

Career Services Center

Choosing a Major

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Myths about college and career

I should have a definite plan for my future career path.

Once I select a college major I should stick with it not matter what.

Developing skills and taking courses in Computers, Language, Business & Communications are not necessary unless I plan to major in these fields.

There is one major that is a perfect match for me.

Only paid work experience will help me develop a career path.

I should investigate the job market just prior to my college graduation.

Most people start their careers at 21 and rarely change career direction.

College Career Services focuses on seniors looking for employment.

What kind of career decision maker are you?

As you begin to explore the world of work and decide on your perfect job target, it's important to know how you make decisions. When making decisions, do you tend to spend a lot of time exhausting all of the pros and cons, or are you closer to the other end of the spectrum—just going with what feels right or what your gut instinct is telling you? Look at these various career decision-making styles and identify the style or styles that you tend to gravitate toward. You may find that, due to the seriousness of choosing the perfect job target, you have to incorporate a style that you haven't had to use in the past.

PROCRASTINATING DECISION MAKERS have a tough time making decisions. The pressure of making a difficult decision gives them a sense of paralysis that leads to indecision. Many job seekers procrastinate about their decisions on a job target because of the amount of time it takes to explore all the options.

INTUITIVE DECISION MAKERS go with their gut feelings or instincts when making decisions. Intuitive job seekers tend to use this style after being influenced by some external force, such as television, family, and friends. They see their cousin do well in accounting, so they feel like accounting would be good for them. There's not much thought put into the decision for the intuitive decision maker.

DEPENDENT DECISION MAKERS rely on the opinions of others. Many job seekers fall into this category. They feel overwhelmed by having to pick that one perfect job target out of the thousands of prospects. Dependent job seekers rely on anyone and everyone to help them make this all-important decision.

EDUCATED DECISION MAKERS identify all their options, research options of interest, ask numerous questions, and systematically engage in a process of elimination until that perfect option is found. Educated career decision makers engage in a thorough self-assessment process, read about all career options, seek advice from career counselors and professionals in the workforce, and observe professionals at work (job shadowing). They keep logs of what they've learned and constantly analyze their options.

THE BEST CAREER DECISION MAKER is a combination of all the above styles with the exception of the procrastinating method. You should primarily use the educated decision-making style, but along the way, rely on career counselors, professionals, and other people you respect to offer advice, guidance, and feedback (dependent decision-making). Then, once you have thoroughly completed the self-assessment and career exploration processes, incorporate the intuitive decision-making style to let your feelings and intuition in on the decision. Your intuition is always a fairly accurate gauge, but it's even more accurate after you have all the factors laid out on the table.

Model for decision making

The purpose of this model is to teach a planful process and to apply it to career decision making.

Step 1: Learn about self

When making life's major decisions it is important to understand the kind of person you are - your likes, strengths, weaknesses, values, sources of satisfaction, and personality characteristics.

Step 2: Set goals

In each major decision, there should be a goal which you are trying to reach, presumably a goal which would bring you satisfaction or at least an improved status.

Step 3: Find or make alternatives

Two or more realistic alternatives must be found in order to have a decision. For major decisions, as many realistic alternatives as possible should be identified for consideration. This is the time to think and dream expansively.

Step 4: Learn about alternatives

In order to dismiss some alternatives and seriously consider another, it is essential to get as much information as possible about each, and to project how you would feel or fit in each of them.

Step 5: Put alternatives in priority order

Based on the information you've collected, which allows you to "project" yourself into each alternative, you now throw some away and arrange the others in priority order.

Step 6: Make choice

The painful side of decision making is having to give up some desirable alternatives in favor of even more desirable ones - and ultimately to choose one - while keeping other options open, if possible.

