Choosing a Major and Career Path

WHAT IS A MAJOR?
A major is a field of study in which a student completes a specified number of credits, mostly from upper-division classes. Majors study an intellectual discipline in-depth, including its historical development, theoretical orientations, factual content, research methods, and unsolved problems or mysteries. USU offers more than 150 major options in eight colleges.

WHAT IS A MINOR?
A minor promotes the study of the content and methods of a discipline different than the major, and either reinforces the major or provides enrichment and breadth in curriculum. USU does not require the completion of a minor for graduation; however, some majors, such as Psychology, require the completion of a minor.

WHAT IS A DUAL MAJOR?
A dual major means a student satisfies the requirements of two majors. Dual majors could extend the time to graduation by about a year. One major is specified as the “primary” major for the purpose of determining the University Studies requirements a student must complete.

IS IT NECESSARY TO CHOOSE A MAJOR?
Yes! A student cannot graduate from the University without a major. Some students have already chosen a major when they apply to Utah State; however, many are undecided. Often those who have already chosen a major end up changing at some point. While you should begin thinking about a major as you begin your general education classes, you do not need to rush into a major. But it is in your best interest to choose a major at least by the time you have completed 45 to 60 credits.

WHO WILL ADVISE ME?
Undeclared/Undecided and Undeclared Business students are advised by the Office of University Advising (UA). If you are undeclared, you should meet with an advisor in the UA office or meet with an advisor in an area of interest in order to give you some resources to help you choose a major. If you have chosen a major, meet with an advisor in that department or college. Advisors are listed at http://catalog.usu.edu.

HOW DOES CHOOSING A MAJOR RELATE TO A CAREER PATH?
Many students believe that career paths start with their first full-time job after college. Educational psychologists, on the other hand, believe career paths begin early in life and are affected by literally all activities and stages of life. Since choosing a career path is not a “one size fits all” process, you should explore many options before deciding on actual occupational goals. Often it is easy to decide which areas you do not like. After you eliminate negative options, then explore other more interesting areas.

HOW ARE MAJORS CHANGED?
Changing majors is an easy process. Find your new advisor at http://catalog.usu.edu. Your new advisor can start a “Change of Matriculation” form for you. He or she will complete the form acknowledging your acceptance to that major. Take that form to your old advisor for a signature, and then return the signed form to the Registrar’s Office in TSC 246. That’s all there is to it.
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WHY DO STUDENTS CHANGE THEIR MAJOR?
Expectations, social pressures, and desires for quick answers often lead students to quick decisions, disillusionment, and self-doubt when they choose a major. Yet, being undecided or confused about majors and careers is a very common attribute of freshman students. Being undecided is not a sign of a serious problem, nor is it a disgrace. It is estimated that up to 70 percent of freshmen nationwide change their intended major at least once. Even if everyone around you appears confident about what they are majoring in, it is likely they are not.

WHAT IF STUDENTS CAN’T DECIDE ON A MAJOR RIGHT NOW?
Choices about a college major and how to earn a living in the future are inseparably tied to past history. Experiences help shape skills, interests, personality, and values. Exploring college majors and the career paths they are related to may be more like panning for gold than using a vending machine. A willingness to pan through (or explore) various majors, rather than hastily picking one just to make a decision, will eventually lead you to a more enlightened and mature decision.

Options for exploring careers include browsing [http://www.usu.edu/degrees](http://www.usu.edu/degrees) or visiting Career Services, University Inn 102. The career peers and professional career counselors in this office can help students:

- Explore occupations and other work-related information.
- Identify tools and resources to use to increase self-awareness about interest patterns, skill preferences, personality traits, and other personal characteristics.