

Supporting Your Student Through the Selection of a Major



The Student's Story:

She is taking a general education class in English Literature. It was a requirement, but she is actually really enjoying it. She entered college last year wanting to pursue a career in business, maybe open her own clothing store. However, after taking the English class with Professor Dayton, he was so impressed with her work that he asked if she had ever considered a career in teaching. She met with her advisor and found out what she needs to do to make the switch. That wasn't the hard part, though. The hard part will be telling her parents.

The Parental Perspective:

You are so excited that your daughter is coming home for a visit. You haven't seen her for months and you can't wait to hear how her sophomore year is going. The first year was a learning experience for you all—lots of questions, concerns, worries and surprises popped up. However, now she is settled in and stable, no more surprises. Just smooth sailing until graduation. Until she shares at dinner that night that she has decided to change her major and career path.

How to Be Helpful:

- Listen!
- Support the exploration of a variety of potential careers, no matter how many times your student changes her mind.
- And, encourage her to build skills and strengths out of the classroom that complement her in the classroom learning.

Possible reflection questions to ask students exploring a major selection:

- What have been some of your favorite classes? Why?
- How have you performed in these classes? What have you learned?
- What are your passions? What do you really care about and want to contribute to?
- What majors float to the top given your favorite classes and passions?
- How does this major(s) relate to career options of interest?
- What are the implications of changing your major now?

- Encourage your student to make academics a priority.
- Identify the talents and abilities you have observed in your student and share them.
- Encourage your student to find his passion and pursue a vocation rather than simply guaranteeing himself a job.

What Do I Need to Know as a Parent?

- Be aware that the majority of college students change their major AT LEAST ONCE.
- Recognize that many career choices today require further schooling such as graduate school or professional school.
- Encourage your student to visit the Career Center and an academic advisor every year of college. It isn't just for seniors anymore!
- Ask intentional questions to help your student filter through what can be a difficult decision.
- Don't...
 - push** earning potential as a sole decision-making factor.
 - bug** your student about changing his mind and not sticking with a major.
 - push** "occupation specific" degrees over a liberal arts degree.
- Be careful to not expect your student to follow in your footsteps or take over the family career.
- Promote internships, job shadowing and mentoring as a means to "test" possible majors and career paths.

Skill sets that will complement any career your student pursues:

- ✓ Computer
- ✓ Quantitative
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Scientific
- ✓ Foreign language
- ✓ Leadership

Adapted from www.jobweb.com/resources/library/Parents/10_Tips_for_Parents_19_01.htm

Quick Links

- ✓ Job Web – "A Career Planning Course for Parents" by Sally Kearsley, www.jobweb.com/resources/library/Parents/A_Career_Planning_130_01.htm