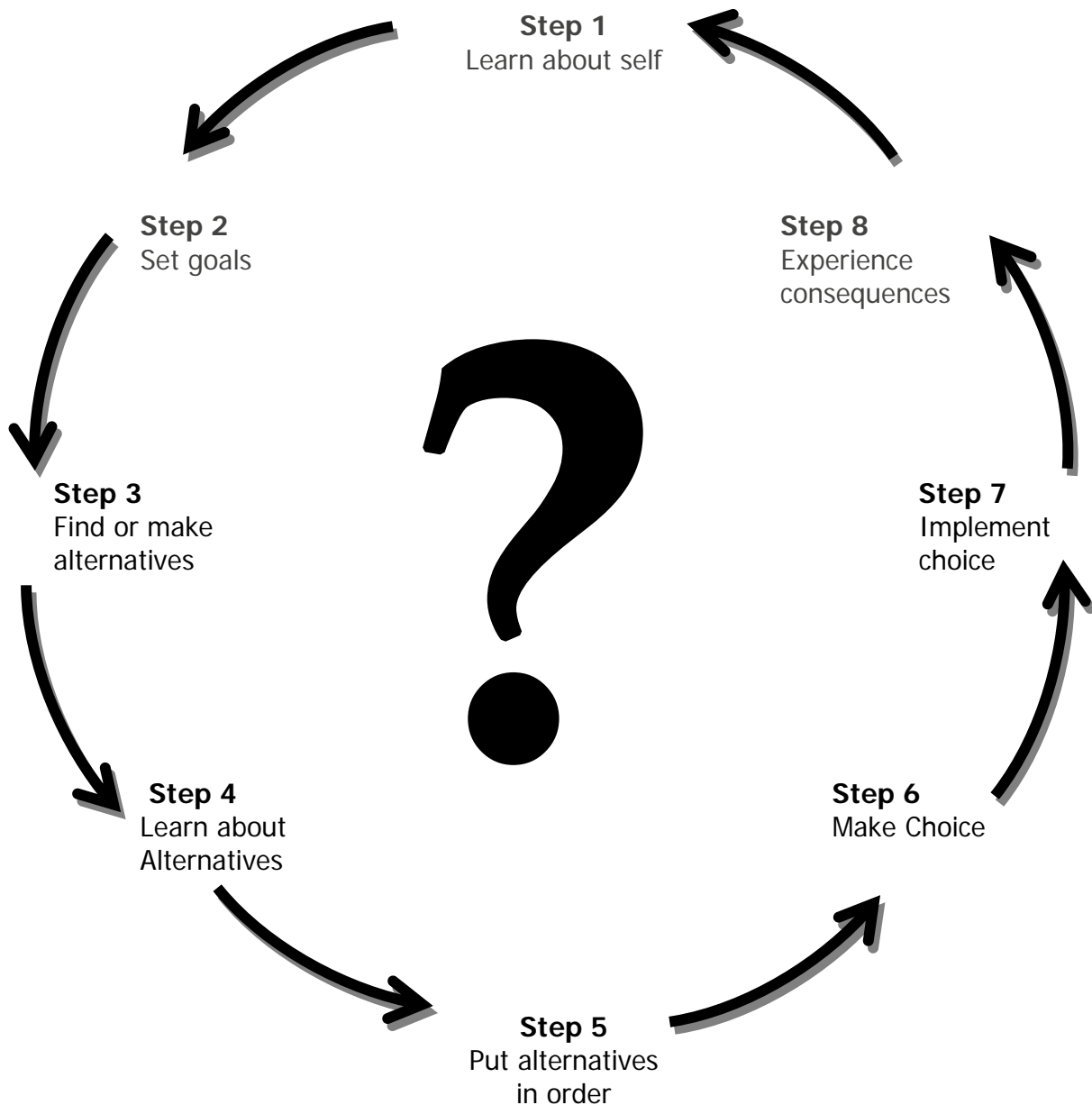
Step 7: Implement choice

Some concrete actions steps must be taken. Decision making moves from an internal thought process to an external action process at this step.

Model for decision making (cont'd)

