How to Choose a Major

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REVIEW YOUR SKILLS AND INTERESTS
You are faced with making a choice, one that will shape the next few years of your life. So it is important to plan carefully. Don't be overly concerned about "hot" majors-what's hot today may be ice cold by the time you graduate. Try not to dwell on so-called "practical" majors-there's no point in taking a practical major if you have absolutely no desire to pursue the subject.

Truth is, most undergraduate majors have little correlation with a person's eventual career. What majors can do for you is give your talents a chance to flourish and round out your background, increasing your chances of doing well in the future.

Keep in mind that the best major is the one that will challenge and stimulate you...the one that will keep you interested throughout your college career. The question is, how will you know which major fits you?

Get to know yourself first. Looking back at what you've accomplished and enjoyed in your life so far will clue you in on what you'll enjoy....and do well in....at college. Take a close look at the different aspects of your life that make you the kind of student and person that you are today.

Education. See what clues your educational background can give you. List your courses, grades, and your reaction-whether you liked, disliked or especially liked each course.

As you review your grades, see if you can determine a pattern. Do you tend to do well in certain subjects? Do the subjects you prefer seem to relate to each other, such as:

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- math and sciences
- liberal arts courses such as English, history, and social studies
- fine arts—painting, drawing, sculpting, photography, drama, music, or dance.

Now take another look at your school experience. Ask yourself:

- What subjects did you like the best? Least? Why was that?
- Did you just have a teacher you liked or did the subject matter excite you?
- Did you do things outside a class to learn more about the subject, like research in the library? Attending lectures?
- Going to museums?
- Did you join a school club that explored this area further?
- What was the most exciting school project you worked on? Why?

A consistent pattern of good grades and likes may be a good indicator for choice of an academic major. A mixed pattern may warrant a discussion with an academic advisor or counselor.

Extracurricular Activities. Your academic life is just one facet of who you are-look beyond your course work. Participation in
extracurricular activities gives insight into what you like doing. Look at your background—college and high school—and examine how you spend your time when you’re not in school.

- Do you belong to any clubs? Which ones?
- Do you play sports? Individual or team sports? Are you an exceptional player?
- Do you write for the school newspaper? Act in school plays? Play in the band?
- Are you in school government? As a member of a group? As a leader?
- Do you get involved in community activities? Work on election campaigns? Volunteer at a hospital?
- Did you study abroad? Why? Where did you go? Was it for the school year or the summer? Did a foreign student stay with your family?

**Work Experience.** This area may be more challenging to evaluate because it’s sometimes difficult to see how part-time and summer jobs have any relevance toward choosing a major. Be assured that everything you’ve done, whether you’ve enjoyed it or not, gives you some insight into who you are and what you like doing. In reviewing your work experience, ask yourself:

- Do you enjoy working with people? Would you rather deal with them on a one-to-one basis or in a group?
- Do you prefer working with data? Do you like words or numbers?
- Would you rather work with things? Do you have a knack for fixing equipment? Sewing? Working on your car?
- Are you entrepreneurial? Did you start your own T-shirt business? Deliver newspapers or organize lawn mowing service; when you were younger?

**Review.** Review what you’ve compiled so far—your lists of courses, school activities, outside activities, and work experiences. Make a list, in each category, of what you consider your high points. For example:

- getting an "A" in chemistry.
- learning a difficult computer program.
- earning a varsity letter in tennis.
- running a successful campaign for class treasurer.
- playing guitar in a band.
- designing an outrageous costume for Halloween.
- being voted "favorite counselor" at summer camp.
- being named "employee of the month."

Come up with five or six examples, and describe each more fully. In simple terms, try to explain

- what you did.
- where.
- with whom.
- what equipment you used.
- why the experience was so memorable.

Once you’ve completed this, put it away. After a few days, you’ll be ready to look at it with a fresh perspective, and be better able to recognize patterns of interests, skills and values. Interests. Do you detect a repetition of the kinds of subjects and activities you enjoy? Do you seem to be more comfortable working with people? Data? Equipment? Some interests may seem contradictory—like public speaking and research—but don’t overlook a single one. Jot them down. Your list may or may not include such diverse interests as

writing  true crime  sports
politics  fund raising  juggling
hiking  theater  math
science  speaking  cooking
traveling  art  friends
reading  charity  work
music  carpentry  cars
computer programming  teaching  engineering
fishing

**Skills.** It’s important to know what you do well because the appropriate major may help you expand your skills. Or you may want to gain new skills to round out your background. For example, if your strongest skills fall into the quantitative area (math and science, economics), you may want to complement these with course work that allows you to develop stronger communication skills.

