

## DECIDING ON A MAJOR - FAQs



Deciding on a major is a big step in the life of every college student. It is important to know yourself well as you explore the possibilities available to you. Be sure to consider your interests, abilities, experiences, and values and how they relate to college majors and potential careers.

However, below are some frequently asked questions:

- 1. How do I choose a major?**
- 2. How can I find majors that are a good fit for me?**
- 3. Should I take a career assessment?**
- 4. When should I declare a major?**
- 5. How do I declare or change majors?**
- 6. What's the difference between a minor and secondary major?**
- 7. How do I declare a minor or secondary major?**
- 8. How does my major relate to a career?**
- 9. Should I consider job market demand?**
- 10. How can I gain experience and build job skills?**

### **1. How do I choose a major?**

Since there are no shortcuts in selecting a major and choosing a career path, you should devote time to gathering accurate career information. It is important to make a well-informed decision, and you will want to consider all your options. This will include finding current statistics and receiving advice from professionals about the options you are considering.

Many students are too concerned with finding the "right" major. In fact, you will probably find a good fit in a number of majors. The decision you make should be based on an understanding of yourself, as well as an understanding of the academic and career options available.

Sometimes it takes courage to make the first choice, but remember you can change your mind. Many college students adjust their academic plans and change their majors as they gain more experience and gather additional information.

Career decision-making is an active process that should begin in your freshman year and continue well beyond graduation. Your career journey will be a constant process of exploring, deciding, and re-evaluating!

## **2. How can I find majors that are a good fit for me?**

One way to get started exploring majors and careers is to classify people and careers into six basic types.

Realistic

Investigative

Artistic

Social

Enterprising

Conventional

Most people have a combination of characteristics that may reflect several types, but usually people resemble one or two types more than the others. Knowing about the interest types can help you identify options for further exploration.

## **3. Should I take a career assessment?**

Career assessments are great brainstorming tools. They can help you think of options you've never thought about, or confirm what you are currently considering. They will help you learn more about yourself and tie your interests, abilities, and values to career possibilities.

The staff at University College can help you use assessment results to identify majors at Marshall University that could help you reach your career goals. Then you will want to contact an academic advisor to discuss classes and expectations of the majors you are thinking about.

Remember, a career test won't find you a perfect major. Some jobs may not relate to your interests, but others may pleasantly surprise you. They may open up career paths you have never considered and send you on a career journey you never expected!

## **4. When should I declare a major?**

During your first two years at Marshall University you can be a part of our College of Liberal Arts - Undecided. Students are allowed to remain in this program for up to 58 college credit hours; then you must choose a major.

## **5. How do I declare or change majors?**

When you are ready to declare a major, you should complete a change of curriculum form in the college with which you are currently enrolled. For example, if you switch from science to secondary education, start the paperwork in the College of Science. You will receive more detailed instructions when you start the process. Remember that Marshall University policy requires a 2.0 GPA to move between colleges, and some programs have additional restrictions and/or criteria.

## **6. What's the difference between a minor and secondary major?**

A major is the primary program of courses meeting the requirements for your degree. Minors or secondary majors are a chance to tailor your degree.

Undergraduate minors let you emphasize an area outside your major. You might major in history, but minor in something else that interests you (like Spanish).

A minor requires completion of at least 15 designated hours of course work.

With secondary majors, you examine complex topics from many vantage points. A secondary major requires more hours than a minor, and will vary according to degree type.

## **7. How do I declare a minor or secondary major?**

You should declare a minor or secondary major with the department or academic unit that offers that program.

## **8. How does my major relate to a career?**

When you choose a major, keep in mind you are not always selecting a lifelong career. A biology major can become a biologist and a history major may become a historian. However, any Marshall University major can help you gain the knowledge and transferable skills to apply to jobs in many different fields.

When selecting a major, you are choosing what classes you will take, what you will learn, and what skills you will acquire. Every employer looks for well-rounded workers. A strong education and skills in a variety of areas—from history and English to critical thinking and global awareness—are key elements for future success.

Keep in mind that most college graduates will likely change jobs and career fields several times in their lives. As a college grad, you will continue to develop your skills and identify areas in the workforce that match your interests.

## **9. Should I consider job market demand?**

Since average college graduates will change jobs and career fields at some point in their career journey, it is smart to think about the job market. However, the job market should not be the primary factor used to determine an academic or career choice.

Job market demand can change rapidly, and the factors affecting it are often unpredictable. The careers in demand when you are a freshman may not be in demand by the time you graduate. It is more important for you to select a major or choose career goals that are genuinely interesting to you.

New career fields and jobs emerge as a result of changes in technology and economic trends. The career you will have in 10 years may not exist yet!

## **10. How can I gain experience and build job skills?**

Internships, summer jobs, part-time jobs, and volunteer activities are great ways to start developing the skills you will need. You should contact **Career Services** to help you locate internships and part-time jobs, polish your resume, and prepare for interviews.

Employers need people with strong communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities, computer skills, and leadership/team-oriented skills. A clear career direction is not required to build experience.

You can work on the qualities and skills that all employers seek:

- Interpersonal skills
- Knowledge
- Leadership
- Ethics and integrity
- Adaptability and life skills
- Perseverance
- Continuous learning
- Career orientation
- Multicultural tolerance
- Social responsibility
- Health
- Artistic appreciation



*Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers*