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“Don’t Stress,” They Say—It’s Only the Rest of Your Life

By Simone Sanchez

A lot of pressure is put on us when choosing a major, no doubt. When deciding what we want, or think about what we want to do for the rest of our lives, we can’t help but ask ourselves some overpowering, yet essential questions. For example, how much money will I make? Will I be happy? Will my parents/friends be proud of my choices? No one really shares this, but things like this make a big impact in terms of the career we intend to pursue. It can be such an overwhelming, yet simple, four-word question: What is your major? And that is up to us to figure out.

The First Steps...

When choosing a major, you first need to figure out what you’re interested in pursuing—whether it’s science, math, art, history, writing, or maybe even journalism. You can look into this as early as right now. These fascinations will most likely lead to the job you choose for the future. And you don’t have to know what you want to do right away—it’s even ok to change your mind along the way. Understand that you’re far from alone. A lot of students end up coming in undecided, or at least change their major. In fact, “An estimated 20-50% of students enter college undecided, while an estimated 75% report having changed their major at least once. And at most institutions, students have access to a wealth of resources they can use to narrow down a major” ([Bridgeport](#)).

Some Interesting Interviews

A similar situation in terms of switching majors happened with freshman Hope Sandoval who states, “Funny story, I came in as a political science major and switched when I realized psychology was what I wanted to do...because I wanted to help people.” She hopes to eventually become a school psychologist and advises someone who might be considering this major that “it’s a lot. Psychology is a broad horizon, there’s a lot you can do with it. I think if you want to go into psychology having an idea of what you want to do with it is important. Just kind of understanding that there’s a lot that can be done with this type of degree.” We see how common it is to change majors not just with the students, but with teachers as well. Theology Professor Becky Walker explains how she was a biology major in college, even though she really wanted to major in theology. She decided on her major because she “wanted to go into healthcare, and it just made sense to major in biology because I had taken a lot of biology classes.” With this degree, she “went on and became physical therapist but at the time I was thinking about being a pharmacist or a nurse.” Advice she would give is “in choosing a major you need to be practical in how you can support yourself, but you should also follow your passion. That’s why I didn’t major in theology, there weren’t lots of opportunities for women to get jobs in theology at that time.” This interview is a great example

of how we all end up where we are supposed to be in our careers. It will take time, as we've seen, but right now it is important to at least have an interest or an idea.

The key concept in all of this is understanding you are never alone and trusting the process that the major you were intended to pursue will ultimately lead to the job you are destined to get. Everyone's path is different. Some are smooth, some are rocky. Although some students' paths have been a little more rocky and bumpy during their decision process, by the end of it we end up on the right path. Sometimes just having your goal in mind can serve as enough. Freshman Samantha Leece, who plans to major in applied physics with a concentration in biomedical engineering and a minor in sociology, says, "Honestly I knew what I wanted my end goal to be and I planned accordingly based on that." Samantha hopes to work as a nuclear physicist in an oncology unit and would tell anyone interested in pursuing this major "to study a lot and be prepared for lots and lots of math." I saw another example of someone who already had a good idea of what they wanted to do. Sophomore Samantha Naula is a biology major with a business minor. When asked how she decided on this major she had a very interesting and thought-provoking response: "I took AP Bio and I was dissecting some stuff and thought it was really cool. Science has always been my favorite subject I guess." Sam plans on going to medical school to become a trauma surgeon. Advice she would give is that "it's a lot of work and time management. And you also have to want it, if you don't you're not going to put in the effort to get your work done. I know a lot of people who ended up switching to political science and they said how they couldn't focus and didn't like the way their classes were going. Genuine interest—in it for the long run." These are examples of people who are in the "now" and seemed to have already figured out their paths.



We see a theme of hard work and dedication throughout all of these interviews, even if they chose to switch their intended major.

What's Next in Choosing a Major?

The next step in deciding a major is research. Even if you think you know your major, this is still a very important component and could quite possibly lead you in another direction you may not even have originally thought of. You don't need to wait to do research. That can be done right now. The act of simply grabbing a computer, or electronic device, and looking up what it is that interests you is already a step in the right direction. Conducting research is a vital part of any field you find yourself gravitating towards.



Research is essential in choosing a major.

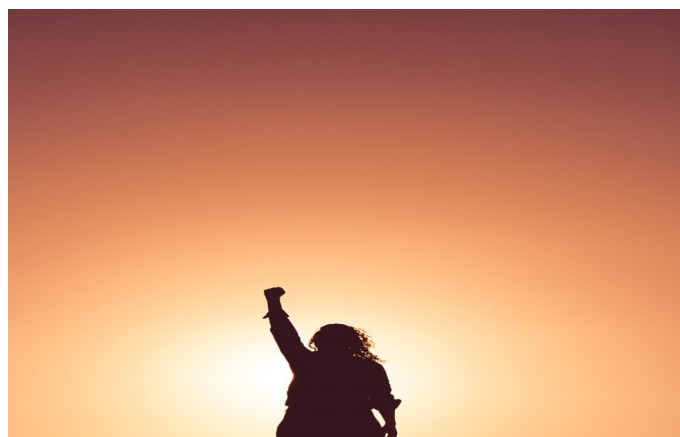
Some of these reasons I would like to share: Conducting research fosters "critical thinking and analytical skills through hands on learning, defines academic, career, and personal interests, expands knowledge and understanding of a chosen field outside of the classroom, develops one on one connections with distinguished faculty in their field, and builds a community with peers, faculty and organizations on- and off-campus" ([San Diego](#)). These are only a few examples of the positive effects conducting research has. There are many different ways to conduct this integrated research. For example, through news articles, publi-

cations related to the major, relevant student associations, recruiting opportunities, etc. The more we learn to access our broad range of tools given to us, I believe, the easier we can make this entire process of choosing a suitable career path.

Personal Connections

Personally, writing this essay connects with me in a multitude of ways. I am fortunate enough to be enrolled at a college that has my intended major, and gives me the option to switch majors if it comes down to that in future years. I am lucky enough that I believe I have already found my calling in terms of my intended major: Communications with a focus on journalism. I believe I am able to assess my skills and talents to the best of my capabilities. This came in handy especially when choosing a major. First, I determine if it is something I enjoy doing. If it's something I typically do not enjoy doing then it's hard for me to make it into a talent or something I would wish to pursue further. All the talents and skills I possess are for the most part things I like to do. I feel my talents also lie in my writing. I do know there is much more to learn about writing and writing strategies in general, but I enjoy writing in my free time as well as assignments and classes where the main objective is writing (like this one). I have been told by parents, family, friends, and even teachers that they liked the angles I took on certain writing assignments and the creativity and truth expressed in the words. Having this unique and special skill of being able to express how I feel has helped me a lot in terms of delivery and emotion in the writing itself. I believe I have the power to make a difference in the world and to use my voice to speak on pressing world-issues. I believe that being able to communicate effectively with people is a key skill in anything you choose to pursue in later years, whether that be directly communications-related or not. Especially this day and age, now more than ever we need to work together and use our voice to demand change as well as to advocate for ourselves and for things we support. I believe my intended major will help me reach this goal and that I have the power to make a difference in the world through this.

I hope you, the readers, see that you do not have to have everything figured out, but something that might seem so small, like conducting research, right now could have a positive impact in your future career. We saw different paths people chose, or are planning to choose, based on their interests, desires, etc. I hope this eases the worries of some of you who are not yet sure about the major you would like to pursue, because, while it is up to you to figure out, there is time, and it is more than alright to change your mind along the way.



It is important to recognize your talents and know that you have the power to make a difference in the world