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Often, individual skills tend to be related, and fall into more general categories. Here are some examples:

**Organizational skills**  **Interpersonal skills**  **Entrepreneurial skills**
Creative skills
Management skills
coordinating
drawing or painting
coordinating work of others
administering
dancing
processing info. or data
budgeting
playing a musical instrument
guiding activities of a team

Scientific skills
Writing skills
tutoring
evaluating
composing copy
helping
designing
developing prose, essays, reports
coaching
researching
editing and proofreading

Technical skills
Research skills
selling
fixing
extracting info. from library
persuading
computing
obtaining info. from people
debating
gathering physical data
constructing

Values. This may be the deciding factor in what kind of choices you make, so now's the time to decide what's really important to you. And since some of your values may be somewhat conflicting, be prepared to set priorities. Commonly expressed values include:

achievement social service variety/change
challenge independence power
status aesthetics high income
prestige creativity recognition
security leisure early entry

At this point, you should have a fairly good idea of how you see yourself. Now you should try to get input from others:

- Talk to an academic advisor or counselor. Show your lists and analyses and see if there's agreement with your conclusions.
- Talk to your parents and friends. Learn how they perceive you.
* Remember, the purpose behind all of this is to provide you with personal insight that will enable you to selectively pursue some areas of interest and eliminate others. Once you know yourself, you will be well on your way to making decisions on what you want to achieve in college and how to achieve it.

TESTING. This can give you a more objective picture of yourself as a student. Tests should not be viewed as conclusive, but they can be good indicators of your knowledge and skills to date. This kind of information may be necessary in order to form a complete evaluation of yourself. Some of the tests you'll want to look at are ones you took in high school. Others are ones you have taken or can take in college. What follows is a fairly representative sampling of high school tests. You may have taken different ones depending on where you live. If you don't remember what tests you took in high school, call high school guidance counselor and request copies of you results.

Aptitude Tests (generally measure potential).
Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) measures verbal and mathematical ability plus standard written English.
American College Test (ACT) covers English, social science, natural science and mathematics.
Differential Aptitude Test (DAT) provides a number of measures including: verbal reasoning, numerical ability, abstract reasoning, and mechanical reasoning.

Achievement Tests (generally measure what you have learned).
College Board Achievement Tests (ACH) include 14 subjects:
English Composition German
French Latin
Hebrew American History and Social Studies
Spanish European History and World Cultures
Mathematics Level 1 Biology
Mathematics-Level 2 Physics
Chemistry
Literature
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) measures performance in reading and mathematics.
Competency Tests measure minimum level of competency in certain reading, writing, and mathematics.
English Placement Test is administered by most colleges in order to place freshmen appropriately.

Vocational Interest Tests measure your interests and compare them to successful performers in a variety of occupations. Some popular tests are the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory, The Self-Directed Search: A Guide to Educational and Vocational Planning, and Campbell Interest and Skill Survey. If you haven't taken these-and would like to -talk with a counselor in Student Counseling (235 Behmler Hall).

Reviewing Test Scores Again, what you're looking for are patterns. One individual test score is probably not that significant, but you need to pay attention to repeated patterns. For instance:

- Are your verbal reasoning scores consistently higher than your quantitative reasoning
scores?
- Do you generally achieve high scores in science? In language tests?
- Are your interest patterns similar to people in artistic fields? In the scientific fields?

Put this information together with your grades and interests, and you should be able to see a clearer picture of yourself. Here's a quick review to help you determine mine what you've learned so far.

1. I can list the courses from high school in which received A's and B's. ___Yes ___No
2. I can discuss in detail my previous accomplishments in school, work, and leisure time. ___Yes ___No
3. I can make a list of five activities that interest me. ___Yes ___No
4. I can list my three strongest skills. ___Yes ___No
5. I have decided which three values mean most to me. ___Yes ___No
6. I have reviewed my test scores and identified patterns of interest. ___Yes ___No

Ideally, you have answered "yes" to all six statements. If you still feel confused at this point, or want confirmation of your conclusions, you should see a counselor in Student Counseling. The best major is the one that will keep you interested throughout your college career.

UTILIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES One terrific asset at UMM is the people. You might never again be in an environment that offers such a range of qualified professionals who can provide you with information and advice, free of charge. These people are here for you.

