

# Selecting a Major Guide ♦ 2011

---

## Table of Contents

2	Getting Started!
3	Your Checklist
4	Career Exploration Process
5	Using MyPlan.com
6	Comparing Your Strengths to the World of Work
8	Exploring Interests and Career Planning
9	Career Exploration – Identifying Your Work Values
10	Your Experiences and Career Exploration
11	Career Exploration by Industry
12	Informational Interviewing
13	What Would You Like to Study?
14	Putting it All Together

---

## Career Development Services

Florida Gulf Coast University  
10501 FGCU Blvd S.  
Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565  
(239) 590-7946

Email: [careercenter@fgcu.edu](mailto:careercenter@fgcu.edu)

<http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/careers/>

FGCU Career Development Services supports the mission of the University and the Division of Student Affairs by promoting student learning and development and helping students fulfill their career expectations. Within this context, we assist students in developing and implementing career, education, and employment plans and decisions.

## Overview of Services

**Job and internship search advising,** including resume/cover letter assistance and preparation for employment interviews and salary negotiation.

**Advising on career and major selection,** including assessments, major and career information, and assistance in the decision-making process.

**Graduate school planning,** including assistance with resume/CV/personal statements, graduate school research, and preparation for interviews.

**Campus student employment,** through the use of a web-based job listing system, College Central Network.

# Selecting a Major – Getting Started!

---

Welcome! We hope you find this guide helpful. It was created to assist you with the decision-making process involved with selecting a major. It is an important and sometimes challenging decision, but one that can also be exciting and, hopefully, rewarding! Millions of other college students have successfully picked a major – so can you! Here are some important things to keep in mind as we embark on this journey:

- ❑ Students differ widely in their readiness to make decisions about their major. Everyone’s timeline will be different, so don’t compare your situation to others. Being undecided is not unusual - close to one-third of incoming freshman are undeclared, and many others end up changing their majors.
- ❑ While there is no prescribed date that you need to select your major by, we suggest that students do not wait too long. Delaying the decision far into your sophomore year could prolong your time to graduation. (Some majors have specific pre-requisite courses that are often completed in the freshman and sophomore years.)
- ❑ The decision-making process is just that – a process. It will require you to invest some time, energy, and thoughtful consideration. (For most students, the “sudden realization” as to what they should major in comes only after spending ample time exploring and reflecting.)
- ❑ Accept that nobody else can or should make the choice of a major for you.

There are a variety of approaches you can take when trying to determine the right major for you. This guide will concentrate primarily on what we call the “Career Exploration/Begin with the End in Mind” strategy. What do we mean by “begin with the end in mind”? For example, let’s say you aspire to a specific career, such as becoming a Registered Nurse. Since the academic major that correlates with that occupation is a B.S in Nursing, your choice of major is very straightforward. Essentially, you are selecting the major that will best prepare you for your particular career goal. While the degree of correlation between careers and majors varies, for many students this approach can be a logical “jumping off” point to start the process.

In FGCU Career Development Services, we believe you should consider those careers that are consistent with your personal characteristics - skills (what you are good at), interests (what you like to do), personality (what *you* are like), and values (what is important to you.) Therefore, the majority of the activities in this guide are designed to help you identify your pattern of personal characteristics and how they overlap and intersect with different careers.

However, it is important to know that there are other approaches to selecting a major. Some students select their major based on an interest in a particular body of knowledge, and may not necessarily have a specific career in mind. For these students, their career goals tend to emerge over time, as they progress through their coursework and become more knowledgeable of the career possibilities associated with that major.

The activities in the guide are intended for students to use in a self-directed manner. We have even included a checklist to track your progress. However, many students like to “bounce” their ideas off an advisor or get assistance in interpreting the results of their assessments. In the “Putting it all Together” section of the guide, we have provided a list of departments and resources to help you. Good luck and enjoy the process!

