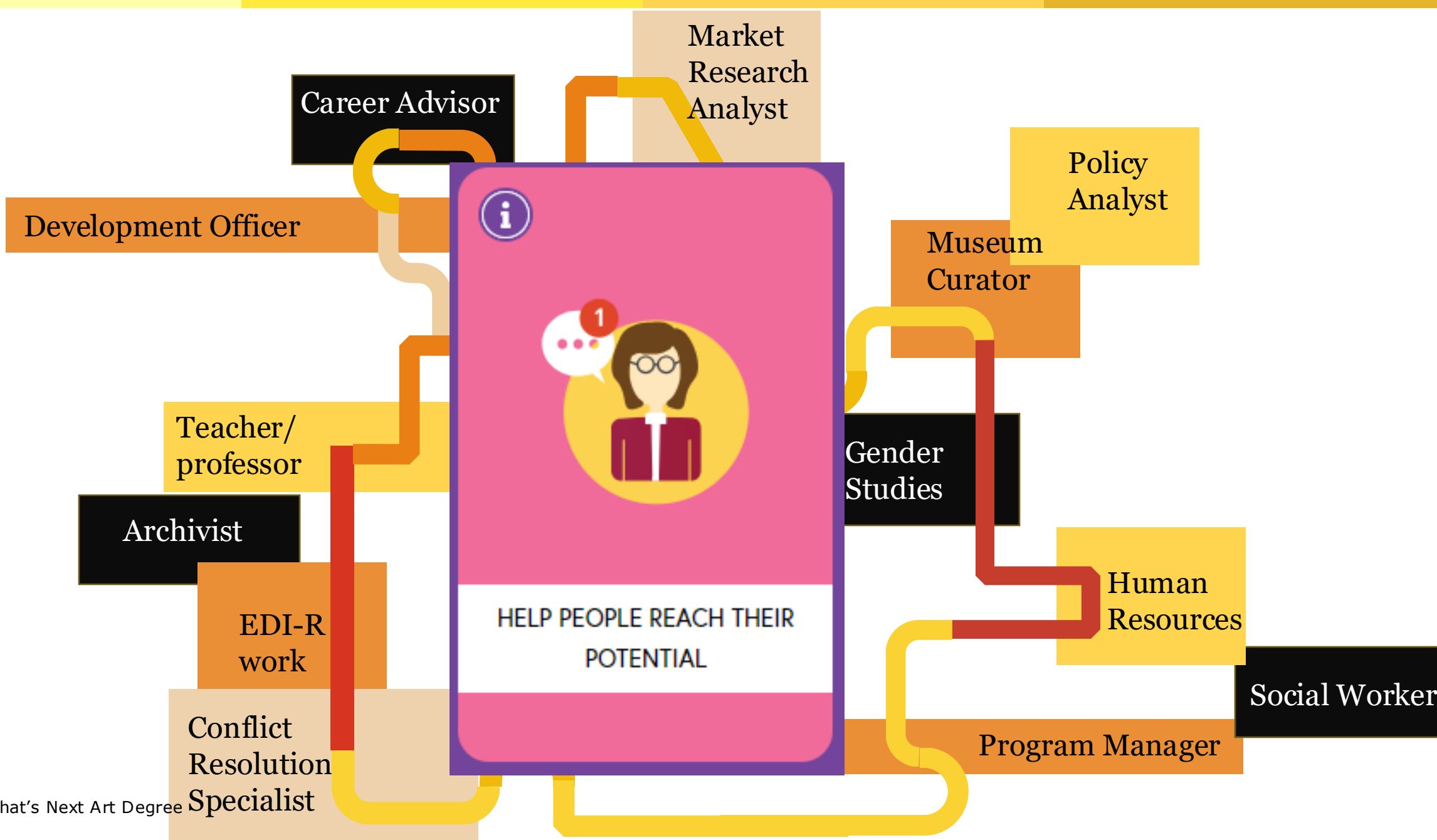


“What problems do I want to solve?”

&

“What skills do I have/need to develop?”





HELP PEOPLE REACH THEIR POTENTIAL

Work #1: Community Health Worker

Work #2a: Social Worker

Learning #2: Non-profit management certificate

Work #4: Public Policy Analyst

Work #5: Policy Analyst

Arts Honours, Sociology

Learning #1: Master's in Social Work (MSW)

