



UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHICH MAJOR TO CHOOSE?

DON'T PANIC!

Up to 80% of entering first-year students indicate that they are not certain of their choice of major!

It might seem like *all* of your friends are certain which major they will pursue, that you are the *only* student that doesn't know.

The **REALITY** is that most first-year students are uncertain about which major they will choose!

And that is **OK!**



There are Resources to Help You Choose a Major...

FIVE QUESTIONS

As you begin to search for information, consider the following questions. Try to keep these questions in mind as you sort through and evaluate the information that you gather.

1. *What are your interests?*

Think about the kinds of things that you enjoy. What activities do you like to participate in? What do you enjoy watching on TV or reading, studying, or talking about? What hobbies do you actively pursue? Do you enjoy group activities, or do you prefer working alone? Do you enjoy outdoor activities or being indoors? Are you interested in science fiction, science fact, or neither? What courses did you enjoy most in high school? When you fantasize about a career, what do you think you would enjoy doing or being? What kinds of activities are you *not* interested in, and why? Imagine not being interested in a subject that you would study in depth for four years or more. The importance of considering your interests in choosing a major should not be underestimated. Would you be interested in the work required in a particular major?

2. *What are your abilities?*

Try to take an objective look at your past performance in scholastic as well as in non-scholastic work. How do your college entrance exam scores and high school performance compare to those of other students? What are the projections for your success in certain academic areas at Coppin State? How have others judged your performance in the past? Have you won scholastic honors or awards for excellence in art, music, sports, or other

performance areas? Do you seem to have a natural talent for helping other people, working with numbers, influencing others, solving problems, using your hands, or organizing activities? How strong are your study skills? Do you have the ability to be successful in the work required in a particular major?

3. What are your values?

Think about the values and principles that are guiding your life. Are your decisions and choices influenced by certain religious, philosophical, moral, or ethical beliefs and teachings? Do you consider service to others to be an important part of your personal philosophy? Is a broad undergraduate education more important to you than a more narrowly-focused program or is the opposite true? Do you value financial security above all else? Where do you stand politically? Would you rather save the rain forest or cut them down? Why? What are your moral values? What place does a family have in your future? Will your values match the requirements and outcomes of a potential major or career?

4. What are your motivations?

Ask yourself why you might be considering a particular major. Do your strongest motivations come from your interests, your abilities, your values, or from some other factors? Are outside pressures (from family, peers, or the job market) shaping and influencing your decisions? Are you thinking about choosing a major because you believe it will be easy, or because it is what somebody else said you “should” do, or because you think you could ensure a good job and earn a high salary? Would your motivation be strong enough to allow you to succeed in a major even if other factors seemed to direct you away from that major?

5. What are your realities?

Consider what situations in your life may have a strong and overriding influence on your choice of major. Do your interests, abilities, values, and motivations conflict with each other, or are they in agreement? Sometimes students are very interested in a major but find that they do not have the abilities to handle the academic demands of the required courses. On the other hand, some students have considerable abilities in a particular area but do not have any real interest in studying that topic. And sometimes students have both interests and abilities in an area but find that the realities of the job market are such that they are not willing to risk a four year (or more) investment of time and money on a major that appears to lead to bleak employment chances.

What other realities might you face in choosing your major? Will you be able to meet entrance-to-major requirements on time, particularly in programs with administrative enrollment controls? How much extra time will it take to graduate if you have already completed a significant number of credits that cannot be applied to a major? Does Coppin offer the major(s) that you are considering or would you have to transfer to another school? Can you afford to finance a four or five year degree, or can you afford only two years of college education? Consider these and other outside factors that may make a significant difference to you. Is your choice of major a realistic one?

Perhaps you are concerned that you do not have a career in mind for which you want to prepare. You want to keep your options open. Selecting a major involves knowing yourself and understanding the major fields of study available to you. Study your college catalog, consider what you have learned about your skills, interest and values, and discuss the possibilities with your faculty advisor or a staff member in the Career Services Center. This information will help you consider the most important issues involved in selecting a major.

There are many ways to gather information about a major. Some of these include the following:

1. Read the college catalog. While this may seem very basic, it is a resource that is often overlooked. Catalog listings include course descriptions for you to read, information on what kinds of work graduates have gone into and ways that this major prepares a student for graduate school.
2. Speak to students in the major. Advanced students in the major will be able to give you an idea about their course of study, what their career goals are, descriptions of professors, etc.
3. Speak with alumni. This can be informally or you may solicit help from faculty or staff in the Career Services Center.
4. Visit with professors. Professors, while they may be biased toward their particular major, are also good sources of information about what students in the major have gone on to do, what kinds of benefits students get from majoring in their subject area, and can also tell you about opportunities for increased exposure to the discipline through teaching assistantships in the department and getting involved in professional associations as a student member.
5. Talk with the staff in the Career Services Center. The CSC staff is available to discuss different options with you. The Career Resource Library has books which describe typical career areas for students in various majors. There are also a variety of exercises and interest inventories which the Career Services Center offers which can help you sort out how your interests compare with others. Does a given major seem like a good fit, given your unique interests and goals?
6. Read departmental literature which can often be obtained from a department secretary upon request. This is information which the department has put together to give students like you the information you need to make an informed decision about whether this is an appropriate major. It also may list important departmental requirements.

FINAL STEP: DECLARATION OF MAJOR



Declaring a major is to officially choose the course of study which you would like to pursue. Admission to the college is not automatic admission to a major program. Each major department interviews and accepts its own students.

Students should report to the **Academic Advisement Office** to obtain a *Declaration of Major Form*, schedule an appointment to see the appropriate department **chairperson**, obtain acceptance in the major, and return the completed form to the Academic Advisement Office.