College Counselors. Whatever major you may be considering, there are counselors who are able to assist you in making your choice. The UMM Counseling Service and Academic Advising Office sponsors an "Undecided Majors" workshop series where they:
- provide information on choosing a major.
- discuss characteristics of different majors.
- compare course requirements of different majors.
- explain the relationship between choice of major and career objectives.

If the thought of choosing a college major—or figuring out what you want to do with your life—makes you feel anxious, you're in good company. So don't feel like you have to face it alone; help is available at Student Counseling. You'll find
- tests to help you evaluate your personality and temperament.
- workshops for students with similar concerns.
- moral support to help you resolve personal conflicts or problems.
- a readiness to listen, to give you the opportunity to talk things out.

Faculty Advisors. They can be consulted regarding the content of their own course and the necessary preparation for graduate and/or professional school. Peer Career Assistants. PCAs are students who have been through the process themselves to informally advise students regarding career concerns.

Career Services. It's a good idea to check out the UMM Career Services early in your academic career because the counselors there are not limited to job placement assistance. They can also
- help you review and evaluate your skills and interests.
- assist students and alumni with graduate and professional school applications.
- conduct Life/Work Planning Workshops.
- provide names of contacts in various fields—from alumni to employers who recruit on campus.
- assist with job search activities.

Written Resources. Another way to seek out information you need is by doing library research. While there are not many published books on choosing a major or how college majors relate to careers, there are undoubtedly new articles and studies being released every day. The following books are valuable resources and can be found in the Career Library (231 Behmler Hall):
PLAN YOUR COURSE OF ACTION

Now that you know yourself better, it's time to explore your possibilities. While you're shopping around, you may want to declare yourself an "undeclared major." Some colleges encourage this because it relieves some of the pressure that freshmen feel upon entering college. It allows you to see what a number of different major fields of study might be like, without officially declaring a major. The question here is, where do you start? First, get to know the majors that are open to you. UMM offers twenty-seven different majors listed below with their respective Holland Code type. Holland Code types can be determined using a number of interest inventories.

- art history (AES)
- liberal arts for human services (SEA)
- studio art (ASI)
- management (ESC)
- mathematics (ICR)
- biology (IRE)
- chemistry (IRE)
- music (ASI)
- computer science (IRE)
- economics (IAS)
- physics (IRE)
- political science (SEC)
- English (AIS)
- psychology (SIE)
- European studies (IES)
- social science (SEC)
- French (ASE)
- sociology (IES)
- philosophy (SAI)
- Spanish (ASE)
- German (ASE)
- speech communication (ASE)
- history (SEI)
- theatre arts (ASE)
- Latin American area studies (IAS)

You may be familiar with political science, English, mathematics, or chemistry, but do you have any real idea what art history, geology, and economics are all about? Before you can decide whether to major in these areas or eliminate them, you should learn more about them. Start by reading the UMM Bulletin descriptions of majors and courses. Once you come up with some that sound interesting to you
- attend an "Undecided Major" workshop (check with Student Counseling).
- talk to juniors and seniors who are majoring in your field of interest.
- join a campus club or group organized around a specific area of interest (check with Student Activities office).

You may also want to meet with an academic advisor or counselor. Come prepared to discuss what areas appeal to you and why. Bring in some of your self-assessment exercises. Academic Advisors and counselors should be able to tell you about different majors in the broadest sense. For example, if you're interested in history, they could tell you how history can be excellent preparation for a wide variety of fields, including: law, teaching, business, public service, journalism and even medicine. Further, a history major can provide
- an excellent breadth of background.
- leadership/management skills.
- strong research/analytical skills.
- planning and organizing skills.
- good writing and verbal skills.
- opportunity to work on self-directed project.
- grad/professional school preparation.

These are all very important factors that employers consider when hiring new college graduates. You may also learn that history, for example, is a very flexible major. The history department may require only 11 courses which may be taken in a non sequential order and your exams may all be essays. Compare that to biology, which might require a total of 19 courses in sequential order, and all exams may be problem-solving tests. Neither major is better or worse. Whether one major is better than another for you depends on:
- what your interests are.
- what you skills and abilities are.
- what occupational areas you want to pursue upon graduation.
- what you impressions are of the faculty/courses in the department you're considering.

Your academic advisor will probably recommend that you talk with a faculty member in the major and perhaps some students in the majors you're considering. Talking with someone so closely involved could give you a better feel for what you'd be getting into.