Work #2b: Gender Studies Specialist

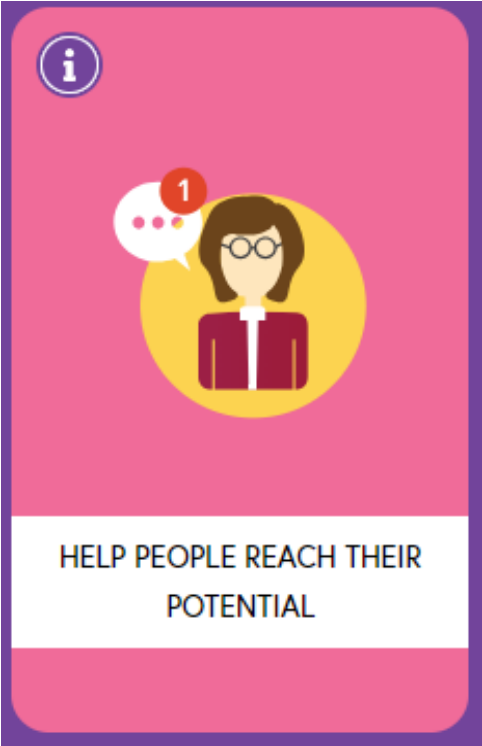
Work #3: Non-profit Program manager

Learning #3: PhD in public policy

# What problems do I want to solve?



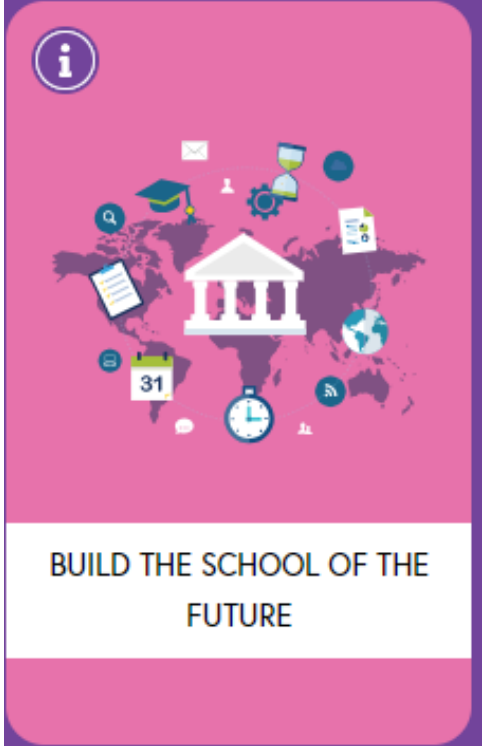
DISTRIBUTE THE WEALTH



HELP PEOPLE REACH THEIR POTENTIAL



IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH



BUILD THE SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE

Image Credits: <https://mysparkpath.com/>

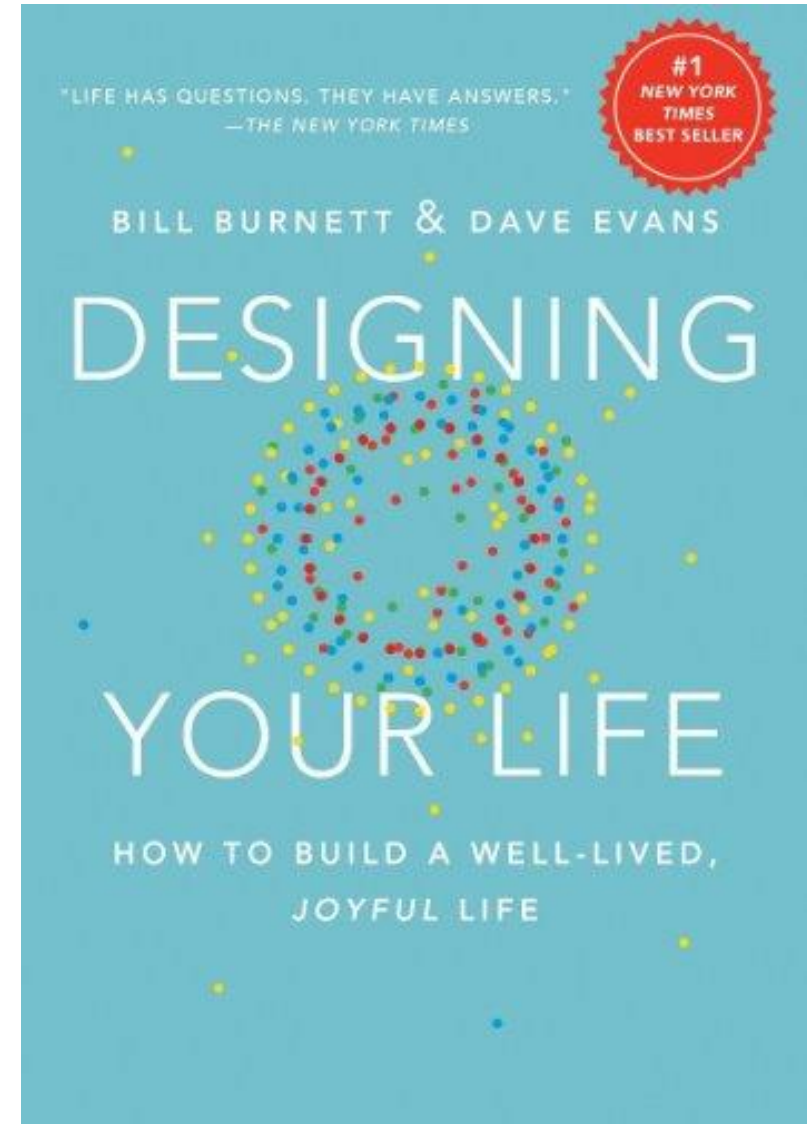


# HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Enter: Life Design

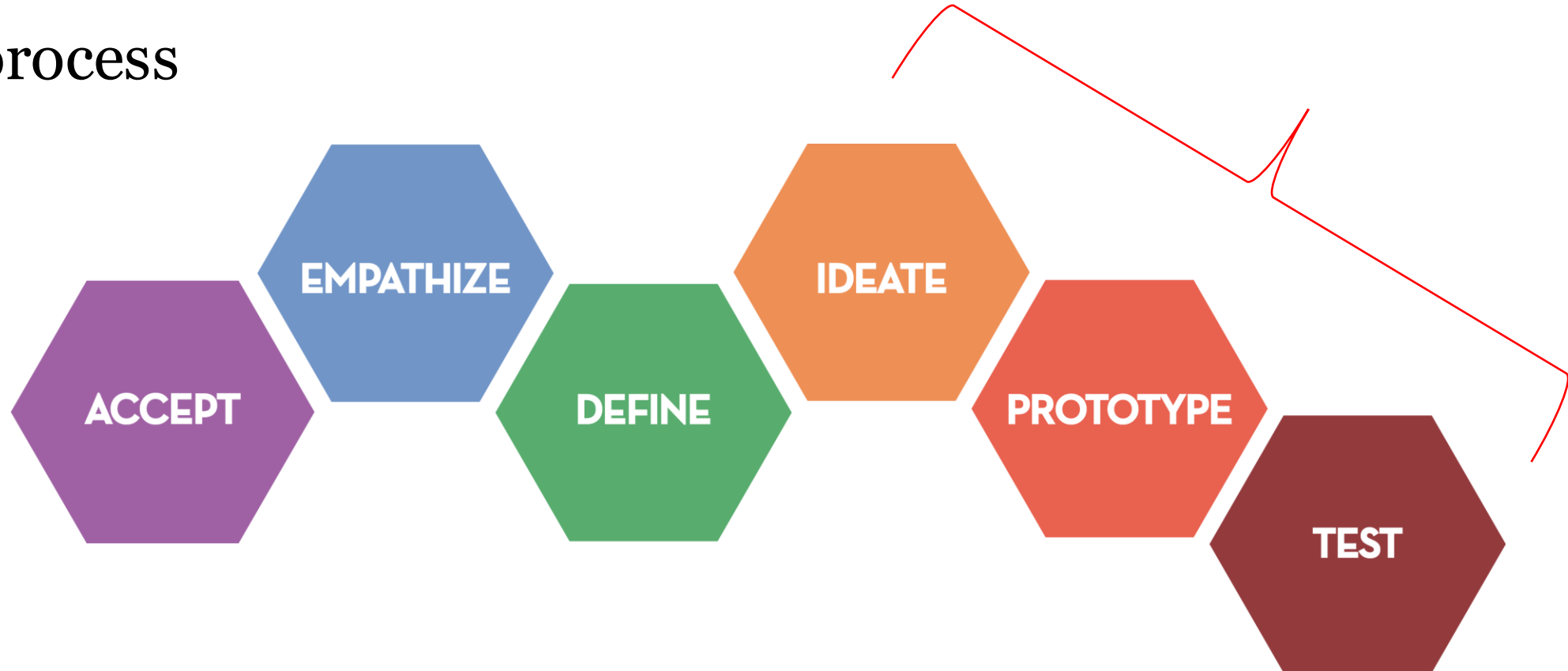
# Life Design

- An approach to problem-solving that applies design thinking to navigate change and transition throughout life
- Popularized by Stanford professors Bill Burnett and Dave Evans: *Designing Your Life*



# DESIGN THINKING

The process



*“What should I do after graduation?”*

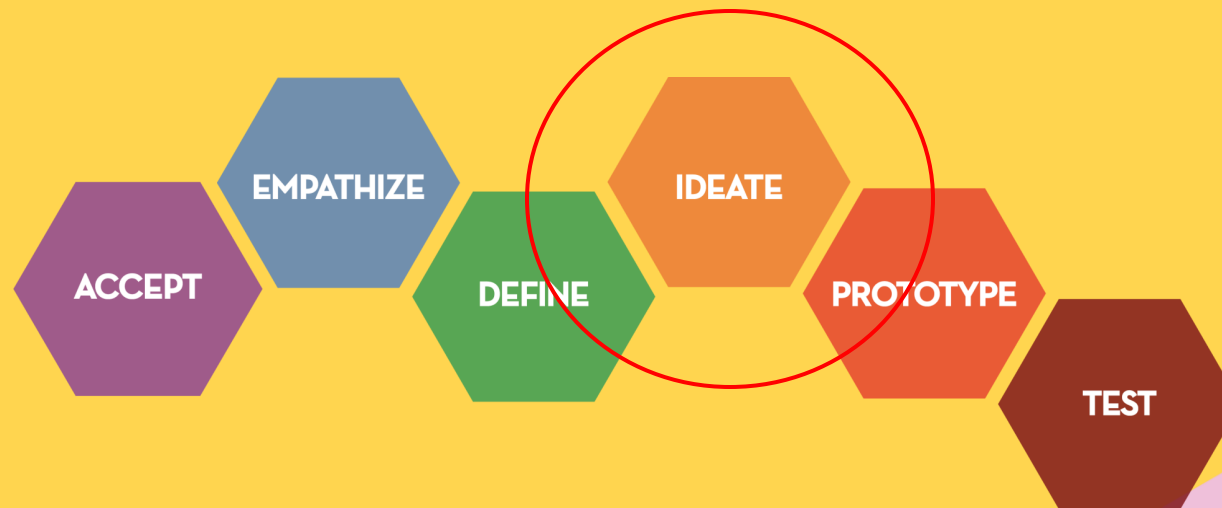
*“How can I help [insert problem/challenge]?”*



UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**

Centre for Career  
Development

# IDEATION





# What is ideation?

- Ideation is a creative process where designers generate ideas in sessions (e.g., mind-mapping, brainstorming).
- The goal is to stimulate divergent, non-linear association free from judgement
- Go for quantity over quality

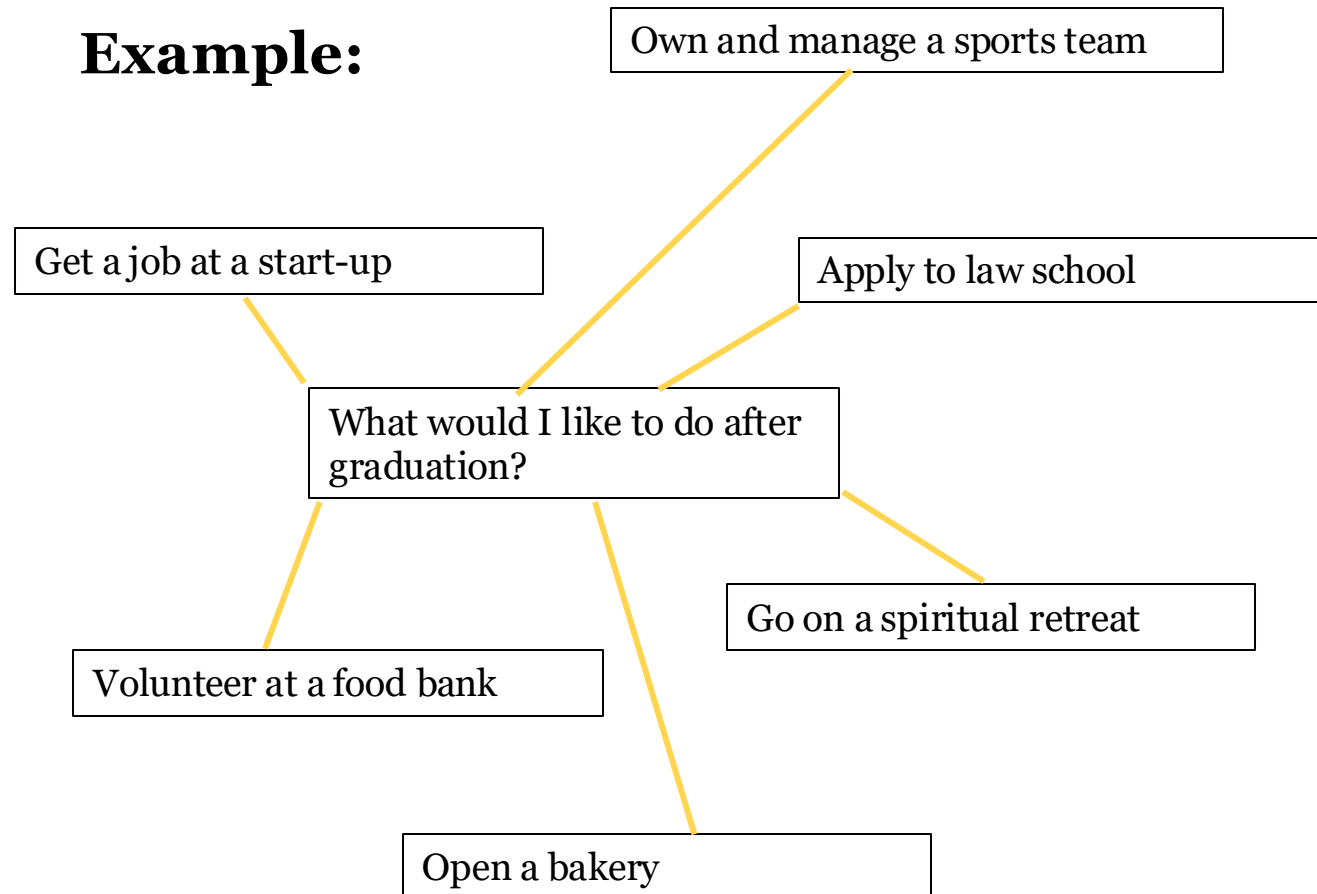


# ACTIVITY: Mind-Mapping (3 mins)

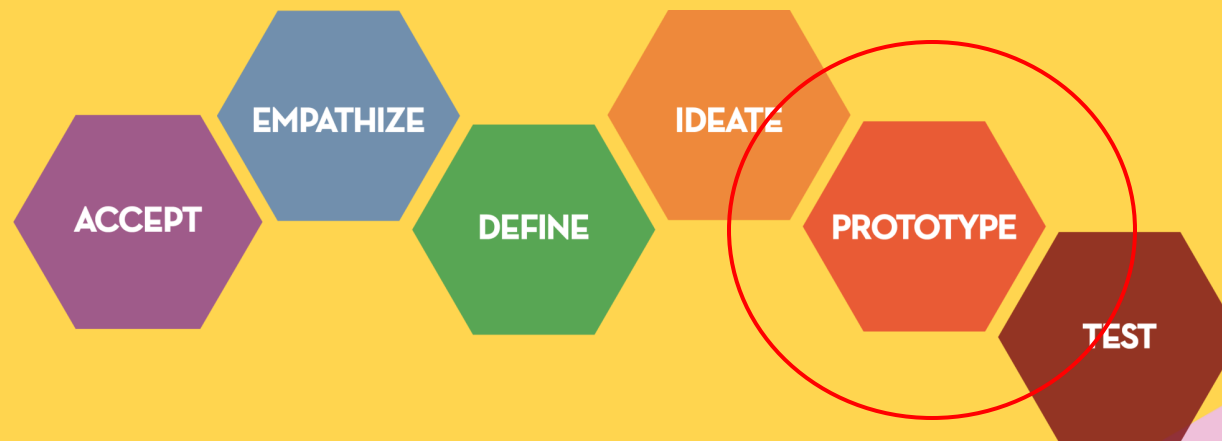
Jot down as many answers as possible to the question: "What would I like to do after graduation?"

- *What's the most realistic version of your post-graduation life?*
- *What would you do if your Plan A was no longer possible?*
- *What would you do if resources or external pressures were not a factor?*

## Example:



# PROTOTYPING



## PROTOTYPING, DEFINED

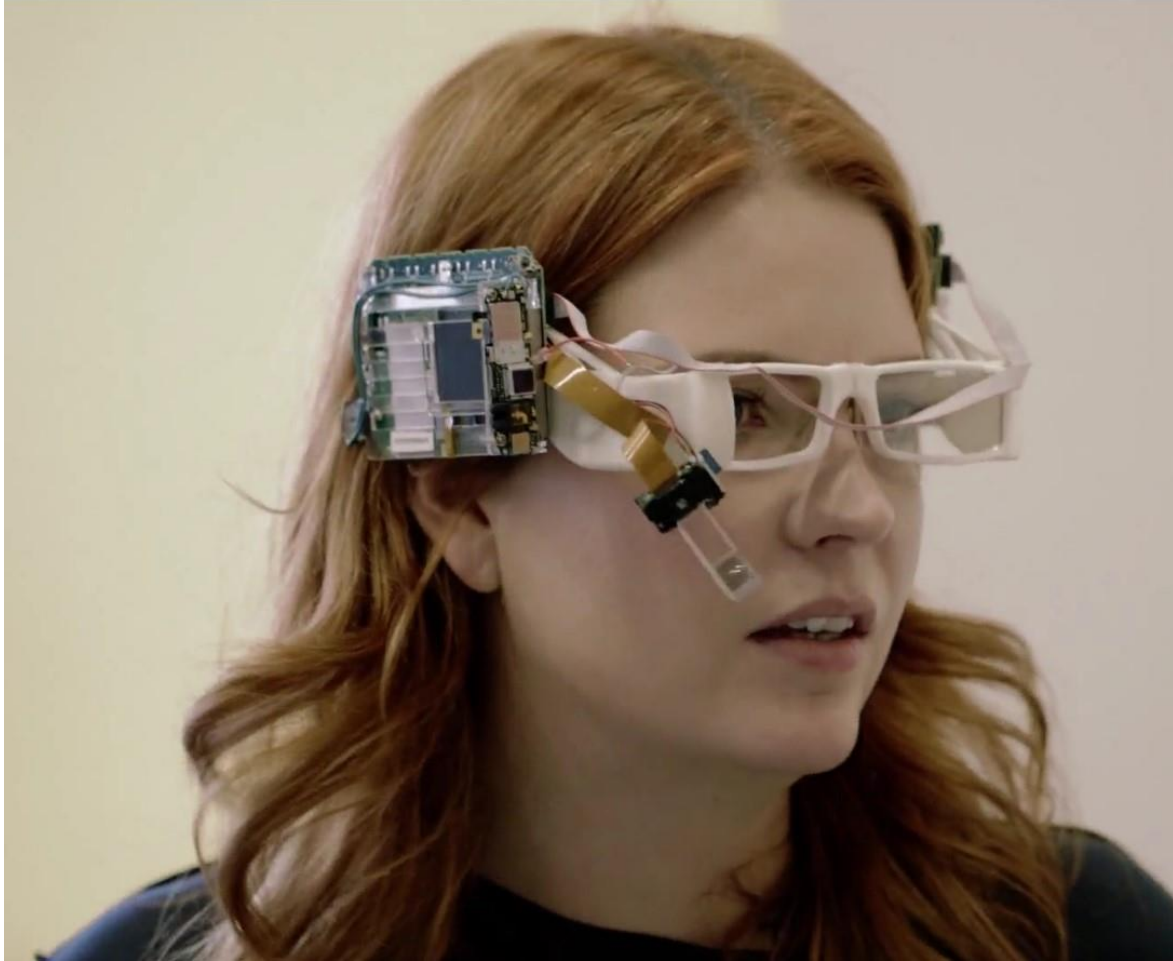
---

"When we say prototyping, we ask the question:  
'What would it be like if I tried this possible future in some  
small and easy to execute way?'"