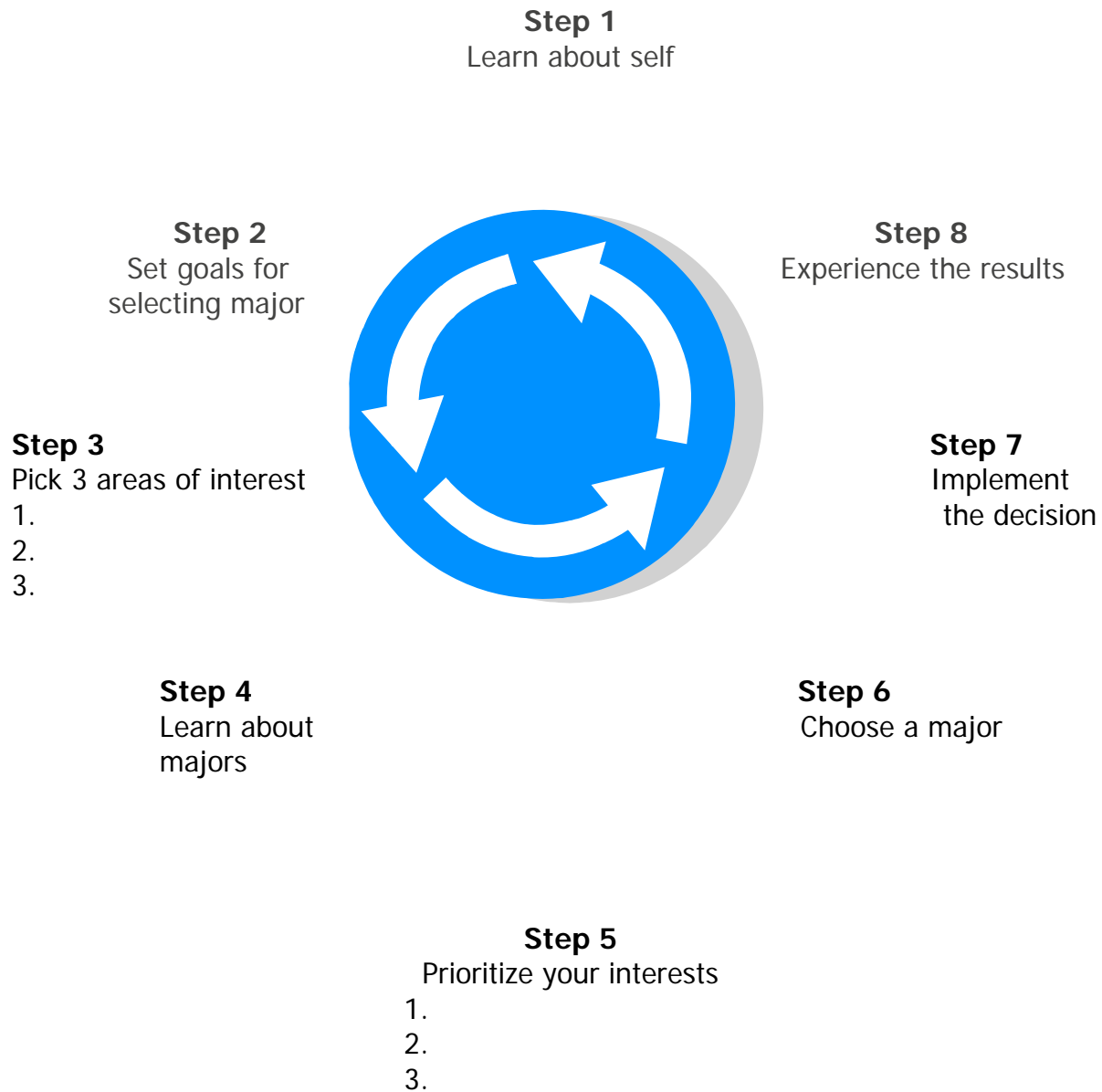
Step 8: Experience consequences

The choices and actions taken begin to bring results. The hope is that these results move you closer to your goal and are in keeping with your view of self. If so, you probably will not be redoing this decision soon; if not, you may be ready for step 1 again.



Decision making process worksheet

Decision making process worksheet



Action steps to selecting a major

A major should be interest-motivated. Choose a major you will enjoy. You will perform best in the area you have some motivation for. Here are some steps to consider:

