



Choosing a College Major

A Strategy for Getting Started

Does thinking about your major make you stressed? Does it seem like you're the only one who is still uncertain about your major? Did you pick a major because you had to, but you're not sure it fits you? Are you sure about your major, but not sure what you can do with it? You're not alone! Research shows that up to 80% of college students are unsure about their choice of major, and half will change their major at least once.

Making a sound decision about your major requires an understanding of yourself as well as knowledge of majors and careers. Here is an overview of steps for choosing a major and for figuring out what to do with it. We recommend that you visit the Career Development for coaching on each step in the decision making process.

Know Yourself

Make a list of 3-5 of your personal characteristics in each of the areas below.

- Interests (What you would like to study?)
- Personality (What do you know about your unique ways of responding to the world around you?)
- Values (What matters to you in your work?)
- Skills and Abilities (What ways of thinking or doing do you excel at?)
- Strengths (from your StrengthsFinder assessment)

You can also visit Career Development to take a formal assessment.

Investigate Majors and Courses

Make a list of 3 or 4 majors you're considering, using the list in the UNW catalog.

- Which majors match my interests?
- Are these majors compatible with my personality style?
- Are my values consistent with these majors?
- Are the courses required for these majors interesting? (Be sure to check out the college catalog for descriptions of majors and courses.)
- Do I have the academic ability to complete the course and major requirements?
- How long will it take to complete the degree? Is the time frame acceptable to me? (Use the curriculum charts and curriculum planning guides available on theROCK to answer this question.)

Talk with your faculty advisor, professors, or a career counselor to find out more about majors.



Learn about Careers

Many graduates will have successful careers in fields that seem “unrelated” to their major. Remember, as a college graduate you will have gained not only knowledge, but skills and abilities that are marketable and desired by many employers. Not all majors lead to a specific career, but all majors lead to a degree, which is a prerequisite for professional employment. Because so many options will be open to you as a college graduate, it is important to have some ideas of the types of careers that interest you.

Visit an online career information website like O*NET (www.onetonline.org).

- Look up occupations based on your interests, values, or skills.
- Make a list of 10-15 possibilities that look intriguing.
- Note the skills, abilities, and knowledge required for occupations that interest you.

A career counselor can provide additional information about careers.

Make an Initial Decision

Put your list of majors, your list of careers, and your list of personal characteristics side by side. Rank your choice of majors from high to low considering:

- Which major seems the best preparation for the most preferred careers on my list?
- Which majors and careers are consistent with my interests, personality, and values?
- What electives or minors would enhance my preparation for my most preferred careers?

Remember that your major does not have to relate to a specific career. Many occupations will be possible with whatever major you choose.

A career counselor can provide feedback on your decision making process.

Implement and Evaluate the Decision

- File a major change form with the registrar’s office.
- Continue to learn all you can about the major and related careers.
- Plan for internships and work experiences that will enhance your skills and knowledge as well as confirm or change your decision.
- Remember, major and occupation are not the same! Continue to explore occupations as one means of confirming that your major choice is a good fit for your career goals.
- Be open to change if further evaluation indicates.

Meet with a career counselor to develop a plan for achieving your career goals.

Make an appointment with Career Development!

Call us or stop by to get started.