



# Choosing a Major

You are not alone in asking, "What do I major in?" or "What am I going to **do** with this major?" 65-85% of college students change their major at least once.

**WHY DON'T I KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH A MAJOR IN...?** 71.3% of students said they entered college in 2001 in order to get a better job. However, 77.8% of students said they entered college to learn more about themselves.

You have successfully navigated the first challenge in meeting this goal to be gainfully employed by selecting a college. Now, you must choose a major, the courses and the experiences that will allow for the most successful career path. While majors such as nursing and education have a direct correlation with your career path, most majors do not instantly tell you what career you will choose. In fact, most majors prepare you for many career possibilities.

**SO, WHAT'S A MAJOR FOR?** Majors are part of the academic process that leads to earning a degree. They are not designed for career purposes. With that said, you should recognize this unclear link and begin to ask yourself questions that **do** have clear answers.

- Determine your specific decision-making goal. Do you want to choose a major first and look at career options later or do you want to choose career options and identify majors that will help you get there?
- Get those decision-making skills going. You already have decision making skills. You went through a process to choose to attend Auburn or when you made a significant purchase, like a car.
- Commit your time. It will take time to find an appropriate major and meaningful career. There will be books to read; professors, supervisors and advisors to question; internships to try and internet sites to explore.

## WHAT STEPS DO I TAKE TO CHOOSE A MAJOR?

### 1. Assess Yourself. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I enjoy? Think about the classes you enjoy most—what they involve and why you enjoy them.
- What am I good at? This is no time to be humble. Identify your skills. Are they technical? Adventurous? Intellectual?
- What is most important to me? Make your choices match your values. Do you want to work behind the scenes or do you seek prestige? Do you need flexibility or security?

- What is the coolest job I can imagine? Describe it specifically and seek people in this area and ask how they got there.
- Do I need to take a career assessment to better assess my skills, interests and values as they relate to the world of work?

### 2. Gather Information and Explore Options

- Examine the majors available to you and eliminate those that do not interest you.
- Go through the Bulletin and read about the remaining majors. Mark courses that interest you the most.
- Do they match with your interests, skills and values?
- Review additional information about the majors on your short list. Visit department web pages, and talk with an academic advisor, students already in these areas and faculty members.
- Visit Career Development Services to find more resources on that major.

### 3. Evaluate and Make Your Major Decision

- Put the information you have gathered together, and consider what you have learned. Weigh the pros and cons of each option and narrow your list down to two or three majors.
- Consider the feasibility of pursuing more than one major and/or adding a minor.
- If you are still having difficulties making decisions, talk with an advisor, professor you respect or a career counselor. Ask them to suggest additional resources and for guidance through the decision-making process.

### 4. Take Action

- Sample courses in the majors you are considering.
- Choose activities, internships, volunteer work and/or part-time employment to develop skills in these areas.
- Talk to people already in these career fields.
- Declare a major!!

**Career counselors and resources available in Career Development Services can help you through each step.**

## FACTORS THAT BLOCK MAJOR/CAREER CHOICES

Here are some of the most common factors that get in the way of making a career or major choice:

### External Factors

- If you feel “**stuck**” wondering what to do with a particular major, recognize that majors and careers develop independently of one another, and you have options.
- If you have a **lack of information** you will be less comfortable making an educated decision. Go to Career Development Services and professors for information on particular majors and careers.
- If you are **overwhelmed by information** talk to Career Development Services about finding accurate information efficiently.

### Internal Factors

- If you **lack self-confidence** in making “critical decisions,” empower yourself with additional information and process with a career counselor.
- If you are **feeling fear/anxiety** recognize that some anxiety can be positive and keeps you “on your

toes.” Too much can wear you out. Talk with a counselor to separate rational from irrational fears.

- If your **values are in conflict** (e.g. you want to earn a good salary but yearn to work for a non-profit organization), do some value clarification work.
- If **others are causing internal conflict** (e.g. parents, spouses and significant others have ideas about your career choice that conflict with yours), recognize this as a conflict and if necessary, talk with a counselor about ways to deal with this challenge.
- If you have **multipotentiality** (e.g. many interests and abilities) and feel it is impossible to narrow your options, a career counselor can help you.

## RESOURCES

- **What Can I Do With a Major In?** on-line at [www.auburn.edu/career](http://www.auburn.edu/career)
- **Type Focus, FOCUS, Discover, Strong Interest Inventory and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** available on website
- **CareerBeam** located on website
- **Resource Library** in 303 Martin Hall

**CREATE YOUR SHORT LIST OF MAJORS** Using the list below, determine your level of interest in each major to create your short list of majors that interests you.

1=Definitely possible; 2=Worth considering; 3=What is this?; and 4=No way!

<p><b>College of Agriculture</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Ag Business and Economics <input type="checkbox"/> Ag Communications <input type="checkbox"/> Agronomy and Soils (Bus, Science & Turfgrass) <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Sciences (Muscle Foods, Production Operation, Pre-Vet) <input type="checkbox"/> Biosystems Engineering <input type="checkbox"/> Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures <input type="checkbox"/> Horticulture (Nursery & Greenhouse Sci, Landscape Hort, Fruit & Veg Production) <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Science (Pre-Vet) <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Veterinary Medicine <p><b>College of Architecture, Design &amp; Construction</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture <input type="checkbox"/> Building Science <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Design <input type="checkbox"/> Interior Architecture <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Design <p><b>College of Business</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Management (Logistics, Prof Flight Mgt) <input type="checkbox"/> Economics <input type="checkbox"/> Finance <input type="checkbox"/> Management (Oper Mgt, Human Res Mgt, Bus Admin,	<p>Entrepreneurship &amp; Family Bus, Info Systems Mgt)  <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing</p> <p><b>College of Education</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum & Teaching <input type="checkbox"/> Edu Foundations, Leadership & Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Human Performance <input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation & Special Edu <p><b>Samuel Ginn College of Engineering</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Aerospace <input type="checkbox"/> Biosystems <input type="checkbox"/> Chemical <input type="checkbox"/> Civil <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Science <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Science <input type="checkbox"/> Software <input type="checkbox"/> Wireless <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial and Systems <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical <input type="checkbox"/> Materials Engineering <input type="checkbox"/> Fiber <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Chemistry <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Management and Technology	<p><b>School of Forestry and Wildlife</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife Sciences (Pre-Vet) <p><b>College of Human Sciences</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Affairs (Apparel Merchandising, Product Design, Interior Design) <input type="checkbox"/> Human Development & Family Studies <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition & Food Science (Hotel & Restaurant Management, Nutrition, Food Science) <p><b>College of Liberal Arts</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Anthropology <input type="checkbox"/> Art <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Communications Disorders <input type="checkbox"/> Criminology/Criminal Justice <input type="checkbox"/> Economics <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Fine Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Languages <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services Administration <input type="checkbox"/> History <input type="checkbox"/> Journalism <input type="checkbox"/> Mass Communications <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy/Religious Studies <input type="checkbox"/> Political Science <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Public Administration  <input type="checkbox"/> Social Work  <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology  <input type="checkbox"/> Theatre</p> <p><b>School of Nursing</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing <p><b>College of Sciences &amp; Mathematics</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Actuarial Science <input type="checkbox"/> Animal & Plant Sciences <input type="checkbox"/> Applied Math <input type="checkbox"/> Botany/Cellular & Molecular <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry/Biochemistry <input type="checkbox"/> Ecology & Evolution <input type="checkbox"/> General Math <input type="checkbox"/> Geography <input type="checkbox"/> Geology <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Biology <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics <input type="checkbox"/> Microbiology <input type="checkbox"/> Physics <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Medicine/Dentistry <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Optometry <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Pharmacy <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Physical Therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Veterinary Medicine <input type="checkbox"/> Statistics <input type="checkbox"/> Zoology
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