Graduation is coming up soon and you may not have a crystal clear idea of what you are doing afterwards. Your friends or family members may persistently ask you "what are you doing after graduation?" To make matters worse, it may appear that all of your friends have their lives completely figured out. This is not always the case, however, despite what it may look like; in fact, many graduating seniors feel similarly to you!

Common Themes with Graduating Seniors
- Fearing the unknown and being financially independent
- Unanticipated transitions like losing the structure of a student lifestyle, leaving behind friendships, and feeling pressured by expectations of post-grad life.

Graduation poses a very important developmental challenge for emerging adults, and it is not uncommon to feel overwhelmed or anxious about this next step. It is also not uncommon to not have everything figured out yet. Sometimes, post-graduation expectations of a financially stable, sustainable career does not immediately reach out to us.

The good news, however, is that there are steps you can take to ease these feelings of being overwhelmed or stressed out! We have outlined them in this pamphlet.

WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

SHORT TERM GOAL
Short term goals can help alleviate stress by prioritizing your immediate concerns. Identify those; maybe your immediate needs concern finances, saving up for graduate school, or developing professional skills or volunteer hours. Whatever they may be, focusing on a short term goal that satisfies these may clear up some of the unknowns of post-graduation. This process may require you to accept lower-paying jobs, a job you don't necessarily love straight out of college, or to move home with family, but it does provide movement towards your LONG TERM goal by setting a foundation for the here and now.

LONG TERM GOAL
Set a long term goal and plan the steps necessary to reach this goal backward from the goal. For example, when do you think you'll be in the career you desire? What should you be doing the year prior to that? And the year before that? By planning your long-term goal backward, you may find yourself being more realistically with your time-frame and priorities. Remember to be patient with yourself in this process, and understand that sometimes feelings or plans may change. Additionally, establish a network with professionals in the career you are pursuing to help you jump-start your own path to success.
Don't be too hard on yourself.
Some students regard moving back home as a failure but there can be many benefits to moving back home as well. For example, moving back home to save money may be a great step towards your future goals. Use your time at home to reboot your routine.

Have a conversation with your family about what moving home will look like.
It's important to be on the same page as your family after having lived independently for so long. Discuss expectations about your financial contribution, your responsibilities at home, rules of the house and what your ideas are about the duration of your stay. Having talked about this sooner rather than later may save you from future conflicts.