Majors and Careers: Making the Right Choices

By Jamal Shareef
Finding Careers
Question

• Ask Yourselves: “Why am I in college?”
Changing World

• Change has become the norm.

• Careers frequently zigzag into other areas.
  – Ex: different languages, computer skills, artistic design, etc.

• As you work, you’ll be continually enhancing and expanding your skills and competencies.
Who is Responsible for Your Career

• You are, more or less, responsible for your career.
  – Traditionally, organizations provided structured “ladders” for employees to climb in order to reach higher professional levels.
  – Those ladders are beginning to disappear.
  – You have the ultimate task of engineering your career path.
Plan Ahead

- To advance your career, you must accept the risks that accompany employment and plan for the future.
  - Organizations continually restructure, merge, and either grow or downsize in response to economic conditions.
  - As a result, positions may be cut.
  - Because you can be unexpectedly unemployed, it will be wise to keep other options in mind.
The Perfect Job

• A college degree does not guarantee employment.
  – Your degree opens up opportunities that are more rewarding, financially and otherwise.
  – But just because you want to work for a certain organization doesn’t mean there will always be a job for you there.
Adding Sustenance

• A commitment to lifelong learning will help keep you employable.
  – In college you have been learning a vital skill: how to learn.
  – Your learning has just begun when you receive your diploma.
  – Over time, continue to build a portfolio of what you have learned, and all you have achieved.
Connecting Majors with Your Career

- Truth is, most majors do not lead into a specific career path or job.
- For ex: Today English majors are designing web pages and philosophy majors are developing logic codes for operating systems.
Exploring Your Interests

- Exploring your interests is the best way to choose an academic major.
- It is recommended that you major in something you are really passionate about.
- Remember, there is more than one right way to get where you want to go.
Why Am I in College?

• Before you answer the question, consider these points:
  – Am I here to find out who I am and study a subject that I am truly passionate about, regardless of whether it leads to a career?
  – Am I here to engage in an academic program that provides an array of possibilities when I graduate?
  – Am I here to prepare myself for a graduate program?
  – Am I here to obtain specific training in a field that I am committed to?
  – Am I here for to gain specific skills for a job I already have?
Room to Breathe

• You don’t have to know your goals when you first come to college, because it is progression and exploration that will help you define them.

• However, selecting a major and a career ultimately has to fit with your overall life goals, life purposes, values, and beliefs.
Organizing Yourself

• Identify potential career choices by organizing yourself.
• There are six different categories of people based on differences of interests, skills, values, and personality characteristics:
  – Realistic
  – Investigative
  – Artistic
  – Social
  – Enterprising
  – Conventional
Realistic

- These people describe themselves as concrete, down-to-earth, and practical doers.
- They exhibit competitive/assertive behavior and show interest in activities that require motor coordination, skill, and physical strength.
- They prefer situations involving action solutions rather than tasks involving verbal or interpersonal skills, and they like to take a concrete approach to problem solving rather than rely on abstract theory.
- They tend to be interested in scientific or mechanical areas rather than cultural and aesthetic fields.
(Realistic)

• Possible Careers:
  – Agricultural engineer
  – Electrical contractor
  – Industrial arts teacher
  – Navy officer
  – Fitness director
  – Package engineer
  – Electronics technician
  – Computer graphics technician
These people describe themselves as analytical, rational, and logical problem solvers.

They value intellectual stimulation and intellectual achievement and prefer to think rather than to act, to organize and understand rather than to persuade.

They usually have a strong interest in physical, biological, or social sciences.

They are less apt to be people oriented.
(Investigative)

• Possible Careers:
  – Urban planner
  – Chemical engineer
  – Bacteriologist
  – Flight engineer
  – Genealogist
  – Laboratory technician
  – Marine scientist
  – Nuclear medical technologist
  – Obstetrician
  – Quality-control technician
  – Computer programmer
  – Environmentalist
  – Physician
  – College professor
Artistic

- These people describe themselves as creative, innovative, and independent.
- They value self-expression and relations with others through artistic expression and are also emotionally expressive.
- They dislike structure, preferring tasks involving personal or physical skills.
- They resemble investigative people but are more interested in the cultural or the aesthetic than the scientific.
(Artistic)

• Possible Careers:
  – Architect
  – Film editor/director
  – Actor
  – Cartoonist
  – Interior decorator
  – Fashion model
  – Graphic communications specialist
  – Journalist
  – Editor
  – Orchestra leader
  – Public relations specialist
  – Sculptor
  – Media specialist
  – Librarian
  – Reporter
Social