Get first-hand experience. The best way to determine whether you're going to like something is to try it out. If you think you want to major in political science, take a political science course. Take courses that:
- really interest you.
- are taught by professors who are highly recommended by other students.
- have a reading list that appeals to you.

If you like the first course in a particular field, try another course before you decide to major in that area. If you don't like the first course, talk to a faculty member in that major or your academic advisor to determine why you dislike it. Is it
- the subject matter?
- the professor?
- the entire major?
In your first two years of college, you might want to experiment with many different courses before making any decisions:
- Explore new worlds and find out what's interesting, what's tedious, what's easy and what's difficult.
- Expand your base of information to include whole fields you never knew existed.
- Learn about yourself so that you know who you are, what you like doing, and what's important to you.
- Develop your skills and potential in order to apply your background to diverse career fields.

Evaluate what you've learned to date. You've researched various fields, experimented with courses, talked with faculty, counselors, and fellow students. Now it's time to ask yourself:
- What courses have you liked best? Least? Why?
- How do the majors you're considering relate to your interests, skills, abilities and values?
- How do employers that you might like working for feel about the specific department you're considering? (A Career Services counselor can provide information.)
- What career area/graduate schools have students from these majors gone into? (Check with faculty and/or Career Services).

This should help you narrow your choices to two or three possibilities.

Evaluate the majors you're considering. You're close to making your choice. Take a final look at the major(s) you're still considering. This checklist should help you confirm or reassess your decision.

Do you know: Yes/No
1. What preparatory courses are required? ___ ___
2. What's the minimum grade point average for acceptance into the major? (If applicable) ___ ___
3. How many courses in the major are required? ___ ___
4. Whether the course offerings are sequential or non-sequential? ______
5. If there's a required course-or courses-that may pose scheduling difficulties? ___ ___
6. If the exams are finite reasoning or essays? ______
7. How much freedom there is for elective courses? ___ ___
8. How many credits are needed in order to graduate in that major? ___ ___
9. Is an internship, tutorial, directed study required? ___ ___
10. Is Study Abroad or volunteer experience recommended? ___ ___

When?

Remember, if you need help sifting through these questions, you can always talk to a counselor or academic advisor. Once you've arrived at the answers, the question of choosing a major should fall into place.

Declare your major. There's no avoiding the fact that you have to choose a major—and fulfill the requirement for that major—before you can get your degree. And you can't just accumulate credits indefinitely; you have to be making progress towards graduation.

So make your decision, based on all you've learned about yourself and the major you are selecting. Be assured that you don't have to feel trapped by your choice. You can always declare a different major if you change your mind. Many students go through changes. Fortunately, UMM allows you some flexibility. Just don't feel compelled to reconsider your choice simply because:
- you don't do well in class.
- you're not overly impressed with a professor.
- you worry that you should major in something more "practical."
- your parents, relatives and family friends worry that you should major in something more "practical."
- you know someone who majored in something else and just got a terrific job or was accepted into the best graduate school.

*Remember that your choice of a major isn't critical. What you do with the major is!

MAXIMIZE YOUR OPTIONS.

When you've decided what you plan to major in, you'll want to maximize that course of study for the best return on your investment—which in this case is time. You're going to spend a number of years in college and you want to make the most of it. A good place to start is when you're selecting course work for your major.

Look at your requirements. You'll find that you have certain requirements that you must fulfill in order to get your degree, both for your general education requirements and for your selected major.

General Education requirements are broad in scope, because they are designed to provide solid grounding, no matter what major you choose. A number of courses are usually offered that can meet these requirements, mostly during your freshman and sophomore years.

Departmental major requirements are specific in nature, because they're designed to give you an area of specialization. The amount of individual freedom for picking courses varies according to the discipline. Most majors have specific course work required
in the lower levels; other majors may have recommended course work in the lower levels. However, the bulk of your major course work will undoubtedly be taken in your junior and senior years. Look at the big picture. True, you must fulfill all requirements mentioned above. But don't become so concerned with the obligations that you overlook greater opportunities. It's important that you get the best education you can, and you must assume responsibility for making that happen. So as you evaluate what you must take, see if you can orchestrate it creatively. If you can, try and take some courses each semester that relate to each other. For example, if you need to satisfy requirements in math, natural or social sciences, art and business, consider taking courses in statistics, psychology, or others. In this way, you may be able to see how they all work together. If you are taking related courses in different disciplines, let you professors know. They may allow you to write one final multidisciplinary paper, or work on projects that are related.

