REASONS FOR CHOOSING A MAJOR
Here are just a few possible reasons why students decide on a 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.

Whether a decision is motivated by passion, reason, security, or flexibility, choosing a major radically shapes your academic experience.

KNOW YOUR DECISION MAKING STYLE
With a small investment of time researching both majors and careers, the more likely you will arrive at a well-informed decision. Here are a few considerations when faced with important life decisions such as what to major in and what career path to pursue:

- Become aware of the need to make a decision.
- Be aware of your individual characteristics.
- 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.

Be aware of your decision making patterns. If you tend to make decisions too quickly, think about slowing down the process to ensure you have gathered enough information to make a sound decision. If you tend to put off making decisions—precisely because you want to make a good choice—think about gathering information in order to make a tentative decision. Or if you tend to postpone making decisions—even though you already have done the research, it might be time to do some reality checking on major possibilities. Whatever your decision making tendencies are, it is important to consider your unique style in the process. Most decisions will fall into one of these categories (Adapted from Take Hold of Your Future):

1) Decisions made with certainty—the alternatives and their outcomes are clearly known.
2) Decisions made with measured risk—the outcomes of each alternative are not totally known, but something is known about the probability.
3) Decisions with uncertainty—the outcomes of the alternatives are totally unknown.

CONNECT MAJORS TO POST-GRAD OPPORTUNITIES
Remember that choosing a major is different from selecting a career. Careers are not necessarily related directly to academic majors: any major can lead to a variety of careers. It is often coursework combined with practical experiences gained through internships, research, work, or service projects that makes one competitive for post-grad opportunities.

Graduate school or professional programs will often require coursework to be considered a competitive candidate. Identify target graduate programs and review their pre-requisites. This information can be incredibly useful, helping you decide upon a major that incorporates most if not all of the requisite coursework, positioning you for entry into the workplace or grad school.
CAREER/MAJOR DECISION MAKING DIFFICULTIES
Although career/major indecision is unique to each individual, research has identified three major categories of difficulties encountered when making career decisions (Gati, 2011). These difficulties may include:

1) Lack of Readiness—a lack of motivation, indecisive approach in general, or dysfunctional beliefs.
2) Lack of Information—a lack of information about the decision making process, lack of self-awareness, lack of occupational literacy.
3) Inconsistent Information—unreliable information, internal conflict on incompatible factors, external conflicts i.e. disagreement with significant others on what to major in or career options.

If you are stuck when it comes to making career/major-related decisions, meet with your academic/career advisor. Resources and support are available to help you identify difficulties in making career/major choices—with advisors ready to help you develop a strategy to keep moving forward.

MAJOR RESOURCES
Enroll in PACU-255 Career Exploration. 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.
Schedule Academic and/or Career Advising. Pacific University students are assigned both academic and career advisors to help select majors and make thoughtful post-grad plans. For academic advising contact the Advising Center (ext. 2800) and/or a faculty advisor (contact the Advising Center to connect with a faculty advisor). To schedule a career advising appointment, go to the Career Development Center website www.pacificu.edu/career/appointment.cfm.
Visit Classes. After reviewing class descriptions in the catalog, ask faculty in your major of interest, permission to visit their class. This can help you save time by determining if the class is in line with your interests, without adding a fifth year.
Meet the Major Delegates. Students just a few years ahead of you have a great deal to say about their courses, requirements, and skills acquired in their major. Career advisors can introduce you to Major Delegates—exemplary upper-class students ready, willing, and able to provide an inside perspective on majors. Academic/career advisors can suggest students in variety of majors.
Attend Senior Projects. Students present their highest level of work in their major during these high profile presentations. Attending several presentations provides a window to compare the subtle and overt distinctions between majors.
Visit Department Web 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, check out the different department website links featuring faculty quotes on “What I would say to a student considering this major.”
Obtain Handouts: Connecting Majors to Careers. These handouts relate all of the majors at Pacific University to possible professions. They include information on skills, job titles, industries, job outlook, industries, settings, and salary. These are available in the Career Resource Center at Chapman Hall.
Review LinkedIn Profiles. This professional networking site is a useful resource to learn how others have used their major in the workplace. Create a LinkedIn profile and join the Pacific University group to gain access to profiles of Pacific graduates, providing valuable insight into how professionals put their major to work.