• These people describe themselves as kind, caring, helpful, and understanding of others.
• They value helping and making a contribution.
• They satisfy their needs in one-to-one or small-group interaction using strong speaking skills to teach, counsel, or advise.
• They are drawn to close interpersonal relationships and are less apt to engage in intellectual or extensive physical activity.
• Possible Careers:
  – Nurse
  – Teacher
  – Social worker
  – Genetic counselor
  – Marriage counselor
  – Rehabilitation counselor
  – School superintendent
  – Geriatric specialist
  – Insurance claims specialist
  – Minister
  – Travel agent
  – Guidance counselor
  – Conventional planner
Enterprising

• These people describe themselves as assertive, risk taking, and persuasive.
• They value prestige, power, and status and are more inclined than other types to pursue it.
• They use verbal skills to supervise, lead, direct, and persuade rather than to support or guide.
• They are interested in people and in achieving organizational goals.
(Enterprising)

- Possible Careers:
  - Banker
  - City manager
  - FBI agent
  - Health administrator
  - Judge
  - Labor arbitrator
  - Salary and wage administrator
  - Insurance salesperson
  - Sales engineer
  - Lawyer
  - Sales representative
  - Marketing specialist
Conventional

- These people describe themselves as neat, orderly, detail oriented, and persistent.
- They value order, structure, prestige, and status and possess a high degree of self-control.
- They are not opposed to rules and regulations.
- They are skilled in organizing, planning, and scheduling and are interested in data and people.
(Conventional)

- Possible careers:
  - Accountant
  - Statistician
  - Census enumerator
  - Data processor
  - Hospital administrator
  - Insurance administrator
  - Office manager
  - Underwriter
  - Auditor
  - Personnel specialist
  - Database manager
  - Abstractor/indexer
Career Choices

• Your career choices ultimately will involve a complex assessment of the factors that are most important to you.

• You can aid yourself by:
  – First, begin to identify many career fields that are consistent with what you know about yourself.
    • Identifying potential fields allows you to research them further.
  – Second, identify conflicts you could possibly have with career choices.
    • This will help you analyze the reasons for your career decisions and be more confident as you make choices.
Room to Breathe

- Never feel you have to make a decision simply on the results of one assessment of yourself.
- Career choices are complex and involve many factors; furthermore, these decisions are not irreversible.
Factors Affecting Career Choices

• Some people have a definite self-image when they enter college, but most of us are still in the process of defining ourselves throughout life.

• We can look at ourselves in several useful ways with respect to possible careers:
  – Values
  – Interests
  – Skills
  – Aptitudes
  – Personality
  – Life goals and work values
Values

• Today, more than ever, knowing your core values will be important in shaping your career path.

• In a fast economy, having a strong rudder will help you steer through the turbulent times.
Interests

• Interests develop from your experiences and beliefs and can continue to develop and change throughout life.

• You may be interested in writing for the college newspaper because you wrote for your high school paper.

• It’s not unusual to enter Psych 101 with a great interest in psychology and realize halfway through the course that psychology is not what you imagined.
Skills

- Skills, or the ability to do something well, can usually be improved with practice.
Aptitudes

• Aptitudes, the foundation for skills, are inherent strengths that are often part of your biological heritage or the result of early training.

• We each have aptitudes we can build on.

• Build on your strengths.
Personality

• Your personality makes you *you* and can’t be ignored when you make career decisions.

• The quiet, orderly, calm, detail-oriented person probably will make a different work choice than the aggressive, outgoing, argumentative person.
Life Goals & Work Values

• Each of us defines success and satisfaction in our own way.
• If your values are in conflict with the organizational values where you work, you may be in for trouble.
• The process is complex and very personal.
• Two factors influence our conclusions about success and happiness:
  – Knowing that we are achieving the life goals we’ve set for ourselves, and
  – Finding that we gain satisfaction from what we’re receiving from our work.
Your Career Planning

• The process of making a career choice begins with:
  – Understanding your values and motivations
  – Identifying your interests.
  – Linking your personality and learning styles to those interests.
  – Using this information to decide on an appropriate academic major.

• This is a process you will begin in your first college year, and you will gradually complete it as you move closer to graduation.

• You will periodically reevaluate your plan to better suit your needs and any special characteristics of your major.
Reference


- Career Services Center
  - Phone
    - 333-5942/
  - Location
    - Powell Hall West,
      2nd Floor
    - 1500 N. Patterson St.