# Selecting a Major – Your Checklist

---

## **Step 1: Career Exploration...beginning with the end in mind!** *Activities that can help:*

- Read “Selecting a Major – Getting Started.”
- Review the “Career Exploration Process” graphic, which illustrates the approach of selecting careers that are consistent with your personal characteristics - skills (what you are good at), interests (what you like to do), personality (what *you* are like), and values (what is important to you.)
- Activity: “Using MyPlan.com.” This is a free web-based career planning resource that allows you to take assessments of your skills, interests, personality, and work values, and then see how those patterns of characteristics match with hundreds of different occupations. Follow the instructions on this page closely, particularly the registration part. You must enter the License Code provided to take the assessments for free.
- Activity: “Comparing Your Strengths to the World of Work”
- Activity: “Exploring Interests and Career Planning”
- Activity: “Career Exploration – Identifying Your Work Values”
- Activity: “Your Experiences and Career Exploration”
- Activity: “Career Development by Industry” Remember, you don’t have to pick a specific occupation to select your major. For some students, identifying a particular industry is sufficient. For example, a student may be interested in the field of sports management. While he/she does not have a particular job title in mind after graduation, the desire to work in that field is enough information for them to feel comfortable selecting the B.S in Management with a concentration in Sport Management major.
- Review the “Informational Interviewing” guide. Informational interviewing is nothing more than meeting with a professional doing the job you are considering, and asking him/her questions to help determine what the job is “really like.” This is a great way to ensure your expectations match the reality of that type of work.

## **Step 2: Selecting a Major – What would you like to study?** *Activities that can help:*

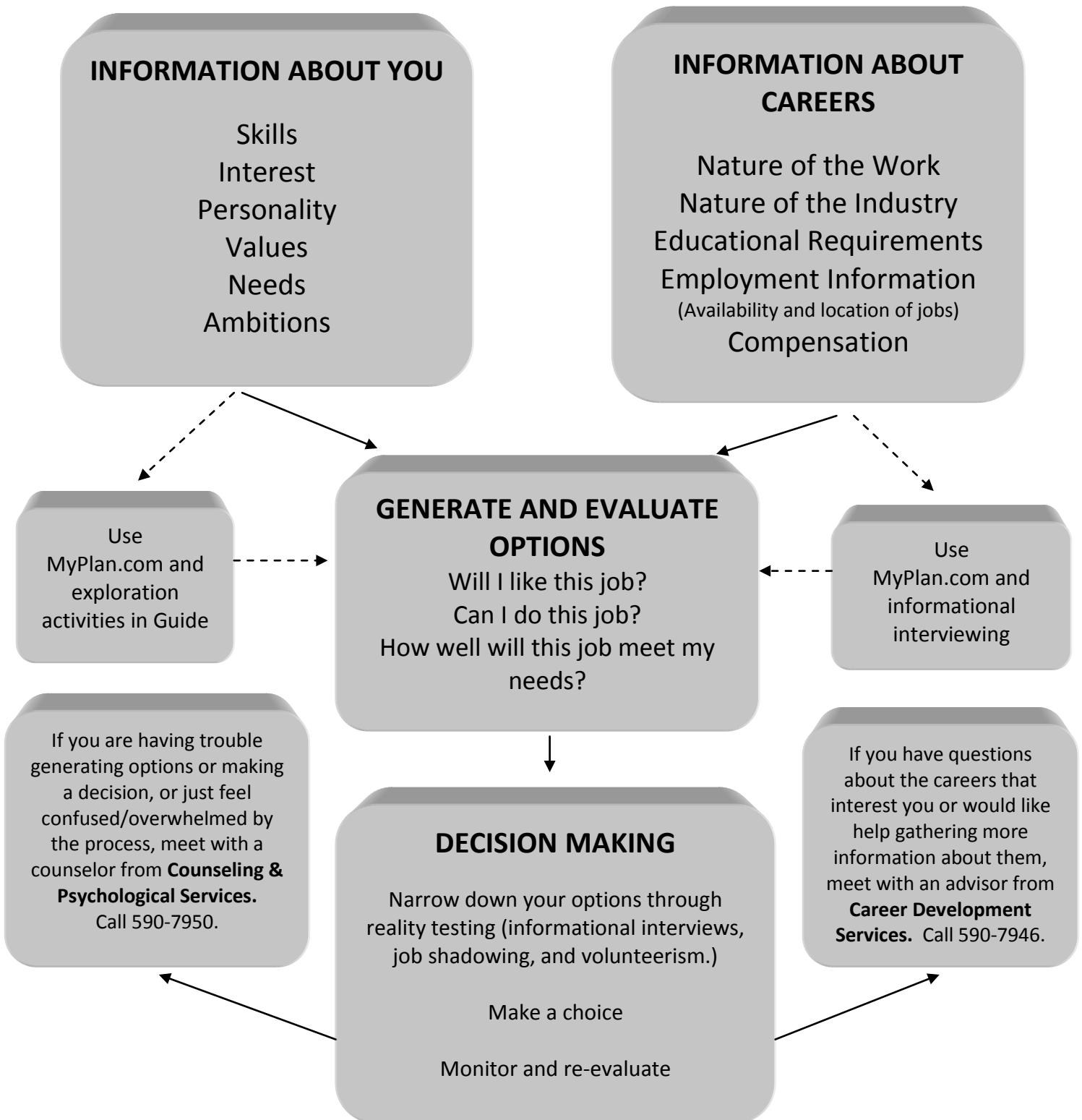
- Activity: “Selecting a Major: What Would You Like to Study?” Remember, some students select their major based on an interest in a particular body of knowledge, and may not necessarily have a specific career in mind. For many of these students, their career goals emerge over time, as they progress through their coursework and become more knowledgeable of the occupational possibilities associated with that major.
- Activity: Familiarize yourself with the “What Can I Do With this Degree” website. Do the common career paths for majors you are considering look appealing? Go to: <http://enrollment.fgcu.edu/advising/majorexpl.htm>.

