

CHOOSING A MAJOR

Make an Informed Decision



REASONS FOR CHOOSING A MAJOR

Here are just a few of the reasons students chose their particular undergraduate major:

- *Environmental Studies is of intense interest to me—it is my passion.*
- *As a pragmatist, I chose Exercise Science because it fulfills the requirements for graduate school.*
- *I chose an Accounting major because it provides a clearly defined career path.*
- *My Psychology major is steeped in research and provides a solid foundation for a number of careers.*

MAJOR DECISION MAKING

With a small investment of time researching both majors and careers, you will identify key factors to help determine best fit. With burgeoning information available online this can be confusing. Here are a few things to consider when faced with making an important decision such as what to major in and/or what career path to take:

- Become aware of your readiness to make a decision
- Inventory your individual characteristics and personality traits
- Identify areas where you have the most interest
- Obtain current information about identified alternatives
- Make tentative choices from among viable options
- Rank order your preferences
- Reality test beginning with your first preference

While it is unrealistic to know all of the alternatives and every possible outcome in advance, it is worth the effort to research options and give thought to the consequences rather than settling for a quick resolution to an important decision.

Identify your particular decision making difficulty. There are many reasons for having difficulty making major/career decisions. Career counseling can help to identify your specific difficulty. Research suggests at least ten difficulties:

1. Not willing to commit to a career decision—just not ready yet
2. Have difficulty making decisions in general
3. Unreal expectations of the career decision making process
4. Lack of information about how the decision making process actually works
5. Unaware of individual abilities, strengths, values
6. Lack concrete information about occupational options
7. Don't know how to obtain information: unsure about data bases, talking to professionals, credible websites
8. Unreliable information—too much data that is often contradictory
9. Internal conflicts with two or more viable options with incompatible factors
10. External conflicts i.e. disagreement with significant other—parent, friend, partner

CONNECT MAJORS TO CAREERS

Remember that choosing a major is different from selecting a career. Careers are not necessarily mapped directly to academic majors: any major can lead to a variety of careers. It is often practical experience gained through internships, research, employment, or volunteering that make one competitive for post-grad opportunities.

MAJOR RESOURCES

PACU-200 Career Exploration for the Undecided. This two credit course helps students connect majors to careers by conducting a self-study, researching occupations, considering fit, and developing an *Individual Career Plan*.

Career Advising. All Pacific University students are assigned both academic and career advisors to help select majors and make post-grad plans. Schedule an individual appointment with a career advisor at www.pacificu.edu/career/.

Visit Classes: In addition to taking a wide variety of classes, ask permission to visit a few classes after reviewing class descriptions in the catalog. This can save you time by determining early if the class aligns with your interests.

Upper-class Students. Students just a few years ahead of you have a great deal to say about their courses, requirements, and skills acquired in their major. Academic/career advisors can suggest students in various majors.

Senior Projects. Students present their highest level of work in their major during these high profile presentations. By attending several presentations you gain a window into the subtle and overt distinctions between different majors.

Catalog and Online Resources. The catalog contains valuable information on the sequence of course requirements for each major. Study the course descriptions since they provide important detail on the coursework. Also, peruse department website links featuring faculty quotes on “What I would say to a student considering this major.”

Handouts: Connecting Majors to Careers. These handouts relate majors at Pacific University to possible professions. They include information on skills, job titles, industries, job outlook, industries, settings, and salary.