The value of this type of orientation towards learning cannot be overestimated.  
- You'll enhance your education.  
- You'll intrigue professors with your initiative, and could develop some outstanding mentors.  
- You'll impress employers with our innovation, initiative, organizational skills, creativity, and follow-through-all important job skills.

Most of all, remain flexible. Be willing to experiment so that you can stretch yourself. If you don't take advantage of intellectual opportunities now, you probably won't ever have a similar opportunity. So what should you take? Anything and everything that looks interesting. You'll be amazed to find out how many courses that you like will satisfy one requirement or another. Classes with good reading lists. A trip to the bookstore to see who's requiring what books is not only fun but very instructive. You can get a real sense of a professor's interests by the books one recommends. Courses taught by "outstanding" professors. Interestingly enough, many times the subject matter is less important than who's teaching it. "Great" professors are an unbelievable treat no matter what they teach. What you will learn form them will have far greater impact on your life than the content of any one course.

Courses from other schools. Just because you're at UMM doesn't mean you can't take courses at other colleges.

Courses at other campuses. Since UMM is part of the University of Minnesota system, it's possible to take courses at another UM college.

Studies abroad. Although it may seem most appropriate for foreign language or international studies majors, studying abroad is an opportunity that's available to almost any student. Even if it doesn't specifically relate to your major or career goals, it can be a valuable life experience that may serve you well in the future. In general, these studies are taken at a foreign school, usually during a summer or junior/senior year. Check with your advisor and the UMM Center for International Programs (CIP) to see which programs are available.

Independent/Directed studies. Sometimes you'll discover an area of interest where there is no course offering at UMM but you'd like to explore this topic further. An avenue for doing this is arranging an independent study course through a discipline faculty member or University College (228 Community Services). All you usually need is a proposal of what you'd like to study and the approval of a faculty member who's willing to sponsor the project for credit, and the approval of the Division Chairperson.

Creating your own major. Some students who have academic interest in a field not offered as a regular major decide to create their own. It could be an individualized major like International Relations, Public Relations or Women's Studies. Or an interdisciplinary major, combining more than one field like Psychobiology (psychology and biology) or Arts Administration (management and art history). UMM offers you this option. If you're interested in pursuing it, a few words of advice:  
- This requires a lot of extra work, so be prepared to go through a mass of red tape.  
- Consider whether your major will be a help or a handicap in the future. Majors that are too specialized, esoteric or "creative" may be misunderstood, and therefore difficult to translate into a career or further studies. Consult a faculty advisor or Career Services Counselor and, perhaps, a potential employer or two.

Choosing a minor. A minor is a secondary area of specialization that allows you to take a concentration of courses in another field. While some students choose minors related to their majors such as Spanish and Latin American Area Studies; others use it as a means of specialization, concentrating in such areas as microbiology or English literature. Some students complete a minor just because they like a particular subject. Others use it to add "practical" courses-like accounting, computer science, marketing, statistics and communication studies-to a liberal arts degree.

There are other ways to augment your major(s) as well. You can:

Choose a double major. This allows you to focus equally on two subject areas. It's usually a good idea to pick two areas that complement each other. A double major is different than a major/minor in that no area is relegated to lesser importance.

Work with a professor on specific research. This is particularly valuable if you're considering graduate/professional school or teaching at the college level. It's also a good idea if you want to explore a particular subject matter in depth, or develop a close relationship with a professor. In any event, it will allow you to refine research skills and apply knowledge gained through coursework. Again, there are faculty advisors and counselors who can advise you if you find yourself in this situation. They can help you explore your feelings, identify what's wrong so that you can pick a more appropriate school, and research different options.
Learn outside the classroom. What you do at school in your spare time can have a bearing on how you do in the real world. Participation in team sports can help prepare you for collaborating with colleagues in business. Campaigning for student leadership positions can develop your sales and administrative skills.

Take advantage of the many opportunities available at UMM. Think about joining an organization related to your major; it not only gives you the chance to practice and enhance your skills, but to interact with people who share your interests and possibly make valuable contacts as well. Say you're a management major who enjoys theater-why not keep books for UMM's theatre productions? And if you're a science major interested in communications, consider working at KUMM's radio station-either on the controls or on air as Science Reporter. Open yourself up to the possibilities.

BUILD FOR THE FUTURE.

Once you determine your major field of study, don't let yourself fall into the trap of concentrating solely on your course work. College is your chance to broaden, not limit, your horizons. Besides, chances are slim that your major-whatever it is-will relate directly to your job twenty years after you graduate from UMM.

