



Undecided About Your Major?

Questions to ask yourself:

- What majors am I considering or have I eliminated?
 - Why am I undecided? Too many options? Not enough information?
 - How undecided am I? Am I deciding between 2 alternatives or completely undecided?
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It's not always easy to figure out where to start as you explore majors, academic goals, and career plans. Choosing a college major and directing yourself toward a perspective career can be stressful. You might feel pressure to make the right decision and/or feel overwhelmed by the number of options from which to choose from. You may feel uncertain about your intended major for a variety of reasons:

- You have interests in a variety of subjects (an indication that you have a broad range of interests and a high level of motivation to learn about different subject areas)
- You prefer to gather more information before making any commitments or decisions (you have some ideas but want to explore them and keep your options open)
- You have yet to gain a solid understanding of what your skills, interests, and values are and how this information fits into the decision-making process
- You have yet to experience the variety of subjects or fields of study that are available to you through the college curriculum

Possible first steps toward choosing an academic/career path include:

- **Talking with a Career Advisor:** A Career Advisor can assist you in exploring “best fit” fields of study based on your interests, skills, and values. Career Advisors can also help you identify why you are undecided as well as suggest appropriate resources.

To schedule an appointment with a Career Advisor, call Career Services at 860-768-4287 or stop in the Career Services Office located in GSU, Room 309.

- **Conducting independent exploration in consultation with a Career Advisor:** Once you have identified appropriate academic options, Career Advisors are available to work with you through your next steps in connecting your academic options to potential career paths, in addition to learning more about the opportunities available in-and-outside of the classroom to build and develop your skills.

It's important to determine the amount of time you are willing to invest in the exploration process so that you can work with your Career Advisor to develop a realistic academic plan.

College is a time to explore many interests. Choosing one subject to base your career on does not mean ignoring the others - it means relegating them to co-curricular activities. There are some careers that favor or even require one degree over another. If you're interested in a particular career find out which majors are required or recommended before you choose one.

How do I choose a major?

As a beginning college student, it is natural to feel somewhat uncertain about your intended major. Did you know that the majority of students reach a final decision about their major **during their college experience**, not before starting college? What is most important is **how** you decided on a major that is appropriate, attainable and realistic for you.

1. **Understanding Yourself:** exploring who you are and where you want to go are key steps in discovering a satisfying major and/or career. It's important that you focus on yourself first. Self-assessment involves uncovering and understanding your skills, interests, and values and connecting this information to potential academic options for further exploration.

Do you know what you want? What are you interested in? What are your actual and potential abilities? What is important to you? What are you capable of achieving? What kind of person do you wish to become?

2. **Becoming Aware of Your Options:** explore various majors through a variety of research methods – read course descriptions and major requirements in the Undergraduate Bulletin, talk to upperclassmen and/or faculty in the academic departments you are considering, participate in clubs/organizations that support your interest areas, “sit in” on or register for a course that interests you, use on-line and hardcover resources provided by the Career Services Office to explore career paths associated with majors you are currently considering.

Explore the full range of options and majors realistically available to you. Are you aware of the options that exist and the demands they will make? Will you like the courses offered? Are you motivated to complete them? Will you look forward to studying the subject matter?

3. **Developing Awareness of What Options Best Match Your Personal Abilities, Interests, and Values:** assess your level of motivation and your abilities needed to make informed, realistic decisions and a plan of action to implement them.

Have you explored and researched your options and assessed yourself against their academic requirements? Do you have the ability necessary to be successful within the program of study? Are you able to make connections between your personal abilities and those required by the field of study you're considering?

4. **Exploring Career Paths:** experience potential career paths through informational interviewing, job shadowing, internship and volunteer opportunities. Research careers related to what you've learned about yourself and identify any skills and/or experiences you would like to gain throughout your academic career that would best prepare you for your future options.

Develop an ability to see “the big picture”. What skills still need to be developed and how can you develop them? What opportunities or experiences would help prepare you for your chosen career path? What have you already achieved?

The following steps will provide you with an increased ability to make realistic choices based on sound information. There may be many choices in front of you that are suitable and possible. Your level of motivation, your abilities and personality will determine your potential to make the most of the different opportunities and experiences available to you.

RESEARCHING A MAJOR ? QUESTIONS TO ASK ?

The following is a list of questions and topics that you might wish to consider when speaking with Faculty regarding a specific major, minor or program – or consider talking to upperclassman within a major of interest. Keep in mind – these are **ONLY** suggestions! Be sure to come up with questions of your own.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

1. How would you describe what your field of study is all about?
2. What are the department's entry requirements to become a _____major?
3. Does the coursework involve mostly lecture, lab work, field experience, team projects, research and/or writing or some combination of these?
4. What types of programs, minors, and/or electives have students combined this major with?

SELF ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

1. What kinds of skills, abilities, personal qualities and interests should a student considering this field have?
2. What kinds of skills, abilities, and knowledge could a student expect to gain from this discipline?
3. Are there any courses or previous experiences that would help a student to determine whether to major in this field? What courses or experiences would you recommend for a student interested in further assessing this as a possible option?

CAREER INFORMATION

1. What opportunities exist, if any, for students to gain experience in your field of study – ie: internships?
2. What fields of graduate study have your students pursued? Is graduate school "required"?
3. What are the career options if I major in your field of study?
4. What have recent graduates in your major gone on to do?

FOLLOW-UP

1. Are there particular persons, places or references that a student can refer to for more information on the field of study and/or career options?
2. What are the department's entry requirements to become a _____major?
3. What advice would you give a first-year (undecided student) student interested in this major?