## **Step 3: Making the Decision and Helpful Resources.** *Activities that can help:*

- Review the “Career Exploration Process” graphic again, particularly the “Decision Making” stage. Hopefully you have been able to narrow down your options through informational interviewing, job shadowing, volunteering, or any other activity that will help you evaluate the careers that will be the best “fit” for you.
- Read “Selecting a Major – Putting it All Together”

# Career Exploration Process

---



# Using MyPlan.com

---

MyPlan.com is a free web-based career planning resource that allows you to take assessments of your skills, interests, personality, and work values, and then see how those patterns of characteristics match with hundreds of different occupations. This resource is available ONLY to FGCU students and alumni.

## **Step 1 – Registration**

1. Go to [www.myplan.com](http://www.myplan.com)
2. Click on “Account” tab on top right.
3. Click “Create Free Account”
4. Fill out Account Information.
5. Read and agree to the “Terms of Use” and “Privacy Policy”
6. Click “Continue”
7. Where it asks for License Code, enter “54DNUVKZ” \*
8. To make results viewable to Reid Lennertz, the FGCU site administrator, click “Share results with license provider.”
9. Click “Submit Registration”

**You must register and enter License Code to take free assessments.**

**\* After June 1st, 2012, contact FGCU Career Center for the new Code**



## **Step 2 – Assessments**

Click on the “Assessment” tab at the top of the page. Each assessment varies in length, but most can be completed within 15 minutes. Each one must be completed once you start it and incomplete tests cannot be saved. Each question must be answered in order – do not skip questions. Once you have completed an assessment it will appear in the “My Reports” folder under “My Portfolio” for you to review. **Be sure to take all four assessments!**

## **Step 3 – Compare your pattern of personal characteristics to the world of work**

In the “My Portfolio” page, you should see your four reports, followed by “Composite Score.” Click “Composite Score” to see the list of corresponding occupations.

1. Where it states “What Level of Education?” select “Level 4: Four Year Degree (College)” and click “Go!” A list of possible occupations will be generated. Near the bottom of the page, next to “Display” select “All.”
2. Review the list. Click on the hyperlinked title of any occupation that seems interesting. This will bring you to a detailed multi-page profile that includes: job descriptions, job requirements, salary and employment data, and related majors or degrees to enter that field.
3. Now, under “What Level of Education?” select “Level 5: Graduate Degree or Higher.” (Near the bottom of the page, next to “Display” select “All.”) Even if your current plan doesn’t involve going to graduate school, it may in the future, so let’s include those occupations for exploratory purposes. Review the list.
4. The goal is for you to identify 4-5 occupations of interest for you to further investigate and assess.

