

CHOOSING A MAJOR

Choosing a major can be a difficult task. We are aware of the challenge and offer the following suggestions to help you make the best possible choice.

1. **Read the College Catalog.** The simple process of highlighting all the class descriptions that appeal to you can be very instructive. Which major has the most? While taking classes your first year, focus on those that you particularly love, that motivate you to learn, that are interesting to you, regardless of how they might fit into a particular occupation later. Most occupational areas can utilize a wide variety of educational backgrounds. Remember: if you don't like classes in your major, you probably won't like the direction it will take you after graduation.

2. **Find out as much about yourself as possible.** We offer several on-line vocational tools such as Type Focus (a personality inventory), and the Strong Interest Inventory, which focus on your interests and how they can affect your choice of a major. Through individual career counseling, we can show you how this information will be helpful in choosing a major and eventually a career that is a good 'fit.'

3. **Talk with upper-classmen about their majors.** Ask key questions such as why they chose their major and what are they learning. How do they plan to use their major after graduation?

4. **Conduct an "Informational Interview."** Ask someone who works in a field that interests you, so that you to find out more about their occupation. This is one of the most helpful tools you have to choose a major or a career. Make contact with alum through Westmont Connect or the Westmont Alumni pages on LinkedIn and take a look at our Informational Interviews handout in our office.

5. **Spend time with professors.** They are eager to interact with students and can provide excellent answers to questions concerning what you would learn in that major, and what careers other graduates have pursued with the major.

"MAJOR" MYTHS & TRUTHS

Below are some of the myths related to the choosing-a-major process as well as some truths to consider when making your decision. Reviewing these can help to guide you toward choosing the right major for you.

Myths

- It is preferable to avoid making a decision than to make a "wrong" decision.
- Decisions on a major are irrevocable and of life and death importance.
- A wrong decision is a failure.
- Deciding against a certain major now means I am giving up that option forever.
- When choosing a major, it's most important to please the significant other people in my life.
- There is one (and only one) right major for me, and true happiness is impossible until I find it.
- My major can or must meet all of my needs and utilize all of my abilities.
- If I really "had my head together" I would know exactly what major to choose.

Truths

- Experts predict that people will make an average of three career changes and work 7 to 10 jobs during their lifetime.
- Many of the job titles in existence today will be out of circulation in the next decade.
- Within 3-5 years, more than 50% of all college graduates are doing work having little or no relation to their college major.
- Those students who enter college with their major undeclared, are more certain of their career direction by the end of their sophomore year than those who declared a major upon entering.
- Finding a job related to a college major is not essential for job satisfaction.
- Men and women who considered their jobs to be closely related to their major seemed to be no more satisfied with their work than others.
- Those who chose majors late in their college experience were equally satisfied with their eventual employment.
- It is not practical to choose a "practical" major that you do not enjoy and do well in. Employers want to see that you have done outstanding work in *whatever* you have chosen to study.

- If you do not enjoy the academic work of a given major, you will probably not enjoy the kind of occupations that major might lead to.