

# **CENTER FOR CAREER AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**



**CHOOSING A MAJOR**

# **GUIDEBOOK**



**MORAVIAN  
COLLEGE**

## **Have further questions?**

**Please contact the Center for Career and Civic Engagement at 610-861-1509, stop by the office or send an email to [careercivic@moravian.edu](mailto:careercivic@moravian.edu).**

**HOURS OF OPERATION: Monday- Friday from 8:00am-4:30pm.**

## 4 MYTHS ABOUT SELECTING A MAJOR

Many students have misconceptions about majors and the impact that choice will have on their lives. Such thoughts may become overwhelming, impeding the decision making process. Some common misconceptions include:

**1. My major will determine my career.**

False:

While certain majors such as education, computer science, nursing, and accounting prepare students for specific career paths, most majors provide background and skills that are transferable to many career fields. The major predictor of career path lies more in the chosen experiences (internships, volunteer, externships, etc.) that are gained during college. Regardless of major, career opportunities are available.

**2. I can ensure employment after graduation by choosing a career in a "high demand" field.**

False:

The job market moves in cycles. Jobs that are considered "hot" right now may not be when you graduate. Focus on building and developing skills that will make you competitive for the changing job market. Top transferable skills sought by employers include verbal and written communication, problem-solving, team-building, and computer skills.

**3. It is a good idea to focus on my general education courses first and decide on a major later.**

False:

General education requirements can vary greatly from major to major. So, it is essential that you begin to explore majors as early as possible in your college career. Work closely with your faculty advisor each semester to choose courses. Remember that any delay in choosing/changing a major may extend your graduation date beyond four years, especially in majors that have a very structured course sequence.

**4. The best way to find a major is to take courses in different areas until I find one that really interests me.**

False:

Exploring majors by sampling courses and eliminating potential majors one course at a time is both time-consuming and expensive. You can learn a lot about majors by reviewing course descriptions and program requirements, talking with faculty and students in various majors, participating in student organizations related to your major of interest, and browsing through required textbooks in the bookstore. Additional ideas for making an informed decision about your major are highlighted throughout this guide.

## 4 TRUTHS ABOUT SELECTING A MAJOR

**1. You may be experiencing any number of emotions surrounding major selection.**

Some might include anxiety, confusion, fear, excitement, reluctance, pressure, and potentially more. This is normal! The Center for Career and Civic Engagement can guide you through this process.

**2. You are not alone in these feelings.**

Picking a major can be a daunting decision for anyone. This does not necessarily mean that your major selection is directly related to or predicts your future career success.

**3. The decision is yours to make.**

While important people in your life might be playing a role in your choice of major, you must make the decision and be comfortable with the choice.

**4. You will benefit from reading this guide.**

Before you buckle down and pick your major, take a look through this guide.

## CHOOSING A MAJOR

Choosing a major is a process that involves assessing, researching, and evaluating your options. Because it takes some time to work through the steps it is important to start this process as soon as possible. This guide will help you navigate the challenge of exploring, choosing, and declaring a major that is the best fit for you.

Know that the Center for Career and Civic Engagement can meet you wherever you are in this process. The content outline below will guide you to the page that best reflects your current decision making stage.

Stage 1= Learn about Yourself	It is hard to know where you are going without acknowledgment of where you have been and what makes you, you.	Page 5
Stage 2 = Gather Information	Researching and gathering information about majors and careers is necessary to make an informed choice.	Page 6
Stage 3 = Evaluate your Options	Reviewing and evaluating major and career options is important to the decision making process.	Page 7
Stage 4 = Declare your Major	Committing to a major is a big decision. Follow our flowchart to determine if you have taken all of the major steps to gain as much information as possible.	Page 8



(Source: <http://carefreecampus.com/trouble-choosing-your-college-major/>)

## STAGE 1. LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF

Self-assessment is an essential element in making informed and realistic decisions about your major and career. The following resources help you to identify and explore important aspects of your personality and create a clear picture of your career preferences.

### A. Career Assessments and Inventories

Career assessments help you to identify your skills, abilities, interests and values. The results obtained can help you more clearly identify and target both majors and careers that complement your personality.

The Center for Career and Civic Engagement offers three primary career assessment instruments:

- Focus 2, an interactive online career and educational planning tool.
- Strong Interest Inventory (SII), an assessment which outlines your work-related interests across six occupational themes.
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), an extensive personality assessment that can help outline your preferences in a various work settings and environments.

