

A CHANGE IN MAJOR- CRISIS OR OPPORTUNITY?

By Jack Geary

You will change majors, schools, occupations, positions, careers, apartments, pets, homes, cities, and spouses (sorry, you cannot usually change children.) Many changes will result from events that not under your control and when you least expect a change- usually sooner than later and more rather than less. You will change emotionally, physically, psychologically, and academically. If you do not believe you will change you can bet that everyone and everything around you will change.

With respect to folks who are in a dilemma about the choice of college major, perhaps it is more important to just complete the undergraduate requirements for a degree and get the diploma, rather than become preoccupied or obsessed with the choice of a “major field” or school. It may be more important to complete “solid” academic coursework in analytical thinking, language expression/reasoning, basic science (college level), critical thinking, writing skills, and speaking skills- just learning how to learn quickly.

We may think that those of us who are blessed, that is, individuals who know what their major the moments we left the womb have an edge. Unfortunately, these folks may be unprepared to adapt to changes in their lives or the economy. These individuals never had to deal with the anxiety of making a choice or the psychic pain of making the wrong choice. None-the-less, choices must be made, including the “major field” of study.

Let’s make it easier. First, think of a university as a collection of colleges, such as the College of Arts & Sciences, the Graduate Schools, and the colleges for the first professional degrees, such as, School of Music, Divinity School, School of Law, School of Medicine, School of Nursing, School of Management, School of Education, and School of Engineering.

Universities may also organize the curriculum around other broad disciplines, such as, Health Professions (Nursing, Medicine, and Public Health), Architecture, Law, Journalism; Teacher Licensure; and Officer Education Programs (ROTC, Army, Marine, Naval, or Air Force Reserve).

Colleges and Universities are further organized into DEPARTMENTS, such as, Anthropology, Art, Art History, Business, Chemistry, French, Physics, Communications Studies, Psychology, English, Economics, Political Sciences, and Theatre to name a few.

INTERDISCIPLINARY MAJORS combine courses from one or more of the major departments noted above. MINORS involve taking a lesser number of units than a major involves and offer an opportunity to obtain cross skills.

The courses that are organized into DEPARTMENTS are closely. If you start with one major in the department and change to another major in the department, you may not need to take any prerequisite courses- you do not have to spend extra time.

But, if you change from Communications Major in one College Department and transfer to the Mechanical Engineering Department in the College of Engineering, you will probably need to take additional courses in mathematics, such as Calculus, Differential Equations, Lattice Theory and Ordered Sets.

So you can see that if you take the most difficult GE or lower division courses that you can handle in analytical thinking (math) and language reasoning (English, Rhetoric) and solid courses in social sciences, History, Chemistry you may be in a better position to make changes without adding extra calendar time.

Why not take the most difficult courses in math and language and select a major that interests you- it is ok to have fun.

STAY AWAY FROM FAD COURSES THAT OFFER LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT.

Similarly, if you remain in the same COLLEGE, changing from one DEPARTMENT or Major to another will require less pain-or extra courses/time.

WHEN IN DOUBT, take the path that moves you out of the SRJC fast, in to a four-year school quickly, and then complete your BA/BS degree ASAP.

MOVE ON and MOVE OUT

There is a psychological and emotional benefit by “completing something.” ANOTHER STRATEGY is to talk to someone who is doing something (occupation/profession) that interests you a lot, and find the path taken.

So, look over the catalogues of two or three Universities that interest you and concurrently talk to a person who is doing something you like. Become comfortable with the organization of University and the colleges that make up the school, review the course descriptions, the terminology- you are handing over thousands of dollars- you need to become an intelligent consumer. This will help you narrow down the choices. But move on, over, and out as quickly as you can.

NO NEED TO SAY GOOD LUCK- the problem is- are you ready to respond to the “luck” that comes your way?