- 1. College catalog.** Don't overlook the obvious. The college catalog can provide you with a great deal of important information about the numerous degrees and majors offered by the College of Arts, College of Business Administration, College of Education, College of Human and Health Sciences, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and College of Natural Sciences at CSU Stanislaus. The catalog provides an overview of each department, information on degrees offered, related career opportunities, and course offerings and descriptions. If you do not have your own copy, you can pick one up from the Outreach Office.
- 2. Select introductory courses.** Taking courses from several departments can help you gather some information. Experiment. See what interests you.
- 3. Meet with faculty.** Schedule meetings with faculty members from departments/programs of interest to obtain information to assist you in making an informed decision. The Career Services Center will be glad to refer you to faculty members in various disciplines. You may want to ask the following questions:
How did you get into this field?
What are recent graduates of your department doing with their major after graduation?
What are the most challenging courses?
What skills or interests are common among students pursuing this major?
Would you to connect me with current students who are enthusiastic about the major and might be willing to answer some questions for me?
- 4. Meet with students.** Speak with students who are currently majoring in the fields you are interested in. Use the list of students you received from faculty. Ask them to explain some of the courses and requirements as well as unique challenges and opportunities presented by their department/program of study. Also, do not overlook valuable input from friends, classmates, and roommates.
- 5. Network with alumni.** Ask faculty and staff members for referrals to alumni currently employed in the fields that interest you. Schedule informational interviews to discuss topics, including what a typical work day is like, major responsibilities in this field of work, qualifications needed to enter the field, and strategies for success.
- 6. FOCUS – a computerized career guidance system.** With FOCUS you can assess your interests and search for occupations compatible with your self assessment profile. Occupations can be analyzed as they pertain to your current or planned major area of study and the work areas that appeal to you. Occupations can also be researched for duties, educational requirements, skills demand, work values, job outlook, and salary. FOCUS helps you consider the kinds of experiences and training you will need to achieve your career objectives.
7. Utilize resources in the Career Services Center Library including books, journals, job listings and other publications to help you in your research.

Pick one of the steps described above, and set a date you will complete it by to make sure you follow through. Make an appointment with a career counselor or faculty advisor to discuss your progress direction.

California State University, Stanislaus

Major Programs of Study

Thirty-four undergraduate majors are currently offered at CSU Stanislaus.

AGRICULTURAL STUDIES

- Agricultural Biology
- Agricultural Business/Economics
- Permaculture
- Special Concentration

ANTHROPOLOGY

- Archaeology
- Ethnology
- Physical Anthropology
- Environmental and Resource Studies (minor)

APPLIED STUDIES

ART

- Art History
- Graphic Arts
- Painting
- Printmaking
- Sculpture
- Time Based Media

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

- Botany
- Ecology and Field Biology
- Entomology
- Genetics
- Marine Biology
- Microbiology
- Zoology

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

- Accounting
- Computer Information Systems
- Finance
- General Business
- Management
- Marketing
- Operations Management

CHEMISTRY

- Environmental Sciences

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- General Track
- Programs Track
- Research Track
- Services Track

COGNITIVE STUDIES

- Environmental Sciences

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

- Organizational Communication/
- Public Relations
- Speech Communication
- Journalism (minor)

COMPUTER SCIENCE

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- Corrections
- Forensic Science
- General Criminal Justice
- Law Enforcement

ECONOMICS

ENGINEERING – Joint program with University of the Pacific

ENGLISH

- Humanities Program
- Teaching English to Speaker of Other Languages (TESOL)

ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAM

- African American Studies
- Chicano Studies
- Ethnic Studies

FRENCH

GENDER STUDIES (minor)

GEOGRAPHY

- Applied Geography

GEOLOGY

- Applied Geology

HISTORY

- World History (minor)

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (minor)

LIBERAL STUDIES

- Anthropology
- Applied Philosophy
- Art
- Bilingual/Crosscultural: South East Asian
- Bilingual/Crosscultural: Spanish
- Biological Sciences
- Chemistry
- Child Development
- Civics
- Communication Studies
- Earth Science
- Economics
- English
- Ethnic Studies
- Exceptional Children and Youth
- Geography
- History
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical Education
- Physics and Physical Science
- Sociology
- Spanish
- TESOL
- Theatre

MATHEMATICS

MUSIC

- Composition
- Education
- Jazz Studies
- Performance

NURSING

- Pre-License Program
- RN to BSN

PHILOSOPHY

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Health and Wellness Management

PHYSICS AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

- Applied Physics
- Earth and Space Sciences
- Environmental Sciences
- Microelectronics (minor)

POLITICAL SCIENCE

PSYCHOLOGY

- Developmental Psychology
- Experimental Psychology

SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Anthropology
- Communication Studies
- Criminal Justice
- Economics
- Ethnic Studies
- Geography
- History
- International Studies
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Urban and Community Studies