*Please keep in mind that MyPlan.com is not intended to tell you what you “should do” as a career. It is a starting point to help you generate options. Ultimately, it is YOUR decision to determine the best career path to pursue.*

# Comparing Your Strengths to the World of Work

## FGCU Career Development Services

Instructions: Rate yourself in the following areas by placing a check in corresponding box

1 = not a strength    2 = developing    3 = satisfactory    4 = high    5 = highest

### Transferable Skills

How well do you perform each activity?

	1	2	3	4	5
Analytical					
Artistic					
Budgeting					
Building					
Collaborating					
Computer					
Counseling					
Creative					
Critical Thinking					
Customer Service					
Decision Making					
Delegating					
Editing					
Financial					
Helping					
Interpersonal					
Investigating					
Judgment					
Leadership					
Listening					
Management					
Negotiating					
Organizing					
Planning					
Presenting					
Prioritizing					
Problem-solving					
Quick-learner					
Researching					
Selling					
Scheduling					
Speaking					
Supervising					
Teaching					
Teamwork					
Time Mgt.					
Training					

### Personal Qualities

How well does each quality describe you?

	1	2	3	4	5
Adaptive					
Ambitious					
Confident					
Conscientious					
Creative					
Cooperative					
Compassionate					
Dedicated					
Dependable					
Determined					
Detail-oriented					
Diplomatic					
Efficient					
Energetic					
Ethical					
Flexible					
Friendly					
Hard-working					
Innovative					
Loyal					
Optimistic					
Organized					
Passionate					
Patient					
Persistent					
Practical					
Precise					
Professional					
Reliable					
Resilient					
Resourceful					
Responsible					
Self-starting					
Sincere					
Tenacious					
Versatile					
Willing to learn					

# Comparing Your Strengths to the World of Work

---

Complete Activity #1 to help generate some possible career options.

Complete Activity #2 if you already have some possible career options and want to compare them to your strengths.

## Activity 1

*Instructions: Make a list of your strengths (that you rated yourself as a 4 or 5 on the worksheet.) Brainstorm a list of possible careers or fields in which your pattern of strengths would be valuable or required.*

**Strengths:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Careers:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

## Activity 2

*Instructions: List a possible career or field you are interested in. Review your strengths on the worksheet. List those skills and personal qualities that you rated yourself as a 4 or 5 that would be valuable or required for that type of work.*

**Career:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Career:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Career:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Career:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Exploring Interests and Career Planning

---

While career-related interest inventories, like the one available through MyPlan.com, are a good way to better understand what kinds of activities appeal to you, they may not capture all your individual and unique interests. Below is a worksheet to further investigate what truly interests you during your everyday life. When completed, review your answers and see if the information can play a role in your career plans.

Do you have any hobbies?

---

What do you love to do in your free time?

---

Is there anything you could talk about for hours?

---

What magazines do you read?

---

What books do you read?

---

What Internet sites do you like to browse?

---

What categories would you choose if you were on a game show?

---

What were your favorite classes?

---

What kinds of activities can you “lose yourself” in?

---

*Review your answers. Are there any patterns or common themes? Do you see any connection with your interests and possible careers?*

---

---

---

---

---

---

# Career Exploration – Identifying Your Work Values

---

When exploring career options, it is important to consider how different careers compare with what you consider to be important in a job. Use this worksheet to help you prioritize your work values. Write the values in the spaces provided, with no more than 5 in “Most Important,” not more than 10 in “Important,” and the rest under “Other.”

- Review your results. This information may help you *generate* or *narrow down* your career options. Keep in mind that values are just one factor to use in making career decisions. You should also take into consideration your skills, interests, and personality.
- Gather occupational information about the careers you are considering and see if they are consistent with your list. One of the best sources of this kind of information is from *people actually doing the job*. Conduct what is called an “informational interview.” Refer to the handout titled “Informational Interviewing.”

