

# Help is Available cont'd

large metropolitan area? These are some of the decisions that you must make.

Your choice of careers and your choice of majors will have a significant impact on how your life will be. The career you enter may determine where you will live and who your friends will be.

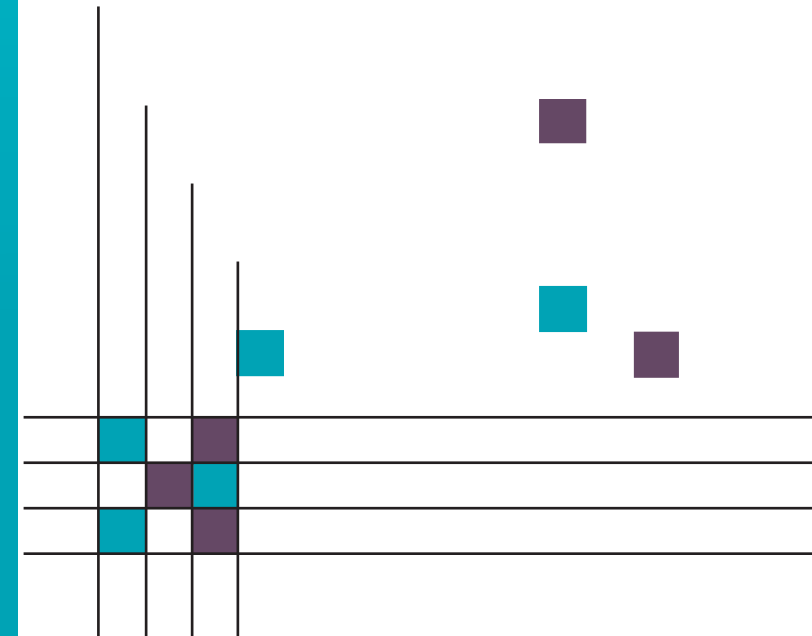
To sum up, choosing a major requires some decisions on your part determining your interests, your abilities and your values. Choose your major based on these decisions, and then put together an educational/career plan to get you where you want to be.

Information is the best tool for planning. Information is available from college catalogues, informational brochures and the Internet. Also, don't forget about information available from those you know—professors, counselors and other helpers in your life. Good luck! Keep thinking and planning.

This handout is part of a Self-Help Information Series written by the Kirkwood Community College Student Development Office, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 319-398-5471 or 1-800-332-2055, ext. 5471.

Please share this information with family, friends and classmates.

# Choosing A Major



**Kirkwood**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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best planning tool!

# Information is the best planning tool

Congratulations! You've taken a big step by coming to Kirkwood. So, now that you're here, are you wondering what to "major" in? Don't know? Don't worry. You have time to decide.

Many students think that a major needs to be selected before starting classes. This is simply not true for most majors. It is true that an early decision in majors like Engineering or Accounting is helpful, and students enrolling in one or two-year programs need to make a decision before starting. However, most of us can take a year or two to make a good decision.

You may feel pressure from yourself and others to "hurry up and make up your mind." Even if time is of the essence, it is still important that you take the time you need to make an informed decision and develop a plan.

## Facts & Figures

- About 20% of all college students change their majors between the time they apply and the time they register for their first classes.
- More than 70% of all college students change from one major to another while in college.
- About 40% of all college students graduate in a major they had never heard of while in high school.
- Around 50% of all college graduates change their career plans after they finish college.

Source: John M Gardner and A. Jerome Jewler

These comments do not mean that you can lean back, and forget about selecting a major, and just let your educational nature run its course. Your college major should require your attention from the time you start college until you finish. Choosing a major may require the most time and attention, but an ongoing evaluation is equally important.

## Liberal Arts Majors

If you are in the Arts and Sciences division (Liberal Arts) and plan to transfer to a four-year college, you may be working toward one of three Kirkwood degrees: Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), or Associate of Science/Career Option (AS/CO). Approximately two-thirds of your classes will be "general education" classes (also called "core" or "liberal arts" classes). The remaining one-third will be "elective classes." Taking elective classes is one way to explore options and help you select a major.

Due to this structure of college courses which contributes to the degree, there is a flexibility that works to your advantage. You can take courses that will apply to virtually all majors.

## Help is Available

The task of choosing a major should be a pleasant one, even though it is frequently frustrating. Help is available from counselors, advisors, instructors and friends. Essentially, you need to do some thinking and planning about the following:

1. Your interests
2. Your talents, abilities and skills
3. The lifestyle you want

A variety of assessments are available to help you explore and identify your interests. Kirkwood counselors conduct career decision-making workshops that include interest and personality assessments. These workshops will provide you with the structure, guidance and information needed to help you select your major. Additionally, valuable job/career information is available on the Internet and in libraries.

You already know what your talents and abilities are. Most of us don't give ourselves enough credit. Often your talents and abilities are better than you think they are. It is a good idea to sit down and have a serious discussion with yourself, so that you have a clear and organized understanding of your abilities and talents. You can also do some thinking about the skills which you would like to acquire or should acquire. There are aptitude and ability tests which can help, but most of us know what we are good at and what we are not. Most of us have a natural ability to do a great many things. Don't be modest, the possibilities are endless.

What do you want in the way of a lifestyle? Do you aspire to earn large amounts of money? To be head of an industry? To live life in the fast lane? Do you want to live a life that is quiet and serene? Do you want to live in a small town, small city, or