

# STUDENT EMPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT

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I work for SpatialVis, an app that teaches students critical spatial visualization skills. There's an adult version (which is used in a UCSD engineering class and at community colleges) and a kids version as well. Sometimes we get to go to local elementary schools with our giant collection of iPads and let the students use the app, which is a lot of fun for both us and them. The spatial visualization skills our app teaches are correlated with higher GPAs and success in engineering fields, but these skills aren't taught in schools. Most children develop their spatial visualization skills by playing with toys such as LEGOs or certain video games. But building toys and video games are typically marketed

towards boys, which can leave girls at a disadvantage when it comes to engineering subjects. By working for SpatialVis, I'd like to think that in just a very small way, I'm helping to narrow that gap.

**Q:** What do you do and what makes your job unique? **A:** It's my job to ensure that the students using our app are learning spatial visualization skills and they're having the best possible experience while doing it. That means I design educational content, produce graphics, write surveys, examine survey data, analyze usage analytics, observe students using the app, and even interview them to learn about their overall experience. It's a unique blend of research and creative problem solving, which is why I love design.

**Q:** How did you find out about your current job? **A:** Prior to my current job, I'd had a number of miscellaneous jobs. I'd been a sales associate, ski technician, swim instructor, lifeguard, UCSD College Ambassador (tour guide), Sixth College Orientation leader, and a volunteer for a variety of organizations and non-profits. I found out about my current job through a friend I met at my pre-professional club, Design at UCSD. She and I had worked together before, so she knew I was reliable and could fill the role. Her boss was looking for someone who had experience with a particular software tool, and I happened to have experience using that tool, which I had learned on my own through watching YouTube tutorials and practicing. She recommended me for the job, I passed along my resume, and I got it without even interviewing. (Look at that, just another reason to join a pre-professional club and start networking!) A career counselor I've visited likes to remind me of the adage, "It's not what you know, it's who you know."

**Q:** What advice do you have for students looking for a job like yours? **A:** Seek out hands on projects that will give you real-world experience. In your coursework, take as many project-based courses as you can. Be proactive about not only finding opportunities, but creating opportunities. Right now I'm doing some pro-bono work for a company based in San Francisco called Instructables. Working for them has been a terrific experience because they have a mission and values that I really identify with, I get to work for a real client, and I'll have a portfolio piece that I can show off once I'm done. Most importantly, though, the only reason I got that opportunity was because I did some speculative work (sample work showing them what I could offer them) and reaching out to them directly — so be proactive!

**Q:** What advice would you like to give to students? **A:** Find and create opportunities to develop your career skills. UCSD is a research powerhouse. However, because of our emphasis on research and theory, students aren't always developing practical job skills to make them hireable. That means we have to go the extra mile to learn and develop those skills on our own. Doing that might entail taking online courses, community college classes, working an internship, watching YouTube tutorials, or learning from more experienced peers. On-campus jobs that might not directly relate to the field you want to go into can still teach you valuable soft skills. If there's a pre-professional UCSD student organization that aligns with your career goals, join it. There, you'll be able to learn new skills and start networking with peers entering the same field. For example (and just to give a shameless plug), if you're interested in user experience (UX) design, research, and/or design thinking, my org, Design at UCSD, puts on skill building workshops and talks from guests to help ease students into industry. Find us on Facebook and at <http://designatucsd.org/>.

*Do you have an awesome on-campus job? Do you love what you do and want to share your experiences with other students? If so, [contact us](#) and you may be spotlighted in future newsletters!*