

HOW TO CHOOSE A MAJOR: NAVIGATING YOUR WAY

Choosing a major can be a difficult and confusing process but don't let that hinder you. Some students enter college having decided on a major and others need help narrowing down their options. Many students change their major 1-3 times. Keep in mind that choosing a major or field of study is not the same as choosing a career.

Studying any of the majors offered at Goucher will help you develop skills and competencies that you can use in a variety of occupational settings. Most majors will help prepare you for a variety of career possibilities, depending on how you want to utilize your skills. **Don't lose too much sleep over your major choice!** Your major does not dictate your future, nor does it trap you in one career field for the rest of your life. Many people end up doing things outside of their majors or decide to change careers.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN CHOOSING A MAJOR:

- Careers very rarely require specific undergraduate majors, so study something you will enjoy.
- While you'll want to be mindful of completing requirements for graduation, it is OK to change your major.
- Employers consider more than just your major, so it will be very important to articulate the skills you develop in your courses major and gain experience in your industry of interest.

HOW CAN THE CEO HELP?

The CEO offers several services and resources that can help you navigate your way through the process of choosing a major. Make an appointment with a career advisor to help you during any step of the process. Here are a few ways we can offer help:

- Showing you online resources that include information about many career fields
- Reviewing the career exploration self-assessment (detailed on next page) and discussing the results
- Engaging you in conversations about internships, networking, informational interviewing, and job shadowing

WHAT STEPS CAN YOU TAKE?

There are many steps you can take on your own to start your major exploration. You can begin with some self-reflection by asking yourself questions about your interests, strengths, and values. Then, you can start researching different career fields. Finally, you can talk to someone in your desired field as well as gain hands-on experience to inform your choice of major.

1. LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

You need to understand yourself before you can choose a major that fits you. Think about these questions to get started.

- What courses do you enjoy?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- What activities are you involved in on campus or in your communities?
- What kinds of things do you do well?
- What is important to you? (Money? Prestige? Creativity?)
- What type of work environment interests you? (Physical **and** social environment)
- What is your dream job?

The CEO offers several [self-assessments and tools](#) that can assist with this reflection process. One in particular is the [O*Net Interest Profiler](#), an interactive tool to identify careers that align with your interests.

2. RESEARCH CAREER OPTIONS

Begin exploring what broad career fields match up well with the things you have learned about yourself. Research salaries, working conditions, training & qualifications, and daily responsibilities. Here are a [few helpful resources](#):

- Review these sites:
 - [The Muse Career Paths](#) is a series of blog posts written by authors representing a variety of industries to help you explore potential career paths, link majors to careers, and hear career stories from authentic voices.
 - [O*net Online](#) allows you to find occupations using keywords or using a list of skills. This site is fairly detailed--good starting points could be the list of tasks at the top of each career and/or related occupations near the bottom. You'll find the interactive tool, [O*Net Interest Profiler](#), to help identify careers that align with your interests.

- [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) is another resource to learn about various aspects of career fields, including required education, potential earnings and job prospects, and job search tips.
- Read job descriptions for advertised openings. Handshake, Indeed, and LinkedIn have listings for a variety of fields.
- If you have a few majors you're considering, check out What Can I Do With This Major? This website offers information about possible careers for different majors. (Note: the majors are not Goucher-specific, so look for those related to majors offered at Goucher. As a paid resource, you should access through [Goucher's page](#))

3. GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF POSSIBLE MAJORS

Next, review the majors Goucher offers. Try eliminating ones that do not interest you and start researching your favorites.

- Talk to other students who are in these majors.
- Talk to faculty members in these areas.
- Review the courses required by that major and, if you can, try taking an introductory course in an area of interest.
- Consider Major/Minor or Double Major combinations (review requirements in your catalogue and speak to your advisor).
- Visit the [Goucher Undergraduate Program Finder](#) to learn detailed information on each major Goucher offers.

4. SPEAK TO EXPERTS

One of the best ways to learn if a major (or career) is right for you is to speak with those who are in positions and industries that appeal to you. These brief exchanges are called information interviews (also called career conversations), and they are vital to every step of the career development process. See the CEO's [informational interview resources](#) to learn more.

The CEO can help you prepare for an informational interview with someone in a particular job, company, and industry, give you an overview of how to find potential contacts, and help guide you through [setting up a LinkedIn profile](#).

5. GAIN FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE

If you are still unsure of the major you would like to choose, you can try getting more experience in that field. Completing internships or volunteer activities related to the major you are considering can help you get a better idea of your passions and interests. Internships:

- Help students explore career paths, enhance skills, and provide opportunities to experience the world of work.
- Are a valuable way to explore careers and industries, while gaining experience and meeting professionals in those fields.
- Can be paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time, for academic credit or not, for a specific time period.

The Career Education Office is here to offer support as you consider majors and explore career paths. [Schedule an appointment](#) to meet individually with a member of the CEO team.

For other tips & questions contact the CEO at career@goucher.edu or visit the CEO website at www.goucher.edu/CEO

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