

# CHOOSING AND CERTIFYING INTO A MAJOR:

## SOME HELPFUL STRATEGIES



*World Class. Face to Face.*

## WHAT IS IN A MAJOR?

A major is a field of academic study, usually requiring about 30 to 45 credit hours in an academic area. You certify into a major that leads to a degree. To certify into a major, you need at least a 2.0 overall grade point average and must have completed at least 24 credit hours. Each department has its own individual requirements regarding grade point average, credit hours completed, and prerequisite coursework to be able to certify. (You should be certified by 60 credit hours.) The academic department is responsible for the particular degree requirements. Note that some departments have additional selective certification requirements. When you acquire 70 credits it is time to apply for your degree. You can do this either through your department or the Office of the Registrar.

Your major is not always the same as your degree. For example:

YOU MAY MAJOR IN:	DIPLOMA WILL SAY BACHELOR OF:
Accounting or Human Resources	Arts in Business Administration
Advertising	Arts in Communications
Spanish	Arts in Foreign Languages and Literature
General Studies, Sciences (Choices of Biological, Physical, or Mathematics)	Science
Elementary Education	Education

Choosing a major is one of the most difficult decisions you will need to make during your college education. You will need to think about what is important for you in an occupation, explore the options available to you, and do a self-assessment of your values, abilities, and interests. Once you have done this, you will be in a better position to make a decision.

The most common reasons why students sometimes find choosing a major difficult include:

- Lack of knowledge (not knowing what is available or where to go)
- Are unsure of their own interests, skills and abilities, or fear certain types of academic work (math, speech, writing, research)
- Mistakenly believe that choice of major totally determines career
- Have too many options, too many interests
- Feel pressure to meet parents/friends expectations
- Do not see a major that fits personal interest area
- Fear of failure

For some students being unsure about a major can be very stressful; others are fine with delaying a decision. Whatever your situation, take the initiative to investigate your options and their requirements early in your academic career.

## STRATEGIES FOR CHOOSING A MAJOR

### KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

- 1) Have you considered all possibilities? Be familiar with the full range of WSU majors plus the options developed within the major. Also closely examine “related majors” that sometimes have advantages you haven’t considered.

### EXAMPLES OF RELATED MAJORS

**BUSINESS:** Various options within Business Administration, Sociology (options of Personnel & Human Relations, Business & the Economy), English/Business, Apparel Merchandising, Speech Communication

**ENGINEERING:** Environmental Science, General Science, and Construction Management, Business (MIS), Math (Actuarial Science, Applied Statistics), Agricultural Engineering

**COMPUTERS:** All majors incorporate use of computers in some way; many involve software specific to the major: Fine Arts (electronic imaging), Business (Decision Sciences, MIS), Social Statistics or Research Methods

### KNOW YOUR OWN EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- 1) Recognize that some areas of study provide academic preparation suitable to a “generalist” rather than a “specialist”. You need to consider what educational preparation best fits your needs and how you can build your knowledge and skill areas.
- 2) Recognize that a minor can add an academic emphasis or complement your major. For example, someone who can do well in both math/science and writing/languages demonstrates a very valuable range of skills.
- 3) Select from the range of GER (General Education Requirements) coursework purposely to explore possible future majors.
- 4) Explore creative combinations that meet your learning goals; combine areas of study that show interdisciplinary knowledge and breadth or emphasize your uniqueness.

### CHOOSE A MAJOR THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS

- 1) Choose a major that will help you gain a broader view of the world, one that interests you and will prepare you for a “generalist” (Liberal Arts) or “specialist” (math) role.
- 2) Choose a major that provides a good background for the professional area you hope to enter in graduate school.
- 3) Develop a marketable combination of liberal arts major with a practical coursework concentration (liberal arts major with a coursework in accounting or technical writing).

### CAREER SERVICES CAN HELP!

Career Services can assist you in choosing a major and linking your major to a career. Career Services’ staff can provide you with information and resources that can assist you in making an informed decision on these important steps of your career development. Please call at **335-2546** to make an appointment with a career counselor.

Remember:

- It is okay to be undecided. You can use your first and second years to explore different academic fields.
- 20-50% of students enter college undecided.
- As many as 70% of students change majors at least once.

Choosing a major is only one factor in determining your future job prospects and career path. Your grades, the electives you choose, and the skills you acquire through your coursework, often will determine the career opportunities available to you more than does your major. Use your career goals as the basis for decisions about academic major, elective courses, internships, and extracurricular activities.

## **RESOURCES**

ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS Contact academic departments for the most current information regarding course descriptions, options, and requirements for academic degrees. Discuss options with departmental representatives, professors, and other students. Visit student clubs and organizations.

STUDENT ADVISING AND LEARNING CENTER. (Lighty, 260, 335-6000). Provides assistance with advising, changing advisors, tutoring, and other types of academic support. The Transfer Center in SALC is available to assist transfer students with advising, transfer credits, and other types academic assistance.

CAREER SERVICES (Lighty 180). Make an appointment for individual career counseling and career assessment at 335-2546. Inquire about the Strong Interest Inventory and Meyers Briggs Type Indicator assessment tools. Career Services offers comprehensive services to help you with academic and career decision-making and exploring ways to connect major with career/graduate studies. Career Services also offers:

- UNIV 100 Major and Career Choice course, 1 credit. The main objective of this course is to assist students in the decision-making process of choosing a major/career through self-assessment and career exploration. This course is for undecided students.
- SIGI Career planning software offers ideas for career exploration, how to relate major to career, current salary and other occupational information.
- CAREER RESOURCE CENTER Maintains material on WSU majors, occupational information, employer directories and literature, graduate studies, and computer resources for career exploration and job search.