

## Professional Goals

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For this statement of goals, I have to be honest; I have never been the type of person who spent any amount of time planning out my life or setting goals. I am incredibly envious of people who have always known exactly what they want in life. It is a wonderful thing when a five-year-old kid knows he wants to grow up to be a dentist, works hard towards that goal, and ultimately becomes a dentist. That has never been me.

Even when I matriculated at university, I had no idea what I wanted to study. Instead, I followed a path where the next step was always hidden from me before I embarked on it.

- I studied math because I was good at it.
- I found that I liked applied mathematics, so I studied physics.
- Then I found that my favorite branch of physics was astrophysics.

Along the way, I have always explored interests as they arose.

In the course of my life, I have found the time to also become a professional musician. Specifically, I play violin and viola in professional symphony orchestras. I also enjoy playing sports. Regardless of what I am doing, I always strive to be a strong competitor with a fierce desire to win.

Perhaps my life has been too broad. Maybe I have explored too many interests, rather than focusing on one topic to become an expert. That could be, but I would not change it. The variety that my life has afforded me is the essential quality I treasure.

In the chaotic pandemic world in which we currently reside, I find that long-term plans have been rendered moot. I find the notion of a five-year plan incomprehensible. Even a one-year plan is something I can hardly fathom at this point in my early-career. Instead, I try my best to live in the present; ignoring the past and the future as much as possible.

I realize that this is a non-answer. However, I feel that it is best to work hard and make the best use of every moment. If I follow every current project to its logical conclusion, I find that it naturally leads to the next important idea and forms into the next project. Thus, my future is not written, nor is it closed off; I am able to confidently continue along my path (even if I don't know where it will lead).

Also, I feel this keeps me open to new ideas and opportunities that arise. If instead I had my head down and was solely following a plan, I might miss out on important opportunities. That is the problem with with plans. Even well-thought-out plans cannot succeed if they remain rigid; only perfect prescience could create on an unassailable plan.

At this time in my early-career, I have experienced one year of pure teaching, followed by five-plus years of pure research. Having experienced each in isolation, I now desired to teach and research simultaneously. Moreover, I desire the synergy of teaching and research that is created by involving students in my research. Most of all, I want to find a permanent position where I can truly live in the moment and not have to worry about my future anymore.