

Major Considerations

TRANSFER AND CAREER CENTER

Kentfield Campus Student Services Building, Room 206

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Education is a lifelong process, not a goal or an end point. Choosing a major is one part of that process, but it is not the process itself, nor is it the end of the process. Try to accept the idea that there may not be just one perfect undergraduate major for you. There may be several that are equally appropriate, or there may be no single major that can fulfill all of your needs. The best that you can do is to make your decision based on as much relevant and accurate information as you can obtain. To do so, consider the following:

1. What are your interests?

- Think of things you enjoy.
- What activities do you like to participate in?
- What do you enjoy watching on TV or reading, studying, or talking about?
- What hobbies do you actively pursue? Do you enjoy group activities, or do you prefer working alone? Do you enjoy outdoor activities or being indoors?
- Are you interested in science fiction, science fact, or neither? What courses did you enjoy most in high school?
- When you think about a career, what do you think you would enjoy doing or being?
- What kinds of activities are you not interested in, and why?
- Would you be interested in the work required for a particular major?
- Need more help in identifying your interests? Enroll in a Counseling course like COUN 130 Career Life Skills Planning or COUN 133 Career Exploration. You can also stop by the Transfer and Career Center to browse through the many resources there.

2. What are your abilities?

Try to take an objective look at your past performance in scholastic as well as in non-scholastic work.

- What are your projections for success in certain academic areas?
- How have others judged your performance in the past?
- Have you won scholastic honors or awards for excellence in art, music, sports, or other performance areas?
- Do you seem to have a natural talent for helping other people, working with numbers, influencing others, solving problems, using your hands, or organizing activities?
- How strong are your study skills?
- Do you have the ability to be successful in the work required in a particular major?

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3. What are your values?

Think about the values and principles that are guiding your life.

- Are your decisions and choices influenced by certain religious, philosophical, moral, or ethical beliefs and teachings?
- Do you consider service to others to be an important part of your personal philosophy?
- Is a broad undergraduate education more important to you than a more narrowly-focused program, or is the opposite true?
- Do you value financial security above all else?
- Will your values match the requirements and outcomes of a potential major or career?

4. What are your options?

- What if you don't know where to start in choosing a major because you don't know what majors are out there to choose from? The following can help with that:
- Never heard of Agronomy and Crop Science? Want to know what Computer Forensics is about? How about Metallurgical Engineering or Gerontology? Explore the Book of Majors in the Transfer and Career Center as well as other resources to explore the myriad of options available.
- Or, if you know what field you are interested in (like biology), but are having trouble determining a specific major within it (like microbiology or zoology), the resources in the center can also be of help.
- Want a major that prepares you for a specific career? Appeals to your intellectual interests? Allows you to do research? Showcases your talents?
- Do you feel very passionate about a subject, but feel there is no major to support it? Perhaps a student-designed major might work for you. Research potential transfer institutions that allow their students to create their own major.
- Can't decide between two different majors? Perhaps a double major or a major and a minor might appeal to you. Keep in mind, this often times increases a student's time to degree completion.

5. What are your motivations?

- Ask yourself why you might be considering a particular major.
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- Do your strongest motivations come from your interests, your abilities, your values, or from some other factors?
- Are outside pressures (from family, peers, or the job market) shaping and influencing your decisions?
- Are you thinking about choosing a major because you believe it will be easy, or because it is what somebody else said you "should" do, or because you think you could ensure a good job and earn a high salary?
- Would your motivation be strong enough to allow you to succeed in a major even if other factors seemed to direct you away from that major?

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6. What are the realities?

Consider what situations in your life may have a strong and overriding influence on your choice of major.

- Do your interests, abilities, values, and motivations conflict with each other, or are they in agreement? Sometimes students are very interested in a major but find that they do not have the abilities to handle the academic demands of the required courses. On the other hand, some students have considerable abilities in a particular area but do not have any real interest in studying that topic. And sometimes students have both interests and abilities in an area but feel that the realities of the job market make it not worth the investment of time and money.
- What other realities might you face in choosing your major? Will you be able to meet pre-major requirements on time, particularly in impacted programs?
- How much extra time will it take to graduate if you have already completed a significant number of credits that cannot be applied to a major? Meet with a counselor to discuss this.
- Can you afford to finance a four or five year degree? Consider these and other outside factors that may make a significant difference to you.

7. Make it worth the investment

Students can spend a lot of time and money pursuing their educational goals. You want all that work to pay off. Make sure your choice will be one you are happy with.

- Do informational interviews
- Research employment opportunities and prospects
- Can you imagine studying or working in that field for 10+ years?
- Look for related employment or internship opportunities to help you try out the major
- Take introductory courses to be sure you enjoy it
- Research related majors. Is there maybe one that suits you better?