---

- **BILL BURNETT**

# PROTOTYPE DESIGN



A good prototype is:

- Cheap
- Quick
- Accessible

Example:

- Early Google Glass prototype

Photo credit: [The Verge](#)

Life After Graduation

PAGE 28



UNIVERSITY OF  
**WATERLOO**

Centre for Career  
Development

# WHY PROTOTYPE?



## Prototype to:

- Reduce risk
- Expose assumptions
- Engage others with your ideas
- Learn and sneak up on your future

# PROTOTYPE: CONVERSATIONS

- Talk to someone living the future you are curious about to get their story. Everyone has a story that can change your life.
- Conversations = informational interviews



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

# PROTOTYPE: EXPERIENCES



- Get a felt sense before investing more time and resources
- Examples:
  - Internships
  - Sitting in on classes
  - Shadowing someone for a day
  - Volunteering

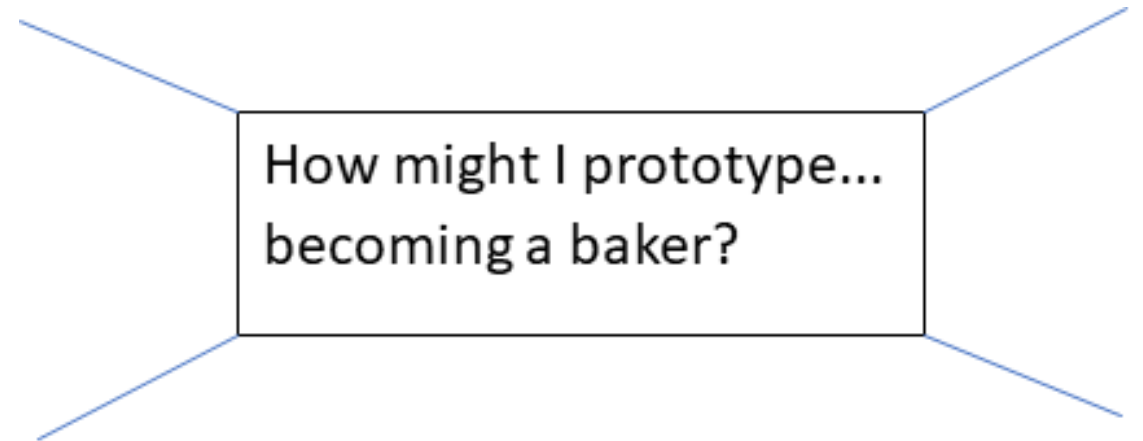


# ACTIVITY: PROTOTYPING (30 seconds)

**Step one:** In the middle of a piece of paper, finish this question using your top choice from activity #1:

- "How might I prototype... [future scenario]"

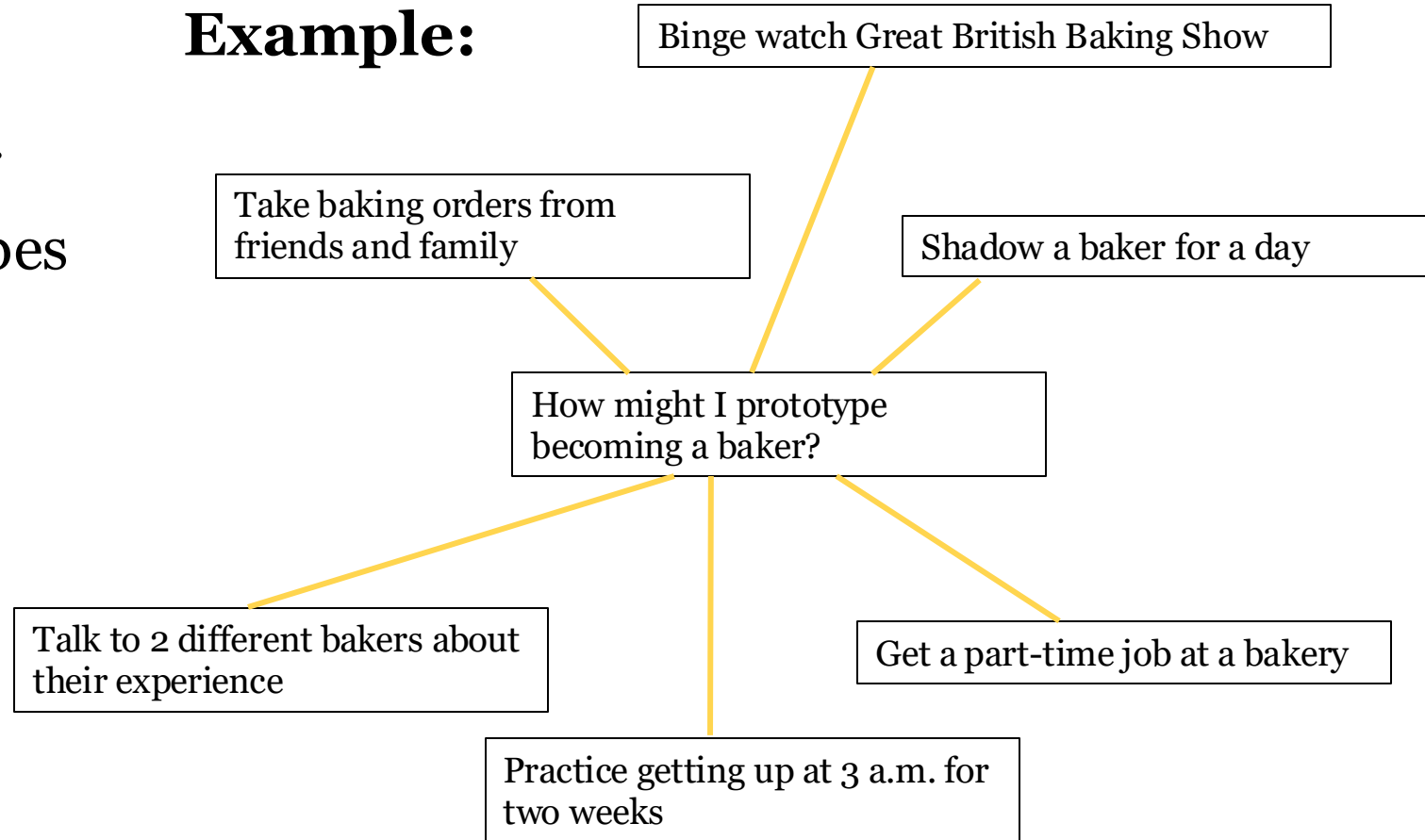
**Example:**



# ACTIVITY: PROTOTYPING (1 min)

**Step two:** On the same piece of paper, identify as many prototypes as you can to answer your question.

## Example:



# RULES FOR BRAINSTORMING

- Defer judgement
- Go for volume
- Build on the ideas of others
- Encourage weird ideas



# GROUP BRAINSTORM

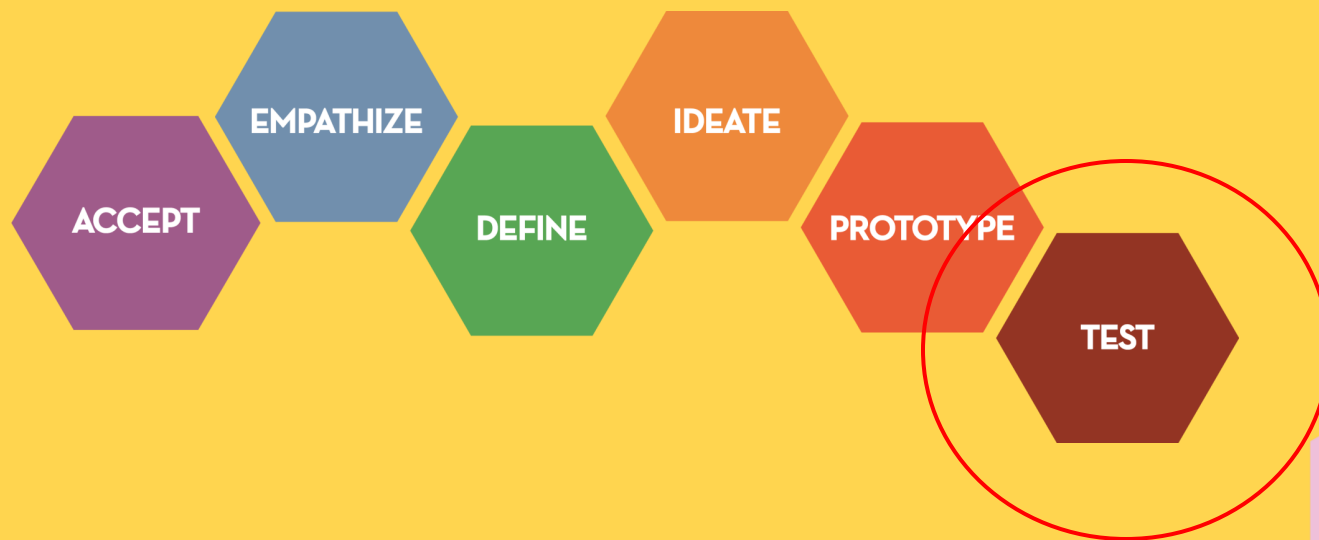
## Brainstorm more prototypes in a group!

- Let's support each other. Would someone volunteer to go first?
- Type in the chat “How might I prototype \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Feel free to come off mute to share what you have already brainstormed.
- Group – Let's brainstorm MORE ideas for other potential prototypes, while Partner #1 writes them down. (2 mins)
- Switch!

# GROUP BRAINSTORM DEBRIEF

Were you able to identify new prototypes? How many?