SOCIOLOGY

- Drug and Alcohol Studies
- General
- Human Services
- Social Deviance and Criminology
- Social Inequality
- The Body, Culture, and Society
- Gerontology (minor)

SPANISH

SPECIAL MAJOR

THEATRE

- Acting
- Technical Theatre

Major descriptions and related careers

ANTHROPOLOGY – the study of the evolution of mankind through the study of cultures. It attempts to provide students with a better understanding of human physical differences, language systems, and the way cultures compare with each other and the past. **Related fields** can include archaeologist, educator, genealogist, museum work, paleontologist, ethnologist and linguistic or cultural anthropologist.

APPLIED STUDIES – unique undergraduate degree program for students who have already begun their careers and/or wish to change careers. This program is a preparatory program for leadership roles in areas where a student already has expertise and experience. Courses are drawn from disciplines including accounting, economics, English, mathematics, philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology. This multidisciplinary structure provides a broad understanding of the liberal arts and preparation for advanced study in programs including Master of Public Administration and Master of Business Administration.

ART – the study of various creative means of expressing human thoughts, interests, attitudes, emotions and ideas. It can be fine art (painting, drawing, photography, etc.), art history or commercial art which revolves around advertising (design, illustration, film, cards, poster, etc.). Related fields can include art therapist, art historian, cartoonist, cartographer, art and film critic, curator, graphic designer, painter, photojournalist, freelance artist and fashion illustrator.

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES – the study of life from the simplest forms of plants and animals to the highly complex structure of human beings. It includes how organisms are structured and how they function and relate to each other and their environment. **Related careers** can include chiropractor, educator, biochemist, nurse, physician, nutritionist, occupational or physical therapist, veterinarian and zoologist.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION – the study of coordination, examination, organization, implementation, promotion, supervision, and directing of the activities of individuals, organizations, and businesses and/or their financial and business transactions. It includes the study of methods of accounting and taxation, operation, sales and marketing, finance and budget, personnel, property, and equipment management. Related careers include public accounting, private accounting, tax accounting, government accounting and internal auditing, advertising executive, accounting, bank president, CEO, finance, human resources specialist, public relations specialist, purchasing agent, and sales manager.

CHEMISTRY – the study of substances and energy. It focuses on composition, characteristics, changes, reaction, uses, and benefits and dangers to mankind. The program is designed to provide the skills and knowledge necessary for **successful careers** in the chemical industry, chemical research, oceanography teaching, and environmental science, or for further study on the graduate level.

Major descriptions and related careers (cont'd)

COGNITIVE STUDIES – the study of human consciousness and cognitive processing. It emphasizes strategies for investigating how real (biological) and artificial (computational) brains individually and cooperatively solve problems, from concepts, process language, interpret visual and other sensory input and develop understanding of the world. The program is designed to provide the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers in educational consulting, health facility administration, human-computer interface and cognitive ergonomics.

COMMUNICATION STUDIES – Related careers include community college teacher, sales manager, lobbyist, speech writer, minister, lawyer, politician, consumer market researcher, staff analyst, focus group leader, political campaigner, staff, public affairs director, community relations director, marketing field director, organizational newsletter editor, public information specialist, press secretary, broadcast journalist, disc jockey, television news producer, news director, media technician, personnel staff, public service agency staff, corporate media director and communication consultant.

COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS – the study of liberal arts, business functions and organizations, computer information system functions and analysis, evaluation and development of computer information systems to support decision making. This degree program provides preparation for successful careers in computer information systems involving the management of information resources-computer data and voice communication-to support business operations and corporate strategy. **Related careers** can include business analyst, computer programmer, database administrator, network administrator and technical support persons.

COMPUTER SCIENCE – the study the design of computers, computer languages, and research into new ways to use computers. Management, analysis, and dissemination of information via computers. **Related careers** can include software engineer, systems analyst, technical writer, entrepreneur, and operations manager.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE – the study of the full complexity of American criminal justice and the opportunity to understand fully the social, legal, and technical progress within the various criminal justice agencies. Related careers can include youth counselor, probation officer, parole officer, corrections officer, federal law enforcement agent, state, county, city police officer, administration, research, law school, forensic science and teaching.