Focus 2 is available online through the Center for Career and Civic Engagement website. For the SII or MBTI, please consult with a member of our staff. During this meeting, a staff member will determine which assessment may be most appropriate for your situation.

After completing an assessment, make an appointment with a staff member to review your personal results and learn how these results can be utilized in the major selection process. After reviewing results, we can better strategize what your next steps might be.

### B. Reflection

Reflection is defined as fixing your thoughts on something or giving careful consideration to it. Learning about yourself and your preferences requires some quiet space to reflect on your past experiences and future aspirations.

The questions below are designed to help you look at careers and work life in a new way. These questions generate ideas which will lead you to discover more possibilities, ask more questions, and explore alternative careers and majors.

- How do you define success?
- What activities do you engage in, or talk about, that cause you to lose track of time?
- If money was not a concern, what work would you be willing to do for FREE?
- What ONE thing would you dare to attempt if you knew you could not fail?
- What type of issues, needs, and opportunities motivate you and seem to give you energy?
- Describe the “perfect job” (not life) in terms of duties and responsibilities.

(Source: Thinking Skills: Finding Your Purpose. Retrieved May 2007, Real World University.  
<http://www.rwuniversity.com/articles.cfm?=32&action=show>)

## STAGE 2. GATHER INFORMATION

So you have gained some knowledge about your skills, interests and values. You have identified majors and careers that are compatible with your developing professional identity. Now, it is time to use the resources of the Center for Career and Civic Engagement to gather more information related to specific majors and careers. Having a greater understanding of specific majors and careers will help you narrow down your options and make informed decisions about your future.

### A. Strategies for exploring majors

1. Read the descriptions of courses offered at Moravian College ([moravian.edu/departments](http://moravian.edu/departments)). This can give you valuable insight about majors you may be considering or pique your interest in areas you may not have considered.
2. Gain a better understanding of majors from your classmates! Informational interviews are a great way to get practical information about a specific major. *The Center can connect you with upperclassman in your major of interest to learn more about the curriculum.*  
Sample informational interview questions include:
  - Why did you choose this major?
  - What do you like most about this major?
  - What do you like least about this major?
  - What type of skills do you think are needed to be successful in this major?
  - Describe a typical class in regard to class size, academic demands, and expectations.
  - What advice do you give to someone interested in pursuing this major?
3. Become involved in the student clubs and organizations directly related to specific majors and careers. Involvement in one of these groups may help you to meet and interact with students and faculty with interests similar to your own.
4. Gain experience through volunteer activities, part-time jobs and summer employment. These may help you determine the suitability of a particular major. *Visit the Center for Career and Civic Engagement to learn more about these opportunities.*
5. Test your interest in an occupation by job shadowing with a professional currently working in a field. You will learn more about the occupation, understand what a particular job is like on a daily basis, develop professional contacts, and experience the culture of an organization. *The Center for Career and Civic Engagement can help arrange job shadowing experiences with an alum in your field of interest!*

### B. Resources for exploring majors:

- *What can I do with a major in...?* (<http://whatcanidowiththismajor.com/major/>): This site outlines common career areas, potential employers and strategies designed to maximize career opportunities.
- *Occupational Outlook Handbook* ([www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)): Provides information on a wide range of occupations and includes job outlook projections, average earnings and educational requirements.
- *O\*Net* (<http://online.onetcenter.org>): Provides extensive information on hundreds of occupations including daily tasks and occupational overviews.
- *The Career Zone* (<https://www.careerzone.ny.gov/views/careerzone/index.jsf>): A career exploration and planning system.



## STAGE 3. EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS

With knowledge of both potential majors and careers, you are ready to evaluate your options and make a decision.

### A. Prioritize your options

Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each option based on your research. Be sure to keep in mind your own interests, values and motivated skills.

### B. Talk with someone

Speak with a faculty advisor, a staff member in the Center for Career and Civic Engagement, your family, and friends about your ideas and options. Expressing your ideas and talking with others will help you gain new perspectives and perhaps new possibilities.