# TESTING



## TESTING A PROTOTYPE (1 MIN)

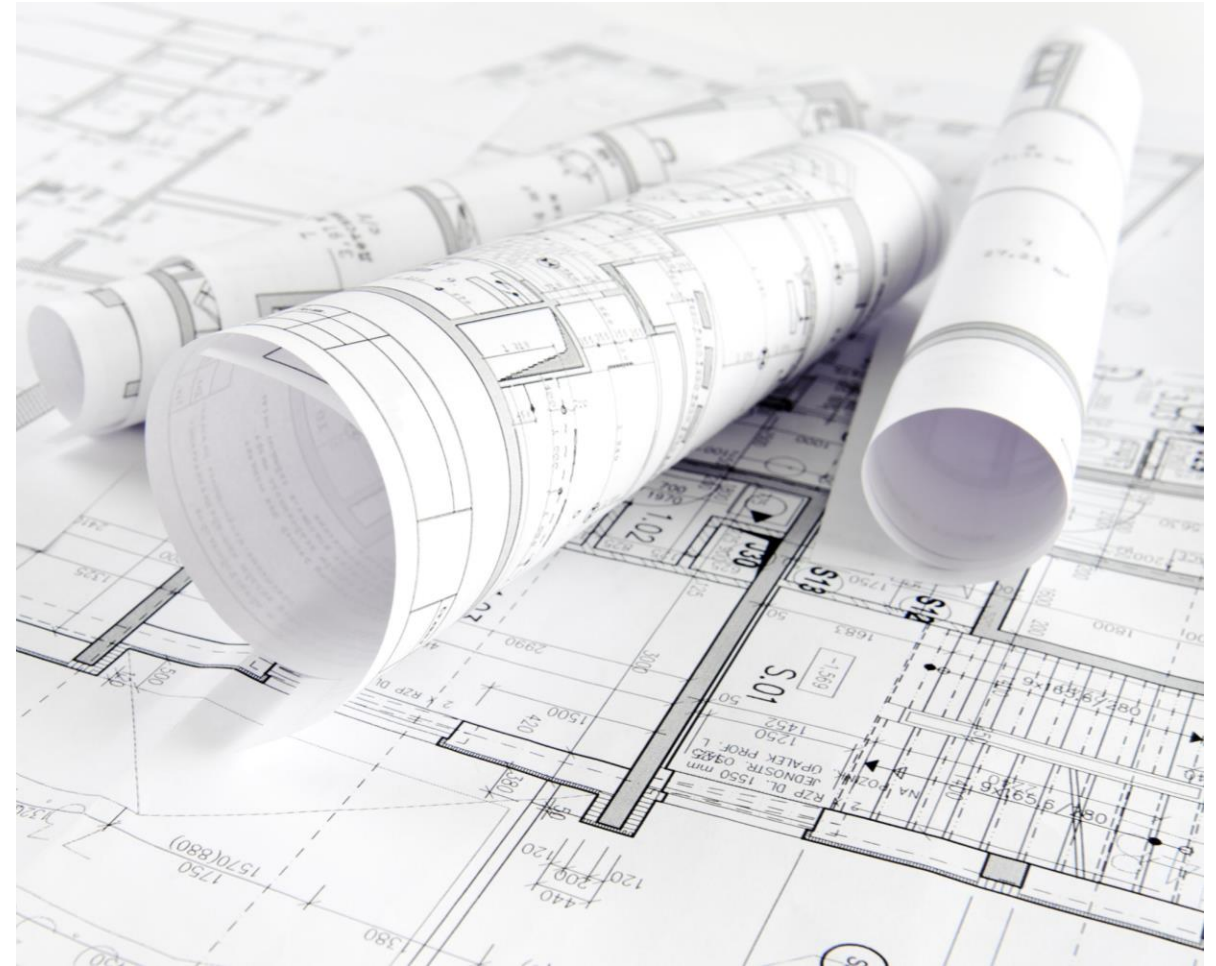
---

What prototype can you test in the next two weeks for less than \$20?

---

# WHAT'S NEXT?

- The point of experimenting is to learn what works and what doesn't
- Use the info from one prototype to design the next prototype
- Stuck? Refer back to your list of prototypes or brainstorm more!
- Life design is an iterative process





# TAKEAWAYS

# LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

## Life design techniques for navigating difficult decisions:

- When in doubt, act!
- Mind-mapping can help to think beyond the binary
- Ask yourself: How might I prototype this?
- Brainstorm ideas with family & friends (or your career advisor!)
- Reach out to the CCD for an appt!

# Bonus!

- If you are interested in continuing this conversation 1-1 with a Career Advisor
- Step 1: Complete a short survey
- Step 2: Express interest in Career Planning Appointments



# CAREER ADVISING SUPPORTS

SUPPORT	HOW TO ACCESS	TOPICS
1:1 appointments & same-day drop-ins	Book online <a href="#">here</a>	Job Search Tactics Résumé Reviews
Workshop or Event	<a href="#">Register on WaterlooWorks</a>	Cover Letter Development Interview Prep Career Exploration
CareerHub Online	<a href="#">Login using WatIAM</a> to access resources and templates	





**QUESTIONS?**

# UNIVERSITY OF **WATERLOO**



**Centre for Career  
Development**