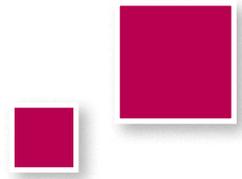


Help Your Student Select a College Major

BY CASSANDRA LATIMER



The first thing family and friends ask college-bound students tends to be “So what’s your major?” Does your student utter a different answer each time the question is posed, hoping that one major will inevitably stick? Or do they even have a clue? The transition to college is tough enough on a student, but do they have to pick a major, too? Even if your student has mentioned the same major or career path since preschool, it is very reasonable to assume that their mind will probably change after a semester or two of college. How can parents provide subtle guidance to their student during these exciting, yet anxious, times?

Know the Resources Available

Students and parents cannot be expected to know about every major available at every college or university. They can, however, find resources on every college campus that can be valuable tools in the “choosing a major”

process. For instance, every college employs career center counselors and academic advisors who can provide students with assessments to identify interests, abilities, and skills consistent with particular majors and offer strategies to discover more about those majors. These professionals can also lend an unbiased, objective ear when students are struggling with this decision. Many colleges even offer credit-bearing courses on how to choose a college major effectively.

Encourage Your Student to Explore Options

No matter how extensive your student’s high school course offerings were, it pales in comparison to the multitude of academic majors offered on a college campus. With a broad spectrum of choices also comes an overwhelming sense of indecision from

a student’s perspective. They’ll only make decisions based on what they know (or what they think they know).

College is the time to explore! Encourage your students to grab a college catalog and read the descriptions of all the courses offered; when they see a course they like, highlight it. The more courses highlighted within certain majors, the more in-depth they should investigate those majors. Next steps include identifying the graduation requirements, speaking to faculty members and students in those majors of interest, and taking introductory courses to try it out for themselves.

Finally, students should get involved in campus activities, part-time jobs, and internships that seem to relate. Only through knowledge and experience can they find the academic major that ultimately captures their interest and passion.

Keep an Open Mind

Parents dream about their children’s future accomplishments and successes and hold expectations sometimes not shared by their child. While most parents say they support their student in whatever college major they choose, others unwittingly place an enormous amount of pressure on their student to choose a particular academic path that may not be the most objective fit. Students must be attracted to and enthusiastic about what they study to truly succeed in college; if not, they often slip academically and emotionally as a result. So if your students talks to you about a totally different major than you ever expected, first make certain they’ve explored it enough to know they’ll love it, and then trust them to find success within it. **O**

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