### C. Visit academic departments

Visit the department of your intended major and speak with faculty to learn more about who they are, their current research interests and how you can map out your remaining college years to fulfill course requirements. Browse through the academic department webpages to learn more: [moravian.edu/departments](http://moravian.edu/departments)

### D. Take an introductory course

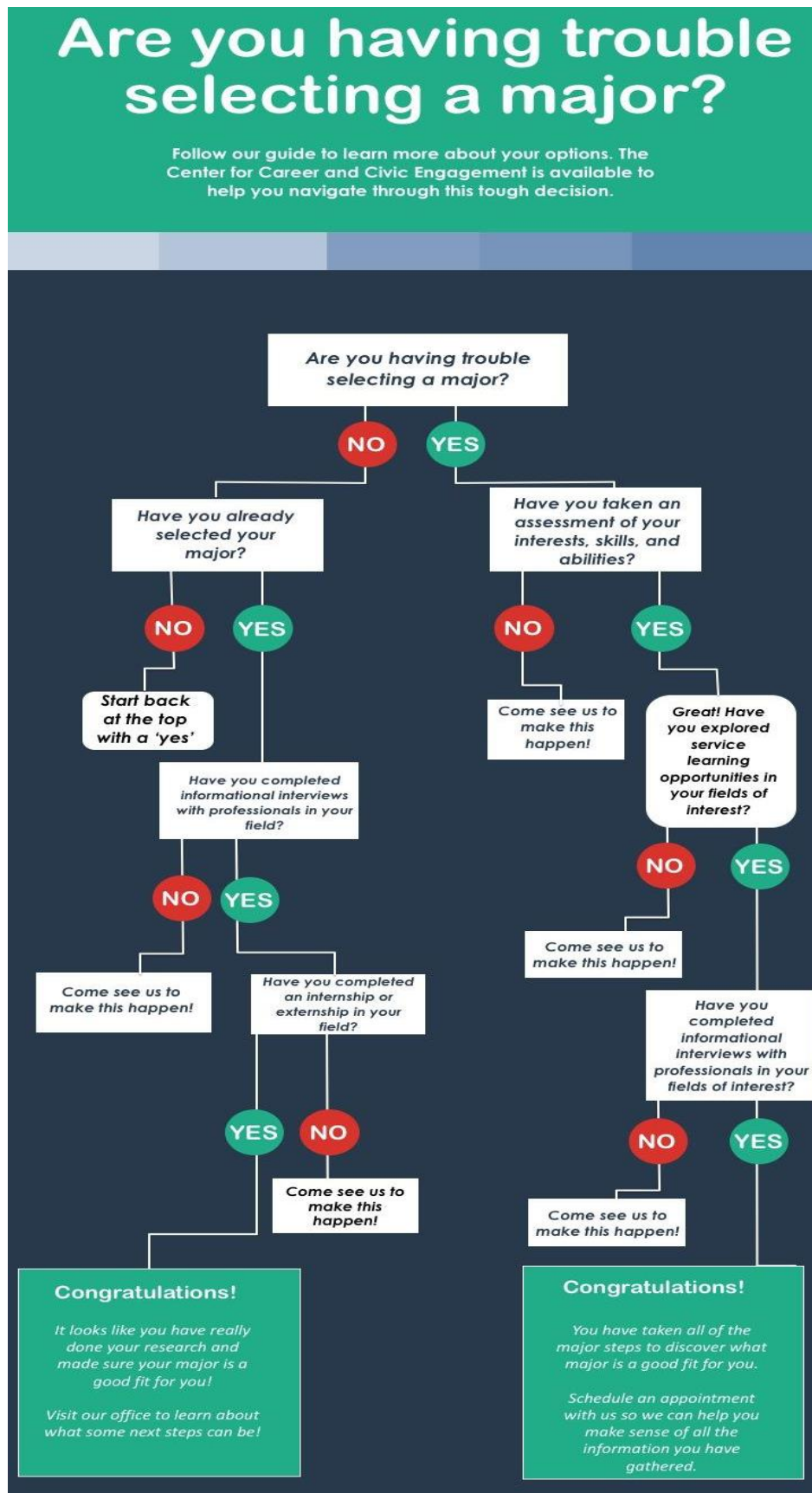
Take an introductory-level course in a major you are genuinely considering. This is different than using introductory courses from all majors as your only evaluation tool for interest. Through a more targeted exploratory approach, as outlined in this guide, you limit the amount of courses you are taking as 'exploration,' saving you time and money.



(source: <http://www.mydegreehouse.com/college-selection/how-to-choose-a-major/>)

## STAGE 4. DECLARE YOUR MAJOR

Follow this infographic to see if you have taken all of the steps to help you decide.





Congratulations on taking the necessary steps to declare a major! We hope this guide and the resources provided have helped you identify how your skills, interest and values would align with a major and career.

But remember, the journey is just beginning. Visit our office to learn more about structured externship and internship programs, networking events, volunteer opportunities, resume and cover letter development, interview skills, job search strategies and more!