Olivia Konys is a senior who is attending the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York.

Q) How did you first get interested in the graphic arts, or decide to major in graphic communications in school? *I was always interested in a variety of visual arts – photography, drawing, computer graphics and web design/programming at first – but I found that what interested me the most in each of these areas was being able to represent a story or experience in each. Now I am interested in editorial and web/app communication, and my background in each of these areas has helped me immensely. I can form a team and easily work with others in these areas to produce a wide variety of work and network at the same time.*

Q) Did you take any courses in high school that were related to graphic communications, or that prepared you for your planned career? *I was a member of my high school yearbook club for three years – my last year being the Editor in Chief of Design. I graduated from Fayetteville-Manlius High School, which has nearly 3,000 students and faculty, and produces a 400-page hardcover yearbook that wins awards for content, photography and design annually - all exclusively led by a team of about 20 high school students. My responsibilities as the design lead included directing the team with the chosen theme, choosing fonts, color themes, directing photography and journalism, and designing all layout templates for my yearbook team. I realized that if I could have a job position as a Creative Director or Art Director in the publishing and graphic arts industry for my career, that my career would never feel like work because it is what I organically love to do.*

Q) What course of studies are you taking now, or planning on taking, during the path of your school education? *As a senior, the courses that I have been most engaged with included Typography and Page Design and Magazine Publishing. These courses were intensive in page layout while using typography in both print and digital editions of publishing on the web. My professor for both classes always supported me as I approached the assignments and projects in a more design oriented way than my peers. This year, I was chosen by this professor to be the teaching assistant for both of these courses to share the importance of the relationship between skill and design.*

I have also taken courses outside of my publishing major, in the fine arts program for graphic design, and have vector art and work experiences now that I wouldn't have been able to achieve otherwise, such as creating app interfaces and logo designs.

Q) Is there a particular area of the graphic communications field that is of special interest to you as you consider where you want to focus your future career on? *I have wanted to work at a magazine company since I was 13 years old. Over 8 years, this is still my dream career, and I have focused on a career in design for both print, web and digital magazine editions.*

Looking to the Future

Q) What type of company would you like to work for after you graduate? *In the editorial industry, a magazine I would love most to design for would be a high-fashion or beauty lifestyle magazine, such as GQ, Vogue, or Cosmopolitan. I would love to find a niche in a role that is involved with other areas of a design agency or corporation, and be a person to influence designs through that relationship.*

Q) What do you think employers are looking for in today's workforce and current industry environment? *I think, to be a director or a dreamer for visual communication and graphic arts, you should be able to produce those ideas yourself and hold an educated conversation about that media. I've found that it is*

most valuable to learn skills in class, but you will ultimately succeed if you engage what you've learned outside of just course assignments and create passionate idea-like freelancing for yourself. If I think of an idea I know how to design – I'm going to make it.

Q) Is there anything that you have found to be particularly different from what you initially expected now that you've progressed through your education process? *I think that the level of expectation for creativity is underestimated by a lot of students. A class assignment can only become so creative, and reaching beyond that is what will set you apart from other future job applicants. People notice the difference between self-motivated projects and goals, compared to a project you were asked to do. Going above and beyond, at least for me, is just the default, and always more rewarding because I have a message to sell myself with.*

As far as skills go, in only four years of college I've seen technology and trends change many times. One year people look for photo-heavy ideas, the next the industry prefers an artist that can animate vector graphics. I think you need to be a bit hard on yourself in order to learn and keep pace with the expectations of the graphic industry, and tell yourself that there's always more you can (and will) have to do to have the highest quality of work possible.

Q) Have you changed your plans or ideas about what area or type of job you might like to have since you first considered the graphic communications field and began studying for a career in it? *I am fortunate to have found my niche in visual communication design and love of editorial design at a young age. I would recommend to people to stay knowledgeable about what niche they think they would pursue, and gain expertise as told by trends – I began with interest in editorial in print, and now have experience for editorial in website and variety of mobile app forms.*

As a less specific recommendation, if you find yourself gravitating toward another degree of study, but still have an interest in the graphic arts, you should still consider applying that topic of interest into the rapidly growing graphic arts field of mediums. It is a great way to start a conversation and earn an aesthetic around a hobby or interest you believe in, if you truly want to change that industry.

Q) Has being a recipient of a PGSF scholarship made a difference in your education, and if so, how? *My program at RIT is highly specific and ever-evolving. My program that begin as print management now has required web programming and augmented reality courses. The university of RIT itself also prides itself on the many majors here, and the support from PGSF has allowed me to take courses outside of my publishing program in add courses in the graphic design, packaging, advertising, computing sciences and hospitality majors – to name a few – and I've become a much more marketable student because of that.*

Q) Anything else that you would like to add? *I will be graduating this May 2016 and I am actively job seeking! Please visit my portfolio online at www.oliviakonys.com and feel free to contact me with any inquiries about my work, or open design production positions.*