

How to Choose a Major and /or a Career

There are two different ways to determine what subject to major in. Some students major in what they find interesting or comes naturally for them, while other students major in a subject that will aid them in obtaining the post-graduate career they desire. Determine which category below describes you best and follow the accompanying list to locate resources and suggestions that will help you arrive at a decision.

Interests

1. What subject am I interested in?
2. What am I passionate about?
3. What do I truly enjoy?
4. Which subjects come easily for me?
What are my skills and abilities within those classes?
5. Which classes do I enjoy the most?
6. What do my higher-grade level friends have to say about the department I am thinking about?
7. Can I finish the major requirements in the time frame I desire (four years, five years, etc.)?
8. Do I know enough about all of the majors to make an informed decision?

Careers

1. What is my ideal job? For example _____
2. What is important to me within a job?
___Location, ___Money, ___Advancement, ___Creativity, ___Travel, ___Stability, ___Attire
3. What skills do I possess or am I confident I can obtain?
___Technical skills, ___Job content knowledge, ___Skill with numbers, ___Skill with concepts
4. What major will get me to this career?
5. If I have more than one interest, how can I combine them within a career?



Resources available for researching majors and careers

Career Services' Library

Career information guides
Books
Internship opportunities

Web Resources

Vault online career library
Occupational Outlook Handbook
(www.bls.gov/oco/)
Career Services Web resources
Online career assessments

Professionals

Career advisors (faculty)
eRecruiting (mentors)
Professors
Externship sponsors
Career Day (fall)

Suggestions for choosing a major and/or a career

Interests

- Take a variety of classes
- Talk to professors
- Compare ideas about majors with upper class students
- Attend workshop on choosing a major
- Contact UMW alumni through eRecruiting to talk about their majors
- Consider a double major
- Join an on-campus club, i.e. Psychology Club
- Take MyPlan (See Career Services for the license code)

Careers

- Try out careers during internships
- Talk to professors
- Complete a couple of externships
- Attend information sessions hosted by employers
- Contact UMW alumni to talk about their jobs through eRecruiting
- Volunteer within your chosen career
- Take MyPlan and/or MBTI

To make a well-informed decision:

1. Know yourself — your strengths, weaknesses, skills, and interests.
2. Research all possibilities.
3. Know that it is never too late to change your mind.

Remember: When people enter college, most do not know what area they want to major in. It is normal to be unsure! Also bear in mind that a college major does not necessarily correlate to what career path a person chooses. Across majors, one third to one half of all liberal arts students enter a field that is unrelated to their majors. Several years later, at least 50 percent work in fields unrelated to their majors.

Notes: