

You Can Figure Out What Direction To Follow In College

by Bob Roth

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For many college students, determining a direction and selecting a major can be a daunting task. Parents and friends usually offer their suggestions, talk about their experiences and voice their opinions. However, with so many options and uncertainties tugging at them, students may find that little seems clear. It is no wonder that they can feel overwhelmed and confused.

Although some students become paralyzed by the confusion, most of you will eventually gravitate toward one of your options. If you are having trouble selecting a direction, here are a few ideas and suggestions that should ease your mind and improve your odds of making a good decision.

a. Recognize That You Don't Have To Get Too Precise Too Quickly - You probably won't have to select a major until your sophomore year. (Check with your advisor.) Even then, the courses you select in your junior and senior years will determine your specific area of concentration. However, it is important for you to be both active and diligent in gathering information, about possible choices, throughout your freshman and sophomore years.

b. Start With Broad Areas Of Interest - When you are a bit unsure about your direction but think that you will be happy in a certain field, don't immediately settle on one job title in that field. Instead, it may be better for you to come at it from a broader perspective. As you do your research, obtain information and gain experience, you can take a variety of related courses, before you decide on an area that holds interest for you. Since every field of study will offer a wide variety of employment opportunities, start broadly and then methodically narrow your choices during the first few years of college.

c. What Have You Enjoyed Doing? - Reflect back. Make a list of the activities and behaviors you already enjoy. Include any activities you think you would like. Consider previous school classes, school and community activities, work, hobbies, sports, etc. What topics do you like to read about? What were you doing when you felt good about yourself? Where would you like to make a difference? Remember, you will be more successful when you enjoy the work you are doing.

d. What Are You Already Good At? - Make a list. Where have you been the most successful in the past? What were you doing when you felt successful? When have others complimented you on your performance? Look for insights into your strengths, so you can capitalize on them.

e. Career Counseling - You can obtain information and guidance from your Advisor, respected Professors, the Career Services Office, Upper Class Students, Alumni,

Business Professionals and Professional Counselors. Wise students seek counsel before they make critical decisions.

f. Career Assessment Instruments - Test results can provide insights into your interests, aptitudes, personality and operating style. With that information, you will probably make better career choices. [NOTE: Try FOCUS 2 or contact WU Career Services if you are interested in this.]

g. Do Some Research - Use your computer, visit the library and put yourself in the path of the information flow. Which employers hire students with your interests? What related fields have alumni entered? You can't make good decisions without information. Make a concerted effort to learn more about the areas that may be of interest to you.

h. Use Your Network - Make a list of questions that will help you gather the information that will enable you to narrow your options to those that are helpful, realistic and available. Talk with the ten or more people in your network who are the most likely to have the information, suggestions and answers you need. Include several alumni and business professionals on your list.

i. Participate, Dabble and Experiment - Select your best options, then get involved. When you participate in campus activities, clubs and organizations, you put yourself in a position to learn first-hand and realistically about your needs, interests and capabilities. This is crucial to the decision making process.

j. Join The World Of Work To See For Yourself - Most students find it helpful to learn by doing. Try working at a part-time or summer job with an employer in your field of interest. Talk with Employees, Human Resources and Management personnel about the opportunities that exist. Ask to be given a tour of the facility to learn about other work areas. Join managers when they attend association meetings. Ask to accompany a Sales Rep. on a sales call. Volunteer for assignments or ask to rotate between departments. Obtain and read all of the company literature about the products and services they offer.

k. Fear Of Making A Mistake - Although every student should exert a special effort to get started on a promising path as early as possible, things don't always work out. Therefore, it is important for you to recognize that our mistakes are rarely fatal and there are frequently many other attractive destinations and paths available to us. Thankfully, we all have the ability to learn and adjust. You've done it in the past; and, you will do it many times in the future. Few people can ever follow a straight path to anything. Life doesn't work that way. Pilots and boaters take this in stride. To reach their destinations, they must constantly make adjustments. When you recognize that you have chosen a wrong destination or find yourself on a wrong path, act quickly to make your adjustments and move on.

All of these steps require active involvement. It is this involvement that enables you to learn more about yourself, so you can take charge of your future. Active involvement

puts you in the best position to pursue opportunities in an area that suits you well.

For more information visit Bob's web site: www.The4Realities.com. Bob Roth is the author of *The 4 Realities Of Success During and After College*. Bob's newest book *The College Student's Guide To Landing A Great Job* is now available.