



Major Confusion

A Student's Perspective®

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One of the most asked questions of college students after “Where do you go to school?” is “What are you studying?” Or, if you are still in high school, “Where do you want to go to school?” and “What do you want to study?” For some people, those questions are easy and exciting. For others, it spurs avoidance strategies so you don’t have to admit you don’t have life figured out yet (but it’s ok, no one really does).

There are a million reasons why some of us don’t have answers for that right away. In preparation for graduation, you will have to choose a major (one of those requirements of higher education), but it’s okay to delay that decision. It does not need to be made before you walk onto the college campus for your first semester.

As a recent college graduate who had trouble deciding on a major, I would like to offer some advice on how (and how not) to make that decision. Going to college is the beginning of an important part of your life and a time when many young adults struggle with choosing a major. It is also difficult to separate what you want to do from what your friends, family and others want for you. All of those individuals are good sources of advice, but ultimately you have to pick a major that you want because it will be you, not anyone else, doing the work and getting the job.

It is also important to consider what you want from life. That is not always as easy as it sounds, because determining the type of job you want later- whether making lots of money, working with people, having a certain educational background, etc- is difficult. If you are interested in a career that will require education beyond a bachelor’s degree, you will need to consider what degree will be required to get the advanced certifications. Various types of social work, medicine, education, and law may require majors within a certain area or specific coursework that will

apply to post-baccalaureate programs.

One of the most important things to consider, though in choosing a college major, is what you enjoy. Which subjects in high school captured your attention? Which extracurricular activities really incited your passions? Which courses of study speak to you and to who you are as a person? There will always be those classes many may not want to take, but that are required. One helpful thing to do is to review the college’s course catalog to see which classes are required for each major. If more than half of them look like something that have little or no interest to you, then that is probably a sign that it is not the major for you. Think about what will make you excited to be in school, and choose a major where more often than not, you will look forward to class!

Another good opportunity you will have once you arrive on campus is to take a sampling of classes from several majors that interest you. Many subjects of study have introductory classes that give a good overview of what can be expected, and you can decide whether you want to pursue those topics further. Many of the introductory classes fulfill basic requirements for most courses of study, so you won’t be losing out on college credits/hours. Also, try talking to students and professors in areas that appeal to you to get more information on majors and possible careers.

Don’t worry if it takes time to come up with answers and a major- it doesn’t have to all happen in that first semester. College degrees are becoming more flexible, so you need not fear locking yourself into one career with the major you choose. Most importantly, though, take a good look at yourself, and remember- this is your life, who do you want to become? You have that power, and choosing a major is just one way to direct it.