



Office of Career Development

Choosing a Major

After choosing a college, choosing an academic major is the next biggest choice you will make. Your ideas and thoughts may range from total uncertainty, to leaning, to deciding. No matter what stage you are in, let us work with you to make an informed, confident decision.

The first step to choosing a major is to be sure you understand what a major is—and what it is not!

- Think of *All of the Knowledge Of the Universe* as light. Imagine shining this light through a prism. What do you see? A rainbow. Imagine that each of the colors of the rainbow represents different types of knowledge or disciplines of study. That is how you should think of a major: an introduction to a discipline of study.
- If you thought a major was training for a particular profession, you are incorrect. But don't worry—this is a common misperception!
- At Transylvania, you will be required to select one (and only one) major by April of your sophomore year. Most majors require 10–14 courses. You will have plenty of time to complete it as well as all of your GE requirements toward the 36 units for your degree.

To assist you with the decision-making process, take a look at the statements below. Click the one that most closely resembles your thinking about majors:

Moving from Uncertain to Deciding

The following "stages" of deciding are not absolute, nor are they linear, meaning you may not progress from one to another. You may identify with more than one of these thoughts. In any case, reading through them all will help you see how choosing a major involves time, study, and conversations with different people. It is also important to note that this page will not, by itself, lead you to choosing a major, so be sure to sign up for a meeting in Career Development so we can help you through the process!

I really have
no idea and
don't really
know where to
begin...

The “It's OK! Two-thirds of the entering first-year class will change their minds anyway!” stage of deciding

The following questions may help you begin thinking about how to choose a major:

What questions intrigue you most about the wide world you live in?

Which major will help you learn more about those questions?

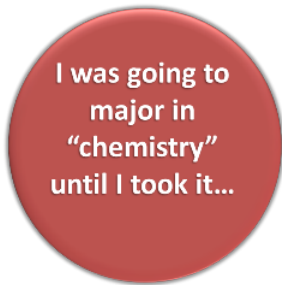
Do you really enjoy studying something?

Are you successful at it?

If I told you we were going to discontinue a major at Transylvania, which one would you fight hardest to keep? (And why are you not majoring in that?!)

Which professors do you enjoy learning from the most?

As you can see, choosing a major is really about choosing what you want to study. Choosing a major is not about choosing a career. That is a separate decision, though there can be some connection. If your concerns are about choosing a career, you can learn more about the Career Exploration process.



The “Stuff happens!” stage of deciding

College involves the happening of lots of stuff! Some of this "stuff" can affect the way you go about choosing a major. Here are examples of some of that stuff:

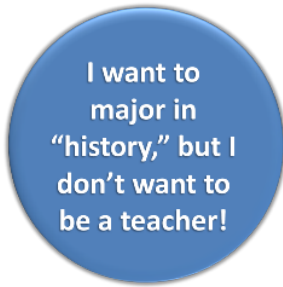
I got bored with the class...
I didn't like the professor...
It's not what I thought it was...
I'm not doing so well...
I really fell in love with anthropology but I don't know what to do with that...or how to tell my parents...
There's too much writing...*

Changing your mind about a major is normal. Most of you who come to college with a focus will change your mind. That is why Transylvania gives you two years to make a decision.

If you are thinking about changing your mind and are left "uncertain," read the information above. Also, consider taking some of our career assessments to learn more about your interests. Finally, be sure to continue to work on your GE requirements as they will expose you to many new disciplines and hopefully help you find one you want to study in depth.

Another useful tool, provided through TNET, allows you to do a degree audit while "hypothetically" changing your major. Select Degree Audit and then choose the major you might want to change to.

**All majors at Transylvania will require a fair amount of writing. Transylvania will help you become a stronger writer. Writing is one of the most important skills you can acquire and one that will make you very attractive to employers. Don't shy away from a major with too much writing; develop into a great writer instead!*



The “Putting the cart before the horse” stage of deciding

Choosing a major and choosing a career are two separate decisions. While they can be related, they are not the same choice. Choosing to study history no more means you have to be a teacher than it means you have to be an accountant. *It's okay to know that you want to major in something without knowing what you want to do with it.* In fact you may not do anything at all with it, and that's OK!

You will likely have five or more careers over your lifetime. How could it possibly be the case that 10–14 courses (out of 36) that you take at Transylvania and choose to begin studying around 19 years of age can determine the next 50 years of your employment experience? When you think about it that way, it doesn't make a lot of sense.

A career decision is one that should encompass your interests, skills, personality traits, and values. And while you should like your major and hopefully be pretty good at it, you have other interests and skills and they should all be considered when making career choices.

To try to separate the major and the career decision, ask yourself these questions:

Do you really like to study "history" and enjoy the faculty?

Are you curious about how "history" is studied and how research is conducted?

Do you enjoy the texts, courses, and assignments?

Do you feel motivated to study hard inside and outside of class?

If you could take classes in only one discipline at Transylvania, would "history" be that discipline?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you may be very close to choosing a major. You can also learn about the many varied career paths that "history" majors may turn to, by visiting our “What Can I Do With A Major In...” page.

If you answered "no," you have some more work to do in exploring the curriculum. Plan to meet with Career Development soon!



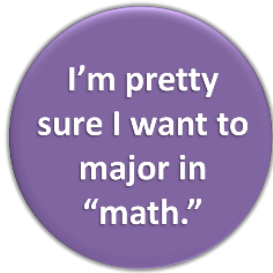
The “Whoa, Nelly!” stage of deciding

Transylvania requires that you complete one (and only one!) academic major along with your GE requirements. Having multiple majors and a half dozen minors does very little for you except stress you out.

So, why should you double major? Double major if there are only two disciplines that you are really truly interested in studying and there are no other classes that you would rather take.

You will remember that special class or two that you finally got to take your senior year, instead of finishing the second major, but you will not remember the one or two classes that you had to take to finish the second major.

Study what you want to study; if that leads to a second major, fine. Otherwise, explore the curriculum, learn a lot from the many different professors across the many different disciplines. Strive to become liberally educated!



The “I just need someone to tell me it's okay to major in 'math!'” stage of deciding

Guess what?! *It's OK to major in math!*

When it all comes down to it, sometimes making that change on TNET can feel really hard, because you are committing to the unknown. You are pretty confident, but don't know for sure.

It's OK! No one can predict the future; we can only make informed decisions based upon what we have learned up to the moment we decide. If you like "math" and want to learn more, go major in "math." Really, it's OK! Pat yourself on the back and be proud you made a decision and then go get great grades!

Visit TNET to sign up for the program change. Also, while it is not required, it is often a good idea to have an advisor from your major. Make sure you talk to that professor first.