## Most Important Values

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Important Values

6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Values

16. \_\_\_\_\_
17. \_\_\_\_\_
18. \_\_\_\_\_
19. \_\_\_\_\_
20. \_\_\_\_\_
21. \_\_\_\_\_
22. \_\_\_\_\_
23. \_\_\_\_\_
24. \_\_\_\_\_
25. \_\_\_\_\_

- Challenging Work
- Likeable Associates
- Authority over Others
- Intellectual Stimulation
- Job Prestige
- Sense of Personal Worth
- Travel Opportunities
- Sense of Accomplishment
- Relocation Not Required
- Opportunity to be Creative
- High Income
- Power
- Work in Nature
- Influencing Others
- Help Others
- Feeling of Belonging
- Opportunity for Advancement
- Regular Working Hours
- Job Security
- Work Independently
- Flexible Schedule
- Good Supervisor
- Work in Nice Surroundings
- Personal Recognition
- Work for a “Cause”



# Career Exploration by Industry

---

Some students may find they want to define their career path more by the industry they want to work in rather than a particular occupation. For example, students may say, “I want to pursue something related to professional sports” or “I’m interested in the publishing industry.” They may not know in what capacity (job) – they are simply intrigued by some aspects of that work environment. Exploring the world of work by industry may be helpful for undecided students, or students with majors that are not limited to a particular field. Review the list of industries below. While not all-encompassing, it represents many of the major industries. Do any sound interesting or appeal to you? If so, put a check next to it. Gather more information as to the types of jobs available in the industries you checked.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Human & Social Services                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising/Marketing/Public Relations        | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts/Entertainment/Music/Theatre              | <input type="checkbox"/> Law & Legal Services                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer & Information Technology             | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement, Security & Safety            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education (Higher)                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education (K-12)                              | <input type="checkbox"/> News & Broadcast Media                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering/construction/architecture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Publishing (books, magazines)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering (civil, environmental, etc.)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Services & Banking                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food and Agriculture                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports (parks, professional, intercollegiate) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government (local, state, federal)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care (medical, nursing, allied health) | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality & Travel                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale Trade                               |

**Gathering more information:** Using Internet resources is an easy place to start.

- For example, if you were interested in a career in “sports,” simply Google “sports careers.” While this approach may seem rather unsophisticated, you may be surprised by how much information you can access. In particular, look for websites for professional associations. You may also find job listing sites for that field, which are a great way to see possible career paths.
- To identify employers within a particular industry, use [www.zoominfo.com](http://www.zoominfo.com), a free online database.
- A more advanced search could involve using the online databases available through FGCU Library Services.

# Informational Interviewing

---

An informational interview is an activity where you meet with a professional in a particular field and “interview” them. If you are trying to determine what field or career you want to pursue, this is a great opportunity to learn what a career is “really like.” Your goal is to get as much information as possible to determine whether this career is a good “fit” for you. Ask questions that will help you understand the nature of the work. Sample questions are listed below. Informational interview are also helpful in helping you better understand how to “break into” a certain field. Therefore, you will want to ask questions about who the employers are in the field and how to best market yourself to these employers.

## Keys to Success

- If you make an appointment for an informational interview, do everything you can to not have to cancel or reschedule it. You are probably dealing with a busy professional who carved time out of his/her schedule to meet with you. Having to cancel **does not** make a positive impression and creates more work for them.
- Arrive ten minutes early – no more, no less.
- Make a good first impression and establish your credibility by dressing professionally.
- Bring a professional looking leather portfolio (notebook) to take notes.
- Read about your contact’s company and industry so they feel you are seriously interested and so that you can get the most out of your meeting.
- If you still feel as though you would like to speak with more people in the field to get additional perspectives, ask if they have any suggestions they would be willing to share with you.
- Bring a copy of your resume and ask if they would be willing to critique it.
- Send a thank you note, which can be typed or handwritten on quality paper, within 48 hours of your meeting. Let them know what you learned and how it will be helpful in your career planning.

## Questions You Might Ask During an Informational Interview

- What do you do on a typical day in your job?
- What kinds of projects do you work on?
- What are the responsibilities/duties?
- How would you describe the demands of your position with respect to work schedule and hours worked?
- What do you like best about your job?
- What characteristics of this job cause the most frustration or dissatisfaction?
- What kind of personal characteristics/attributes are needed to succeed in this field?
- Can people specialize in this occupation? If so, what are the areas of specialization?
- What kinds of changes are taking place in this type of work?
- What were the primary factors that led you to this occupation?
- What are the employment trends in this field?
- What are typical career paths in this field?
- Who are the major employers in this field?
- What employers hire entry-level people?
- What would you estimate as a starting salary for entry-level position in this field?
- What kind of experience should one get to be more marketable to this field?
- What advice would you give to a person thinking about entering this field?

## Selecting a Major — What Would You Like to Study?

---

### Step 1: Review the list of majors offered by FGCU for the 2011-12 catalog year (below)

- Use this list to narrow down your choices. Cross off any majors you are certain would not be a good fit for you. Put a check next to the ones you are interested in or want to research further.

### Step 2: Gather information about the majors you checked

- Go to <http://www.fgcu.edu/undergrad.html>. To learn more about a major, click on the corresponding “View in Catalog.” Review the list of classes in that major. Do they look interesting or appealing? Is the major compatible with your academic skill level?
- Keep in mind that some majors have concentrations that may interest you. For example, Management majors can concentrate in Sports Management, Human Resources Management, or Entrepreneurship.
- Use the “What Can I do With This Major?” site - <http://enrollment.fgcu.edu/advising/majorexploration.htm>. Do the common career paths for that major look appealing?
- Meet with your advisor from First Year Advising (or your academic advisor if you are not a freshman) to learn more about the required coursework.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accounting                   | <input type="checkbox"/> History  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anthropology                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Performance                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Journalism ( <i>pending final state approval</i> ) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic Training            | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Studies                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bioengineering               | <input type="checkbox"/> Management   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biology (B.A. or B.S.)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Science                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biology – Accelerated (B.S.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biotechnology                | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics (B.A. or B.S.)                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Music – Education                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child and Youth Studies      | <input type="checkbox"/> Music – Performance                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical Laboratory Science  | <input type="checkbox"/> PGA Golf Management                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication                | <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Health             | <input type="checkbox"/> Political Science                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Information Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Justice             | <input type="checkbox"/> Resort & Hospitality Management                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Biology Education                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economics                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Mathematics Education                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary Education         | <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Social Science Education                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Work  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Engineering    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Studies        | <input type="checkbox"/> Software Engineering                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forensic Studies             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theatre  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Science               |   |

# Selecting a Major – Putting it All Together

---

Now that you have completed the activities in this guide, we hope that you:

- Know yourself better as a result of the self-assessment activities
- Are more knowledgeable about different careers and industries
- Are knowledgeable about the majors available to you at FGCU
- Feel you can select a major that is the right “fit” for you (***Most important!***)

As we mentioned at the beginning, there are numerous departments on campus to help you:

## **First Year Advising**

First Year Advisors guide new students in their transition into and navigation of the university experience. They help students clarify their interests, skills and values in the context of class selection, major choice, and curriculum planning.

## **Academic Advising Offices**

Near the end of your first year, you will transition from being advised by First Year Advising to an Academic Advisor within one of the Colleges, based upon your choice of major. Undeclared students transition into the College of Arts & Sciences. Your Academic Advisor will support you in your class selection and provide information about curricula, policies, and procedures.

## **Career Development Services**

- Do you still have questions about the careers or majors that interest you?
- Do you need help gathering more information about them?
- Looking for labor market data or information about employers?
- Do you want to “bounce” your ideas and thoughts off one of the career advisors?

The staff in Career Development Services may be able to connect you with helpful information.

## **Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)**

- Are you still having trouble generating options or making a decision?
- Are you afraid of making a commitment to a specific career or major?
- Are the opinions of others making the decision difficult for you?
- Are you feeling anxious or overwhelmed with the process?

If you indicated any of the above, we suggest that you meet with one of the counselors in Counseling & Psychological Services so they can help you with the decision-making process.

**And talk to your professors!** They are experts in their fields and are excellent sources of information.

**Attend the Majors Fair!** This event, held each Fall, is a great way to meet the faculty and academic advisors from the degree programs offered at FGCU. For more information and event date/time/location, go to:

<http://enrollment.fgcu.edu/advising/MajorsFair.htm>