



NEWS & INFORMATION ABOUT  
PLANNING FOR AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

# The GEAR UP Gazette

MAY

FOR PARENTS OF 9<sup>TH</sup> & 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS

## MAJORS 101: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A major is the specialized area of study or program at a college or university. Some majors have a direct connection to a career path, like Graphic Design or Criminal Justice, while other majors might prepare your student more generally with important job skills like communication, interpersonal relationships, organization and problem-solving.

Here are some common questions your student might have about choosing a major:

### **I have no idea what I want to study. How do I choose a major?**

Many students begin college without a clear choice of major. At many colleges, students don't have to choose a major until the end of their sophomore year. Until then, they can take courses in a variety of fields to earn general education credits that count toward their degree, no matter what they major in. As students take different classes, they'll probably find a subject they love. Academic advisors and professors are also available to help students consider interests and review options.

### **Can I change my major?**

Yes! Even students who enter college having chosen a major are likely to change their mind.

### **Does my major dictate my career options?**

In most cases, there is not one specific major required to enter a career field. Employers look for well-rounded individuals with transferrable skills and relevant experience. There are some professional fields (like nursing, accounting and teaching) that do have qualifying or licensing requirements; for these, a student may have to select a certain major.

### **Do majors like English and Psychology get jobs?**

These majors are usually part of a liberal arts degree that builds broad intellectual skills, such as reasoning and judgment, and practical skills in research and writing. This general training enables students to adapt to a variety of careers and graduate programs.

*Sources: [BigFuture](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), [Pace University Center for Academic Excellence](#)*

## DID YOU KNOW?

As many as 75% of students who enter college having declared a major will change their mind at least once.

*Source: [Pace University Center for Academic Excellence](#)*

## COLLEGE MYTHS (AND REALITIES)

**MYTH:** Big colleges are best if your student hasn't decided on a major field.

**REALITY:** Many students think because there are more courses to choose from, a large college offers greater options for undecided students. However, choices alone should not be the deciding factor. If your student is undecided, the best college is one that has core requirements or distribution requirements that ensure he will explore new areas and fields. Also, look for colleges with the strongest academic advising and career counseling programs regardless of their size. Good advising can help your student choose an academic and career path he will enjoy rather than one he thinks he might like right now.

*Source: [pics.collegetrends.org/myths.cfm](http://pics.collegetrends.org/myths.cfm)*

## PARENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Explore careers and interests, as well as majors.** There are many websites that try to help match personality and interests to potential careers. Visit them with your student – try *LearnHowToBecome.org*, *MyNextMove.org*, *MyMajors.org* or *WhoDoYouWant2B.com*.
- ☐ **Explore interests with your student and encourage involvement.** Talk to your student about the kinds of activities she is interested in – it doesn't have to be sports or an academically-related club. Consider potential careers and try to find activities related to fields he is interested in. Consider activities outside of school as well, like in the community or at church.
- ☐ **Review your student's schedule and class selections.** Make sure she is on track to progress from middle school and has a plan for the appropriate classes to take each year in high school for the type of career she might want.

## EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



GEAR UP stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs and is a federally-funded program that helps rural, low-income middle and high schools prepare students for education after high school.

Visit [oregongearup.org](http://oregongearup.org) to learn more and access resources to help your students make a plan. © 2016 Oregon GEAR UP

# COLLEGE. It's not a dream, it's a plan.