Choosing a Major

Purpose

Wondering what you should major in or what you can do with certain majors? **You're not alone!** This question is frequently asked by students and is actually a difficult question to answer.

What to do with a major in …..

Obtaining your college degree is a journey of many choices, including choosing your major and what courses to take. None of these choices mention the word career. You would think that there is a relationship between majors and careers which is true for some but most majors do not relate to a specific career. In fact, the majority of majors at Gettysburg will actually prepare you for many career possibilities.

What's a Major For?

Majors are actually more related to your academics rather than your career. Rather than thinking of your major as the gateway to a specific field, consider how a major will enable you to develop specific skills. These skills can be transferred to a variety of career paths.

Which Comes First? Major or Career?

Either way works! Do you want to choose a major first and identify career possibilities later, or choose a few career options and then identify possible majors that can help you get there?

Steps to a Major Decision

Step 1: Assess yourself:

Your first stop is to do some self-assessment. The more you understand yourself, the clearer your goals and the way to reach them will become. Ask yourself the following questions and take one of the career assessments offered in the Center for Career Development.

- What do you truly enjoy? Consider the classes and activities that you have liked the best. What did they involve? Why did you like them? There are careers related to every interest that you have.
- What are you good at? Identify your skills and abilities. What types of things do you seem to do well? Are they technical? Intellectual? Do you like adventure?
- What is really important to you? Is enjoying your work more important than prestige?
- What is the coolest job you can imagine? Describe it as specifically as you can.

Step 2: Gather Information and Explore Options

· Examine the majors available to you. Make a list of your options and eliminate those that don't interest you. Read about the majors remaining on your list. Mark the courses in each major that most interest you, match your abilities, and share your values. This should help shorten your list.

· Review additional information about the majors on your short list. Visit the web pages of each department. Talk with students in those majors and faculty of those departments.

· Visit the Center for Career Development. What is available? Talk with a career counselor.

Step 3: Narrow Your Choice to 2 or 3

· It's time to put together the information that you have collected. Weigh the pros and cons of each option. If you haven't already, narrow your list down to two or three majors.

· Consider the feasibility of a double major or making one a minor. Create your own major linking several interests into one that share the same theme. Visit the IDS department for more information on this!

· Talk with a career counselor in the Center for Career Development if you are still having difficulty.

Step 4: Take Action and Your Journey Begins

· Sample courses in the majors you are considering

· Choose activities, internships, volunteer work, and part time jobs that can help you further develop your skills in the areas that interest you.

· Talk with people who work in the careers where you have interest. Ask them about their major and how it helped them. Use the Center for Career Development to find alumni to contact for this!

· Go for it! Declare your major!

· And remember: your major alone does not determine your career path!

Information taken from www.jobweb.com and written by: Mary Lou Taylor.