

YOU'RE a WHAT?

By Jack Geary

We (counselors, instructors, students and people in general) may assume that there is a common understanding of major fields of study otherwise known as the “college major.” Students may assume: that (1) there is little variation within a particular major field offered by college or university; (2) there is common agreement about the definition of the term (major field) among individuals who represent the field; (3) the label of the major field points directly to occupations in the labor market; (3) the major field is an occupational title; (4) that there is no theoretical divisions or significant variations within a major department at a specific school (woe to the student who ignores this point); and (5) that college major fields of study are homogeneous across all institutions that offer the major.

Most vocational interest inventories and pseudo personality assessment (aka temperament) instruments, assume a degree of homogeneity within the occupational field that is not present. For instance, not all CPA's and REAL ESTATE SALESPERSONS are alike.

We assume similar misunderstandings about occupational titles. For instance, major fields of study in a college or university may or may not be related to an occupation title that is used in every day conversation. Specifically, occupational titles with common words in the title are often believed to have the same requirements and have the same meaning.

For instance, the following occupational titles are often confused, incorrectly defined, or assumed to require the same educational background. In some instances, the same occupational function has different occupational titles. Some occupational titles are restricted by state license.

Social Worker (BA), Social Work (BA BS), Social Worker (MA, MS), Social Worker (LCSW), Sociology Major, and Sociologist, Demographer, Social Worker at the AA/AS level- what does that mean?

Registered Nurse- trained at the Certificate Level with a RN designation, AA/AS level, BA/BS level, or MA/MS level?

Registered Nurse, Psychiatric Technician, Paramedic, EMT, Physician's Assistant, Nurse Practitioner, and Medical Assistant-back office?

Electrical Engineer, Electronic Technician, Electronic Engineer, Electronic Equipment Service Technician, Electro-Mechanical Technician, Telecommunications Professional, and Electronic Fabricator-Assembler?

Organizational Behavior Consultant, Organizational Development Consultant, Management Consultant, Personnel Manager, Human Resources Manager, Human Resource Worker, Social Worker- Group, and Industrial Psychologist?

Mechanical Engineer, Stationary Engineer, Mechanical Contractor, HVAC Contractor, Air Conditioning, Ventilating, & Heating Technician, Plumber, Facilities Engineer, and Building Superintendent?

Computer Programmer, Systems Analyst, Coder, Computer Engineer, Chief Information Officer (CIO), Network Administrator, CNA, Information Technologist, Webmaster, Hacker, or Nerd? (Chief Ignorance Officer!)

Medical Technologist, Medical Technician, Lab Technician, Industrial Chemist, Chemist, or Cooker?

Radiological Technician, X-Ray Tech, Ultrasound Technician, Sonogram Technician, MRI Technician, Radiological Technologist, and CAT Technician?

Interpreter, Translator, ALS Interpreter, and Court Reporter?

Dental Technician, Dental Lab Technician, and Dental Hygienist? What is the difference?

Registered Occupational Therapist, Athletic Trainer, Physical Therapist, Chiropractor, Vocational Evaluator, Exercise Physiologist, Rehabilitation Counselor, Kinesiologist, Massage Therapist, Vocational Evaluator, Acupuncturist, and Aesthetician (or is it Esthetician)?

Physiatrist or Orthopedic Surgeon? (Physical Therapist?)

Construction Manager, Civil Engineer, Engineering Technician, Surveyor, Chainman, Architect, Construction Superintendent, Environmental Engineer, Facilities Manager, Public Works Director, and Construction Estimator?

Appraiser, Auctioneer, Marine Surveyor, Museum Curator, Pawn Broker, Fine Arts Major, Flea Market Manager, or Fence?

Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Marriage Family Child Counselor, School Counselor, School Psychologist, Mental Health Counselor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Psychotherapist, Counselor, Guidance Counselor, Research Consulting Psychologist, Family Therapist, Psychiatrist, Industrial Psychologist, Humanistic Psychologist, Parapsychologist, Remote Viewer, Dr. Laura, Dr. Joy, Palm Reader, Art Bell, Mother Dora, Astrologer, Psychic Reader, or Madame Valium?

Physician, Osteopath, Podiatrist, Homeopathic Doctor, Veterinarian, Psychiatrist, Ophthalmologist, Optometrist or Optician?

Financial Planner, Insurance Agent, Debit Man, Stock Broker, Estate Planner, Securities Analyst, or Commodities Broker, Bookmaker, Bookie, Handicapper or Shark?

Bookkeeper, Bookkeeper I, Bookkeeper II, AR/AP Clerk, Accounting Technician, Accountant, CPA, Comptroller, IRS Revenue Agent, Auditor, Cashier, Cashier I or Cashier II, Enrolled Agent, Chief Financial Officer?

Legislative Aide, Political Campaign Manager, Political Scientist, Attorney, Publicists, Communication Major, Legislative Analyst, Political Analyst, Astrologer, or James Carville?

Physicist, Mathematician, Linguist, Astronomer, Astrologer, or Space Cadet?

Meteorologist, Oceanographer, or TV Weather Announcer?

Anthropology, Archeology, Geologist, Historian, Environmental Scientist?

Microbiologist, Chemist, Enologist, Pharmacist, or Biochemist?

Botanist, Forester, Park Ranger, Horticulturalist, or Geographer?

Economists, Ecologist, Philosopher, Investment Banker, Actuary, Statistician or Demographer?

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Substance Abuse Counselor, Occupational Therapist, Job Coach, Physical Therapists, Career Counselor, or Vocational Evaluator?

Communication Major, Third World Dictator, Liberal Arts Major, TV Station Manager, Customer Service Representative, Publicist, TV Anchor, Advertising Account Manager, Journalist, Political Analyst of CNN, Demographer, or Customer Service Person.

Executive Chef, Chef, Cook, Sous Chef, Short Order Cook, Grill Cook, Kitchen Work, Preparation Cook, Under Chef, Culinarian, Apprentice Cook, Journey Level Cook, Unit Chef, Restaurant Manager, Fast Food Cook, Baker, Pastry Chef. Prep Cook or Sauté Cook. Which titles describe the same functions? What is the entry level job that a graduate of each of the following programs would likely qualify for: AA Culinary Arts from a Community College; prestige private culinary school; high school certificate program; San Francisco State Hospitality Restaurant & Institutional Food Management Program; and On-the-job training program? What licenses or certificates are required for employment in a commercial kitchen? Can you rank the occupational titles presented?

If you wanted to become an Executive Chef would you consider the following: Hospitality Management Major, Restaurant and Institutional Food Management, Consumer Economics- Food & Nutrition/Food Service Management; Culinary Art Certificate Program (SRJC), or Culinary Art Academy in San Francisco?

THE COMMON CORE

Generally, most undergraduate courses of a college or post secondary training institution require the General Education (GE) Requirements- and most of these courses are survey courses that offer excellent opportunities to learn in depth about major fields of study, such as Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Chemistry, English, Mathematics, and Engineering. Usually, the textbooks associated with these courses, provide information about the occupations associated with the field of study. Many four-year college catalogues provide detailed information about the occupations associated with the major field of study. By just reviewing these publications, you can obtain a better understanding of the occupation, major field of study or discipline, and common titles employed. Many colleges offer undergraduate survey courses with the purpose the surveying the field.

THE REGULATORS

In many instances, especially in the medical field state regulations influence if not control the differences within occupational and professional titles. Often the State Code will officially define the occupational and professional title and who can claim the title. The state code may also define the functions of the individual holding the title can perform. Closely related to the state code requirements are the Professional Organizations such as the American Psychological Association and American Bar Associations. These organizations often write or influence the State Codes, administer the qualifying examinations, set the standards for the preparatory university programs, and sometimes name the colleges whose programs are accepted. Unions exercise the same control as well as building codes.

LIVE RESOURCES

One the most target rich resources for information about college major fields of study and occupations that require professional or technical education are the professors and instructors on campus and professionals working in the community. You can review the College Catalogue to find out the professionals major field of study and degrees.

There is more! What is the purpose of the “minor” field of study? Should the “minor” supplement, complement, or enhance the major field? Should it be an alternative, or plan B? What is the purpose the ‘double mayor?’ What is the significance of a ‘major’ offered by a community college? Check out the Professional Organization Journals for more information. Be careful! When you speak of individuals who represent a professional field you will discover the route they took to get where they are is very circuitous. For instance, a psychiatrist was once an executive of a major retailer.