

# Myths and Facts about Major and Career Choice

As you decide on a major and career, don't fall prey to these common myths:

**MYTH:** "Something is wrong with me if I don't know what I want to do."

**FACT:** Most college students don't have a clear idea of what they want to major in or do for a career. This is normal. With research and support, you can make decisions that are right for you.

**MYTH:** "There is only ONE career for me."

**FACT:** The combination of elements that determine career satisfaction are found in many different careers. For example, if you like helping people in an artistic way, you may be happy as a dance therapist or a high school art teacher.

**MYTH:** "If I choose a major or a career, I'll be stuck with it forever."

**FACT:** Most majors prepare you for a variety of careers. When you combine the skills you'll learn in your major with others you'll gain from full-time work, internships, and other activities, you'll have the ability to move in a variety of directions. Most people have multiple careers and jobs during their work lives.

**MYTH:** "I've failed if I make the wrong choice."

**FACT:** You only fail when you do not adapt. If you learn a major or career choice is not right for you, change it.

**MYTH:** "Happiness is impossible without the perfect career."

**FACT:** Career can be a major source of satisfaction in life, but it is not everything. Sometimes a job simply earns money so that other time can be spent on the things that really make you happy.

**MYTH:** "There is a test or an expert that can tell me what to do with the rest of my life."

**FACT:** Only you know what's best for yourself. There are people and resources you can use for support, but in the end you make your own decisions.

Counselors and the Career/Transfer Center at Citrus can help you clarify information about your interests, skills, personality, or decision-making patterns. Based on your individual situation, counselors may suggest an assessment to help with this. Remember, no test or expert knows you better than you do.

**MYTH:** "I won't be qualified to do anything with a liberal arts degree."

**FACT:** You will be more qualified than most: the skills you develop in a liberal arts curriculum—communication, human interaction, analysis, and flexibility—are those most desired by employers.

**MYTH:** "I just need a little more information before I can make a decision."

**FACT:** Although it's important to make a well-informed decision, sometimes people are paralyzed because they think that no matter how much information they have gathered, it's not enough. They indefinitely put off making a decision. Don't let this happen to you. Collect enough information about your major or career choice. But realize that even after you make a decision, you will still be able to collect more information and evaluate whether it was the right one.

**MYTH:** "You need an exact match between your course of study/major and a future career."

**FACT:** Though there are some careers that require specific training, such as nursing, engineering, accounting, etc., there are more careers that do not follow from a specific course of study/major. In fact, a recent study by the College Placement Council indicated that the majority of college graduates are successfully in fields not directly related to their academic majors!

**MYTH:** "Once you have a course of study/major, you must stick with it your entire college career."

**FACT:** More than 70% of college students change their course of study/major at some point during college.

**MYTH:** "Job market demand should be the primary determinant of an academic choice."

**FACT:** Selecting a course of study/major because it is currently "hot" on the market can be dangerous. Though it is important to look at the potential for employment, the job market is difficult to predict. What is in demand when you are a freshman may not be in demand by the time you graduate. You are on much firmer ground when you select a course of study/major that truly interests you, and find a way to apply it to a career.

**MYTH:** "You must pursue a certain specific course of study/major in order to prepare adequately for professional schools such as dentistry, law, business, medicine, etc."

**FACT:** Most professional schools do not require a specific course of study/major, as long as you meet certain academic courses. For example, in recent years, liberal arts majors have had a greater success with acceptance to medical schools than biology majors.

**MYTH:** "Your academic course of study/major is the primary determinant of your future career success."

**FACT:** A college major alone is not enough to help you prepare adequately for a career. Internships, jobs, extracurricular activities, and volunteer work all contribute to your growth as a well- rounded person, and in developing your skills and abilities. In fact, employers place a very high value on these types of " extra " activities when looking for employees.

**MYTH:** "Your career path will remain fairly stable throughout your adult life."

**FACT:** Nearly half of all graduates change their career plans after they finish college, and the average person changes careers nearly 8 times in his/her lifetime.

**Your college course of study/major does not train you for a single, specific job.** Instead, it seeks to develop your aptitude and abilities so that you can use them in the broadest variety of careers. That is why it is important to choose a course of study/major that allows your individual talents to flourish. Find a course of study/major that fits YOU, rather than trying to fit yourself into a course of study/major. Undergraduate education is not so much a determinant of what you want to BE, as much as what you are prepared to BECOME.

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Sources: College is Only the Beginning, edited by John N. Gardner and A Jerome Jewler; What Color is Your Parachute, by Richard Nelson Bolles; What Can I Do With a Major In...? by Lawrence R Malnig; Indiana University Bloomington