What your major should do is prepare you for a wide range of options. In the meantime, you should try to help along the process. Here's how you can get things rolling.

Find out if you really need or want a graduate degree. In some fields, it's a necessity; in others, it's optional. More and more students are opting for grad schools, whether for a specific credential in such disciplines as law, medicine, business, or social work...or for more advanced and intensive study, in areas such as economics, sociology, French literature.

If you're considering applying to graduate school, it's a good idea to find out, as early as possible, what makes a successful candidate. You may be surprised. For instance, some of the top business schools in the country prefer not to accept applicants with undergraduate degrees in business; they look instead for a more varied background, such as liberal arts. And some medical schools accept as many English, psychology and mathematics majors as biology majors.

If you're wondering if grad school is right for you-or which grad school would be right-remember that you can always talk to a faculty advisor or Career Services Counselor. It might also help you put the picture into focus if you explore the job market. Talk to the experts.

Identify people in jobs that appeal to you. Professionals in the field are perhaps the richest source of current information about a field. It's their living. When you talk with them, find out:
- What they do on a daily basis...
- What they like about what they do.
- What their college major was.
- What further education or other preparation they had.
- What skills they use in the job.
- What recommendations they have regarding choice of a major, minor, electives and graduate school.
- What other factors are considered when hiring someone in this field.

Approach recruiters at organizations that interest you. Most large employers have a college relations and recruiting department. Many have established excellent relationships with UMM, and are more than happy to meet with students. If you're at all interested in one of these employers, make it a point to meet with a recruiter and find out:
- How their organization is structured.
- What types of people they hire for what jobs.
- How many college graduates they hire each year. In what majors.
- What they look for in terms of educational background, extracurricular activities, work experience.
- Whether they offer internships or cooperative educational programs.

Get out in the marketplace. When you realize that there are over 25,000 different types of jobs and literally thousands of employers you can work for, it makes sense to begin narrowing your choices. One good way to do this is by getting out into the marketplace. There are some terrific ways to do this while you're still in school.

Internships are a good way to gain experience, learn about an area of work, and make contacts for the future. Internships are usually part-time work assignments for a specific person or organization, and they generally last one quarter or summer, although they can be arranged for longer periods of time. In many cases, you can continue to take courses while you intern. Internships can be arranged through UMM faculty or The Career Services. As a rule, internships
- tend to be project-oriented.
- normally have a specific start and stop date.
- are either for pay or credit, although you can sometimes arrange both.
- can be set up with employers that don't currently offer them, if you sell yourself.

Field studies are projects orchestrated by students who solicit an employer, public agency, school or the other organization in order to apply classroom experience to a real-life situation. They're usually
- done with a small group of students (3 or 4) who work closely with a faculty member to
solve a problem identified by the organization.
- seen as a mini-consulting assignment.
- not for pay, but expenses are provided.
- one during junior or senior year.

Summer jobs can be valuable not only as a good source of income, but as a good start toward building your career.
- It's a good idea to try and find a job in an industry or with employer that interests you.
- Employers evaluate summer work experience positively, particularly if you returned to
  the same employer for more than one summer, or if you were able to build on your skill base.
- Attend annual Summer Job/Camp Fair in the winter.

Build on your experiences whether you pursue the opportunities already mentioned or create your own, practical experiences will
help you in your transition to the real world. They can help you:
- confirm or re-evaluate your academic and career interests and goals.
- establish professional contacts for the future.
- prepare you for the work environment.

Sometimes, these experiences can lead to a job offer after you graduate. As you can see, exposure to the real world can be
valuable. It will certainly broaden your education. Don't limit your college experience to rashly selecting a major and cramming to
get good grades. A high GPA is important, particularly if you want to go to grad school. But well-rounded graduates will win out in
the end if they can point to:
- a carefully selected major field of study, based on their real interests and skills.
- thoughtfully chosen electives that complement their course work and expand
  intellectual horizon.
- a progressive series of work and other experiences-paid and unpaid-that show a
  dedication to hard work and a history of achievement.

What's important to know up front is that you can accomplish almost anything you want to in college if you work hard. The most
difficult part of the whole process is that there are so many choices to make. But being able to make choices is an integral part of
making it in the real world. It gets easier as you go along. So work on it. Get to know yourself. Seek out information. Take the
initiative. Use campus resources. Challenge yourself-both intellectually and experientially. And persevere. The more you do, the
more rewarding your college experience will be.

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