

Relationship Between Majors and Careers

There are three types of relationships that we observe among majors and careers. For some majors there is a very strong one-to-one correlation between the major and a particular career. For other majors, knowing the industry you want to work in can help you identify potential majors. In the third category, majors prepare students for a wide variety of careers in a variety of different types of industries.

You will need to do some thinking about how you want your major to relate to your future career. The questions below will help you begin this thinking process. Each system has advantages and disadvantages, therefore, use the system that suits you best.

- Do you want a major that prepares you well for *one particular career* or do you prefer a major that prepares you well for a *variety of different careers*?
- Do you have a particular career area that you are interested in and would like to explore further?
- Are you attracted to majors that involve coursework in technical areas or to majors that focus on the arts and social sciences?
- Do you plan to go to graduate school or professional school after graduation?
- When preparing for a career, what other criteria will you be considering?

Three Types of Relationships between Majors and Careers

Major Equals Career

Majors in this category are very closely allied to particular careers. The coursework in these majors are designed to help you develop competence in the knowledge and skills necessary for one particular job or related job variations. Entry to these careers is usually limited to people who have been licensed or certified by the appropriate professional organization.

Advantages of selecting on of these types of majors are:

- The relationship between the major and the career is fairly straightforward and easy to understand.
- Once you have chosen your major, you will not need to spend a lot of time doing research about career possibilities.
- The criteria for getting a job are clearly defined.
- There is a direct correlation between coursework and occupational responsibilities.
- Opportunities for hands-on learning will most likely be integrated into the major curriculum.
- It is very easy to become affiliated with a professional organization.

Disadvantages to selecting one of these types of majors include:

- The skills that you develop in these majors are subject to becoming dated or obsolete. You will need to plan on continuing your education throughout your career.



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- Some people feel trapped because wages tend to be relatively high in some of these careers. A change in career may mean a lifestyle change.
- You have to have a very clear idea that this is the career that you want to pursue.
- Coursework for these majors is very specific.

Examples of these types of majors are Accounting and Secondary Education.

Major Equals Industry

Majors in this category prepare you for a variety of careers within particular industries. The coursework in these majors is designed to help you develop competence in several different careers within a particular industry. These majors develop a broad skill base.

Advantages to selecting one of these majors are:

- You do not have to know exactly what career you want to have only what industry you want to work in.
- Your skills are quite diverse and can be used in variety of different positions within different types of organizations. Yet, you will know that you will most likely work within an industry that you enjoy.
- Your skills are not as technically oriented and less likely to become obsolete.
- It is relatively easy to become affiliated with a professional organization.

Disadvantages to selecting one of these majors include:

- You will need to do more career exploration before deciding which jobs to apply for after graduation.
- You may find that the industry that you chose may not interest you forever. If you choose to change industries you may be required to do additional training.

Examples of these types of majors include: Communication Studies, Kinesiology, Art, Organizational Management, Music, and Theatre Arts.

Major and Career Related by Interest and Abilities

These majors develop very broad, transferable skills that can be used in a variety of different careers. These careers can be prepared for by pursuing a variety of different majors. Thus the relationship here is one in which clusters of majors are related to clusters of careers. There is little one-to-one correspondence between a specific major and a specific career or industry.

The same patterns of interests, abilities, and values that attract you to specific careers will also make majors in these areas more appealing. Similarly, the factors that attract you to specific majors will be the same as those that will attract you to specific careers.

Advantages to selecting one of these majors are:

- You do not need to know the specific career or specific industry in which you will plan to work in order to make a good choice of a major.
- It is relatively easy to change careers and/or industries.
- The skills you develop in these majors are not likely to become obsolete.

- If you are a strong scholar, you will be prepared for a variety of professional programs.
- You are required to take a wide variety of courses, so you can explore many of your interests while in college.

Disadvantages to choosing one of these majors include:

- You will need to do more career exploration later in your academic career to decide among all of the possible careers.
- You will need to take initiative to find internships and other experiences that develop job-related skills.
- The initial salaries tend to be somewhat lower in these careers. However, the opportunities for advancement are generally greater.
- To work as a professional in the field, you will most likely need an advanced degree.

Examples of these types of majors include: Mathematics, Art History, Psychology, Religious Studies, and Sociology.



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