ECONOMICS – the study of production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services. It attempts to clarify how to the use of natural, technological, and financial resources affects the lives of humans. It includes the study of supply and demand and problems of inflation, unemployment, tariffs, taxation, and foreign trade. **Related careers** can include actuary, city manager, financial planner, IRS agent, political scientist, economist, and educator.

Major descriptions and related careers (cont'd)

EDUCATION (child development, elementary, secondary, vocational education) – the study of how human beings teach, learn, and develop language. **Related careers** can include adult education teacher, business teacher, director of Student Affairs, elementary teacher, 4-H agent, secondary teacher, special education teacher, textbook writer, trainer, and tutor.

ENGLISH – the study of the way written and spoken language takes form and the techniques for using it effectively. Students learn and listen to their own writing and speaking, to evaluate the speaking and writing of others, and to express their ideas and statements coherently. **Related careers** can include freelance writer, journalist, teacher, lawyer, lexicographer, linguist, playwright, proofreader, reporter, speech writer, columnist, editor, publisher, and educator.

FRENCH – this program assists students in perfecting their foreign language skills; to deepen their knowledge of language and the humanities by introducing them to representative authors and ideas, and to acquaint them with the culture and traditions of the people whose languages they have chose to study. **Related careers** include international business personnel, trade and commerce, export/import, interpreter/translator, banking representative, buyer/sales representative, foreign/diplomatic service, airlines personnel, travel industry, media personnel/foreign correspondent, public relations, US immigration/customs, US information agency, peace corps, language teacher, bilingual/foreign secretary, foreign publications/textbook editor, and research assistant.

GEOGRAPHY – the study of the interrelationship between the earth and its people. It focuses on climate, land, water, space, mineral resources, population, changes in environment, and how people adapt to them. **Related careers** include cartographer, climatologist, ecologist, environmental scientist, oceanographer, meteorologist, soil conservationist, urban planner, and landscape architect.

GEOLOGY – the study of the earth's structure, composition, and history. It includes the study of rocks, minerals, fossils, river, mountains, oceans, and energy resources. **Related careers** include metallurgist, mining engineer, petroleum engineer, paleontologist, seismologist, hydrologist, environmental scientist, and cartographer.

HISTORY – the study of major social, political, cultural, and economics events of the past. It helps us plan the present and future more effectively. **Related careers** include archaeologist, archivist, educator, judge, lawyer, librarian, political scientist, curator, biographer, historian, public administrator, and journalist.

LIBERAL STUDIES – a Subject Matter Preparation Program leading to enrollment in a Multiple Subject Credential Program. Students graduate with a strong liberal arts background and the necessary experience and content to prepare them for a teaching career. Successful completion of the major fulfills Elementary Subject Matter Preparation for the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. **Related careers** include elementary school teacher.

Major descriptions and related careers (cont'd)

MATHEMATICS – the study of quantitative relationships expressed in numbers and symbols. It includes the formulation, testing, interpretation, and practical applications of mathematical concepts and theories. **Related careers** include accountant, actuary, appraiser, bank officer, computer programmer, market research analyst, statistician, meteorologist, financial planner, and educator.

MUSIC – provides a solid foundation in music history, theory, and performance within a liberal arts context. It prepares students to pursue a variety of academic and professional interests, including graduate study in music. **Related careers** include educator, vocalist, musicologist, conductor, and instrumentalist.

NURSING – an integration of liberal education, including the arts, humanities, and the social physical, and biological sciences. It prepares graduates to practice as professional nurses in all nursing care settings to continue to graduate study. **Related careers** include hospital nursing, public health nursing, in-service education, leadership positions, community health nursing, armed services health care, and eligibility for graduate school.

PHILOSOPHY – the study of how the great minds of the past and present have answered the most serious questions of the universe. It includes morality, ethics, reality perception, knowledge, aesthetics, and existence. **Related careers** include college administration, diplomat, judge, lawyer, minister, lobbyist, public administrator, FBI/CIA agent, and arbitrator.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION – the study of athletic training, coaching, health, exercise science, recreation, motor development therapy, and program for children and youth. **Related careers** include educator, coach, athletic trainer, physical therapist, dancer, and recreation director.

