

CHOOSING A MAJOR

Make an Informed Decision



REASONS FOR CHOOSING A MAJOR

Here are a few of the reasons students chose their particular 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 Education 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

Know yourself, know major requirements. With some time and intention, reflect on your strengths, interests, and values. In addition, study the course requirements of the different majors. Make a hypothesis of best fit then seek out evidence to prove or disprove it. When faced with making an important decisions such as choosing a major, consider the following:

- Can you identify and articulate your individual characteristics and personality traits?
- Do you have access to information on majors/careers of interest?
- Have you considered possible alternatives?
- What is the rank order of your preferences?
- Have you reality tested your preference i.e., visit a class, talk to major delegates, talk to faculty, job shadow?
- If you aren't quite ready to commit, have you considered making a tentative choice among viable options?

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 decision making challenges. There are many reasons behind difficulty making major/career decisions.

Research suggests most students will be undecided at one time or another for any number of reasons including:

- not ready to commit to a career decision—more exploration is needed
- having difficulty making decisions in general
- unfamiliar with the career decision making process
- unaware of individual attributes including abilities, strengths, values
- unsure how and where to obtain career information: talking to professionals, accessing credible websites
- confused by unreliable information—too much data that is often contradictory
- internal conflicts with two or more viable options with incompatible factors
- external conflict with significant other—parent, friend, partner

Career counseling can help students to identify and address specific career decision making difficulties.

CONNECT MAJORS TO CAREERS

Remember 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 CAREER 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 career advisors to help select majors, gain experience, 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/Alumni. People just ahead of you have a great deal to say about how they chose their major and related it to careers. Major Delegates nominated by faculty are a great resource as are alumni profiles via LinkedIn.

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.