

CHOOSING YOUR MAJOR / CAREER

Step 1: Assess

Who are you? In order to find the right major /career for you, you have to know who *YOU* are. Self-assessment can be informal (i.e. journaling, talking, thinking) and formal (i.e. taking career assessments). Academic and career choices should match you on a variety of levels, so you should assess your interests, values, skills, and personality.

Brief Self-Assessment

What are your INTERESTS? What do you enjoy doing (it can be fun, energizing, or relaxing)? Examples: writing, reading, making music, creating art/crafts, building/fixing things, using computers, solving puzzles, being outdoors, etc.

What are your VALUES? What gives your life purpose/meaning? Examples: social justice, helping others, financial security (See "Uncovering Your Values" on the next page.)

What are your SKILLS? What are you good at? Examples: math, science, English, sports, performing, creating art, (See [O*Net](#) web site for a Skills Assessment).

How do you describe your PERSONALITY? Examples: outgoing, shy, mellow, high-energy, driven, competitive, caring, morning person, night owl, calm, anxious, honorable, team player, independent, etc.

The Career Development office also offers **personality** and **interests** assessments to our students and alumni. For more information, contact us at (314) 889-4516.

Step 1, Assess: Uncovering your Values

Values are things that are meaningful to you. Clarifying your values will help you determine the level of satisfaction you will derive from a career and are often overlooked. Circle the values below that are important to you. Star the ones you would like to include in your work. Look at the list and try to narrow down to your top ten. Can you narrow the ten down to three?

Accomplishment	Happiness	Prestige
Adventure	Harmony	Privacy
Advancement	Health	Quality
Appreciation	Integrity	Rapid Pace
Approval	Intellectual Stimulation	Recognition
Artistic Expression	Independence on Job	Responsibility
Authority	Job Security	Respect
Autonomy	Justice	Results
Challenge	Lack of Stress	Social Contacts
Comfort	Leadership	Social Justice
Competition	Leisure Time	Spirituality
Contribution to Society	Loyalty	Stability
Cooperation	Material Things	Status
Creativity	Money	Structure
Diversity	Mobility	Support
Emotional Security	Morality	Team Work
Fame	Physical Fitness	Tradition
Family	Position	Variety
Financial Security	Power	Wealth
Flexibility	Praise	
Friendship	Predictability	Other _____
Fringe Benefits	Pressure	

Step 2: Explore

Once you know who you are, you can explore majors/careers in terms of how they “fit” you. Instead of asking, “What can I do with this major?” ask, “Which careers seem to fit me?” If you know where you’re going, it's easier to plan your route.

The more you know about a potential career, the easier it is to decide if it is a fit for you. When exploring majors/careers, use all of the exploration resources available to you:

- **Internet-** There are too many excellent internet resources to mention them all. We highly recommend our own [Career Services](#) site and [ONET](#), and [Occupational Outlook](#).
- **Print media-** This includes the University Catalogue ([available online](#)), company brochures, books, and newspapers.
- **People-**Take advantage of insider information available to you through [informational discussions/interviews and career shadowing](#). Also, remember the “people” available to help you on campus, the Career Development counselors and Fontbonne University faculty.
- **Experiential learning-** Would you buy a car without taking it for a test drive? Experiential learning allows you to test drive careers. Internships/practicum, part-time jobs, and volunteering are all forms of experiential learning to pursue.

Does major equal career? Not necessarily. Roughly 50% of college grads work in fields directly related to their majors. The reality is that some career fields require specific majors, such as medicine and law, but many do not. Additionally, employers report that an academic major accounts for only 35% of their decision to hire an employee. As such it is more important to focus on career rather than major.

Over 50% of college students change their major at least once. Changing majors can cost valuable time and money. Reduce your chances of switching by taking your time and exploring your options before deciding (Fontbonne students must declare a major after achieving 60 credit hours).

Step 3: Decide

About 80% of people are unhappy at work, and 20% are happy. Our culture has separated work from passion, and taught us to prefer a higher paycheck to higher happiness. That mistake costs us our souls. The goal of career development is to uncover one's gifts and passions, and to link them to the practical needs of the world. We call that ‘being in the right place,’ ‘finding a good fit,’ or ‘making the best use of one's talents’ (Frank, W. S. Retrieved from <http://www.careerlab.com/comments.htm> on June 29, 2010).

Choosing a career is a big decision, and one that you’ll likely make between 2-6 times throughout your life. Not to mention how many jobs you’ll have, which for college graduates averages 10-12.

When making a career decision, you must balance your need to find a career that fits you and in which you will be fulfilled and happy. There may be parts of your job that you don’t enjoy; the key is finding a tolerable balance between what you enjoy and what you don’t.

Additionally, you must pay attention to concerns such as job outlook, salary, and location of jobs when deciding. On paper, a career may sound like the perfect fit for you, but what happens if you graduate and there are no jobs available in that field? Or if the jobs are all on the west coast and you want to stay in St. Louis? Or if the salary is too low for you to live and pay back student loans? A thorough self-assessment and career exploration gives you a strong foundation so you can answer these questions.