PHYSICAL SCIENCES – an interdisciplinary degree designed to prepare students for a greater diversity of professions requiring an understanding of the physical sciences, including astronomy, chemistry, environmental science, geology, marine science, meteorology, and physics. **Related careers** include scientific research and development, industrial work, and teaching.

PHYSICS – the study of matter and the way it interacts with energy (heat, light, sound, electricity, and magnetism). **Related careers** include aerospace engineer, biophysicist, metallurgist, nuclear engineer, physicist, seismologist, astrophysicist, geophysicist, and meteorologist.

POLITICAL SCIENCE – the study of government at every level. It focuses on how people organize, administer, and operate the institutions that govern, include political parties, public opinion, elections, international relations, and the presidency. **Related careers** include campaign work, diplomat, city manager, government worker, judge, lawyer, politician, urban planner, lobbyist, labor relations specialist, and political consultant.

Major descriptions and related careers (cont'd)

PSYCHOLOGY – the study of human behavior. It seeks to understand and explain normal and abnormal behavior, mental ability, perception, development, and individual differences. **Related careers** include employment counselor, guidance counselor, human resource manager, industrial psychologist, mental health worker, marriage and family counselor, minister, psychiatrist, and vocational rehabilitation counselor.

SOCIAL SCIENCE – the study of human interaction in past and present society as well as contemporary social problems, their causes and their potential solutions. **Related careers** include welfare worker, mental health worker, probation officer, school social worker, and vocational rehabilitation counselor.

SOCIOLOGY – the study of how people behave in social groups: families, tribes, communities, and governments. It includes the analysis of social, political, religious, and business organizations to see how they influence society. It investigates the causes of social problems such as racism, crime, divorce, and poverty. **Related careers** include case worker, criminologist, demographer, gerontologist, probation officer, public administrator, and social worker.

SPANISH – the study of language to improve one's ability to communicate. It develops cultural awareness and sensitivity and promotes an appreciation for other cultures. **Related careers** include diplomat, bilingual educator, foreign service officer, news correspondent, translator, travel agent, missionary, linguist, and import/export agent.

THEATER ARTS – the study of the art of theatre through both theoretical and practical work while featuring a close relationship between courses and production. Graduates of the program are able to collaborate with others in the operation of a theatre and/or to qualify for further professional training as an artist or scholar. **Related careers** include acting, designing, directing, educational professional, community, and children's theatre technical production, radio, television, film, journalism, recreation, advertising and public relations, teaching and theater admission.

Several ways to improve your chances while you are still in college

- ✓ Get career counseling, even as early as your freshman year.
- ✓ Participate in a variety of co-curricular activities so that you can decide which areas interest you most, and also develop the personal qualifications – initiative, maturity, and the ability to work with others – that employers say are very important when it comes to hiring. Focus your time and energy on one or two co-curricular activities during your last two years so that you can play a more active role and assume a leadership position.
- ✓ Major in a subject that you like, but consider minoring in an area that will give you marketable skills (e.g., art history major, business minor). Regardless of your major or minor, it helps in many fields to take some business related courses (e.g., accounting, business administration, statistics and computers).
- ✓ Get to know several professors and administrative staff well enough so that you can use them as job references or ask them to write letters of recommendation for you.
- ✓ Interview people who are in the field that interests you for information about what they do, how they got into the field, and what they like and dislike about their jobs.
- ✓ Look into an internship in a field that interests you through your academic department and the Career Services Center.
- ✓ Become familiar with the professional journals and trade publications in your field.
- ✓ Take courses that will improve your communication skills, particularly basic courses in English and grammar, composition, and public speaking.
- ✓ Volunteer to assist a professor on a special project in your field, or do research for a publication he or she is working on.
- ✓ Attend a nearby professional conference/workshop related to your major.
- ✓ Obtain part-time and summer job work experience that may be related to you major.
- ✓ Attend career workshops sponsored by the Career Services Center on interviewing, job searching, resume writing, and preparing for graduate school.
- ✓ Use FOCUS, an online computerized guidance system, to assist you in assessing your interests, values and skills. Ask the Career Services staff for instructions on how to use this program.
- ✓ Develop your computer skills, particularly in the areas of word processing, spreadsheets, database, e-mail and internet.