

# UNDERSTANDING MAJORS AND CAREERS

Take the following quiz to assess how well you understand the topics **MAJOR** and **CAREER**. Are the following statements **true** or **false**? After you've answered, read on for the answers.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Most students know the major they want when they arrive at college.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The most common feelings about choosing a major are excitement and decisiveness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. If I know the major that I want right now, I don't need to spend any more time thinking about it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. If I haven't chosen a major yet, I don't need to do anything now. I'll just take General education Tier I and II courses my first year and wait until I've completed those requirements to think about choosing a major.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. There is one "right" major for everyone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Your major pretty much determines what you'll do for the rest of your life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The most important experience employers value when they hire you is your major.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A college degree assures me a great career.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Successful people usually know exactly what they are going to do in their future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. If I take a career interest test, it will tell me the major and career that I should choose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. There are many helpful resources at Ohio university to help me choose a major and learn about related careers.

## ANSWERS to MAJOR and CAREER QUIZ:

1. **FALSE.** About 1/3 of all Ohio University students are undecided when they arrive at college. Many others who thought they were sure change their minds. In fact, almost 60% of all U.S. college students change their majors, often more than twice! If you're undecided, you're not alone. However, it takes time and research to assess your interests, abilities and values, and find majors that match them. Choosing a major or confirming that your major is a good fit for your interests, abilities and values is an important goal for your first year at Ohio University.

While it is fine to begin college as an undecided student, it's essential to get started on the process of choosing a major early. Why? First, it's difficult to stay motivated to go to class and earn the best possible grades if you don't have a clear goal—even if that goal changes. Second, it takes time to collect the information to make a careful choice of major.

2. **FALSE.** Some students feel excited and decisive about their choice of a major, but most people feel anxiety, indecision, worry, and even panic about selecting a major or confirming their major choice. Often students experience concern about not letting their family down if they choose a major that's not favored by the family. It is essential that **you** select a major after careful research and consideration and not allow family or friends to choose your major for you. It's also important to select a major that fits your interests, abilities and values in order to be satisfied with and confident about your choice.
3. **FALSE.** Since almost 60% of students change their majors, it's essential to confirm that your major choice is a good one, even if you're 100% sure that you want a certain major. That 60% doesn't even account for students who end up in majors they don't enjoy-- or do well in-- because by the time they realize it's not a good choice, they are so far along that they feel trapped and unable to change their minds without delaying their graduation. Even if the major you have selected is a good choice, you need to make sure that you know all of your options and confirm that this major is a good fit for your interests, abilities and values.
4. **FALSE.** It takes time, research and effort to make an informed decision about your major. You will probably complete or nearly complete your Tier I and II courses by the end of the first year, and you will register for next fall's courses in May. If you haven't been working to make an informed decision, what will you register for in May to take next fall? Time will pass much faster this year than it did in high school. Don't wait; get started now!
5. **FALSE.** There are over 200 majors at Ohio University. Each of us has

abilities, interests and values that match up with more than one of these majors. You may discover a major that's perfect for you, but that doesn't mean you couldn't enjoy other majors, too. Similarly, people can enjoy a number of possible jobs and careers.

6. **FALSE.** A few jobs require licensure or certification that necessitate certain majors (e.g. social work, education, engineering), but you can work in most positions with any undergraduate major. In a survey of *OHIO* graduates in 2005, 44% of those alumni reported working in business, but only 10% of those graduates had degrees from the College of Business. On average, students of your generation will work at 10-20 or more jobs in 3-5 different fields over the course of your lifetimes.

Choosing a major is NOT deciding what you will do with the rest of your life. You're just selecting a subject matter that you're interested in studying for 3-4 more years. You need at least 192 credits to graduate from Ohio University, and most majors are 50-60 credits, only about 25-30% of your total credits.

7. **FALSE.** Your major is one small line on your resume, and unless you are applying for a specialized job that requires licensure or certification, it is not the most important qualification. The NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) surveys different types of employers nationwide every year and reports on the skills and qualities employers report in the "ideal candidate." These are called transferable skills and are important in any job and any field. Since 1999 communication skills— both written and verbal—have topped the list. Job candidates have two key opportunities to demonstrate to employers that they have good communication skills: in their resume and cover letter when they apply for a job and during the interview. Ironically, when NACE asked employers what skill was most deficient in college job candidates, they responded that college graduates lack good grammar, writing skills, and public speaking skills. Other skills and qualities that employers seek include honesty/integrity, interpersonal skills (the ability to get along with others), teamwork, and a strong work ethic.

A good GPA is important, too. Nearly 70% of employers reported that they screen college job applicants based on GPA, and the majority said they use 3.0 (B) as their cutoff.

A college student's work experience and extracurricular activities are also very important to employers. Many employers ideally want to hire college grads who have completed internships, that is, work experience similar to the job. But any work experience, even if it's not directly related to the job, can demonstrate your work ethic and other transferable skills. You can also develop transferable skills by actively participating in volunteer and co-curricular activities like student organizations.

8. **FALSE.** A college diploma is a piece of paper that assures you that you have graduated from college, but it says nothing about the quality of your college experience. You will get out of your college experience what you put into it. If you

earn high grades, develop time management and study skills, get involved in co-curricular activities, and develop a solid work record through internships or other jobs, you will have many positive experiences to put on your resume and discuss in a job interview.

9. **FALSE.** Often the most successful people have changed their minds several times about majors and even careers. People who are successful usually have come to understand what they're interested in or even passionate about (their interests), what they're good at (their skills and abilities), and what's important to them (their values). Most of them also say that they've learned more from their mistakes than from their triumphs, and that learning from their mistakes was a big part of making them successful.
10. **FALSE.** Career interest tests look at your interests and/or personality attributes and link them to career options. These tests will provide several possible majors and careers that might interest you, but they don't measure whether you have the skills and abilities for those majors or careers. You will need to do more research and self-assessment (see the step-by-step process on the University College website) to make an informed decision about whether these majors and careers are a good fit for your interests, abilities and values.
11. The **Office of Career Services** provides career advising to all students and alumni of Ohio University. Advising sessions are available via appointment or during walk-in hours without an appointment for a quick ten minute conversation with a career counselor. For students who are undecided on a major or career, Focus and CareerBeam are two computer programs utilized by Career Services to help students find possible career paths. Career Services counselors can also help you with resume writing, interviewing skills, planning for graduate school, job search strategies, business etiquette and professional dress. The Bobcat Online Job Search Program informs students about job openings and recruiters who are coming to campus to recruit graduating seniors. Three career fairs are held annually - one each quarter. Be sure to sign up for a mock interview to gain interviewing skills before you have your first professional interview. Please visit our office on the **fifth floor of Baker University Center, 740-593-2909, [www.ohio.edu/careers](http://www.ohio.edu/careers).**

**University College** also offers major advising to all *OHIO* students. To meet one-on-one with an advisor, stop by 140 Chubb Hall or call 740-593-1935. The University College website at <http://www.ohio.edu/advising/major.cfm>, including an online choosing a major workshop at <http://www.ohio.edu/advising/choosingamajor.cfm>.