# Choosing a Major

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**CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

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Exploring Majors

Adapted from “Choosing Your Major” by Mary Lou-Taylor, www.jobweb.com

Choosing a college major can be a daunting process. There are often a number of options, but which one will fit best with your interests, skills, values, and career goals? If you are uncertain of these answers, you are not alone. The majority of college students will change their major at least once, and many will change their major more than once. It is okay to be undecided.

Step 1: Assess yourself. Know your values, interests, strengths and abilities
Step 2: Gather occupational information and explore career options for your degree
Step 3: Evaluate your options, make your major decision and set goals
Step 4: Take action by gaining experience and connecting with employers

“Many factors can get in the way of you being able to make a major or career choice. Some of the most common are listed below. It is helpful to know the factors that may be affecting your major decision.”

External factors are not personal and are easier to manage than internal factors.

- **Un-relatedness of majors and careers:** Understanding that majors and careers have developed independently of each other will help you avoid becoming stuck wondering what you can do with a particular major.
- **Lack of information:** Often you just don’t have enough information to be comfortable making a decision. You have had very little opportunity up to this point to learn about different majors and careers. Career Service (MSR 210) is an excellent place to begin. If you’re more independent-minded, begin researching on your own.
- **Too much information:** This is particularly true since the advent of the World Wide Web. A huge amount of information is available, and it’s easy to become overwhelmed. Don’t give up: You can learn how to quickly and efficiently find good, accurate information on the web, and your career center can help.

Internal factors are more personal. Sometimes, these concerns must be addressed before the decision-making process can be completed.

- **Lack of self-confidence:** If your choice of a major or career seems especially critical, you may not feel confident in your ability to make a good decision. Often, obtaining additional information can solve this problem. Other times, more counseling may be needed.
- **Fear/anxiety:** While a little anxiety is positive and can help you stay on your toes, too much can wear you down. Fearing that you will make “bad” decisions can paralyze you. A career counselor can help you separate your rational from irrational fears.
- **Conflicting values:** You may be considering paths that are not compatible with each other. Perhaps you want to earn a good salary but also want to work in the not-for-profit sector. Or perhaps you would love to work as a performer, but also need job security. Doing some values clarification work may help you here.
- **Conflict with others:** Parents, spouses, and significant others often have definite ideas about your career choice. Desiring to please others and the need for continued financial support are two ways significant others can put undue pressure on you.
- **Multi-potentiality:** If you have many interests and many abilities, your problem may be one of narrowing down options rather than creating them.”
Model for Decision Making

The purpose of this model is to teach a planning process and to apply it to deciding on your major.

1. **Learn about Self**
   When deciding on a major, it is important to understand the kind of person you are - your likes, strengths, weaknesses, values, sources of satisfaction, and personality characteristics.

2. **Set Goals**
   The goal in choosing a major is to identify the academic discipline that best suits your strengths and interests and which will help you gain knowledge and grow in an environment that includes professors and other students who share your values and interests. A secondary goal is to continue exploring what you can do with the major you choose. The major is a launching pad that can take you in a variety of different career directions.

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 read about all the majors before you narrow the list of possibilities.

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.

5. **Prioritize Alternatives**
   Based on the information you collected, you can “project” yourself into each alternative. This enables you to throw some away and arrange the others in priority order.

6. **Make a Choice**
   The painful side of decision making is that you have 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. In many cases you can add a minor as well as a major.

7. **Implement the Choice**
   Some concrete action steps must be taken. Decision making moves from an internal thought process to an external action process at this step.

8. **Experience the Consequences**
   The choices and actions taken begin to bring results. As you commit to a major, you will take a class or complete a pre-requisite. The hope is that these classes move you closer to confirmation that this major is right for you. If so, you probably will not be redoing this decision soon; if not, you may be ready for step 1 again.
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. **Focus 2**
   With Focus 2 you can assess your interests and search for compatible occupations. Occupations can be viewed by major areas of study and work areas that appeal to you. Occupations can also be researched for duties, educational requirements, skills demand, work values, job outlook, and salary.

2. **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 at Stanislaus State. The catalog provides information on departments, degrees offered, related career opportunities, and course offerings and descriptions.

3. **Enroll in Introductory Courses**
   When possible fulfill general education requirements by taking introductory courses that help you gather more information about a subject that interests you. Be careful of taking extra intro courses from the same General Education category. Seek advising if you’re unsure.

4. **Meet with Faculty**
   Schedule meetings with faculty from departments and programs of interest to obtain additional information. You may want to ask the following questions:
   - How did you get into this field?
   - What are recent graduates 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 connect me with current students who are enthusiastic about the major and might be willing to answer some questions for me?

5. **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.

6. **Network**
   Ask faculty and staff members for referrals to alumni or other professionals currently employed in the fields that interest you. Schedule informational interviews to discuss topics, including what a typical work day is like, major responsibilities, qualifications needed to enter the field, and strategies for success.

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

Taken from the ACT website: http://forms.act.org/wwm/student.html

Please see the following page for more information.
World of Work Map Descriptions

ADMINISTRATION & SALES
A. Employment-Related Services - Employee Benefits Manager; Employment Interviewer; Human Resources Manager; Labor Relations Specialist; Training/Education Manager
B. Marketing & Sales - Advertising Manager; Buyer; Insurance Agent; Real Estate Agent; Sales/Marketing Manager; Travel Agent
C. Management - Financial Manager; Foreign Service Officer; General Manager/Executive; Hotel/Motel Manager; Property/Real Estate Manager
D. Regulation & Protection - Customs Inspector; Detective (Police); FBI Agent; Food & Drug Inspector; Park Ranger; Police Officer

BUSINESS OPERATIONS
E. Communications & Records - Abstractor; Court Reporter; Hotel Clerk; Medical Record Technician; Title Examiner/Searcher
F. Financial Transactions - Accountant/Auditor; Bank Teller; Budget/Credit Analyst; Insurance Underwriter; Real Estate Appraiser; Tax Accountant
G. Distribution & Dispatching - Air Traffic Controller; Flight Dispatcher; Mail Carrier; Shipping/Receiving Clerk; Warehouse Supervisor

TECHNICAL
H. Transport Operation & Related - Aircraft Pilot; Astronaut; Bus Driver; Locomotive Engineer; Ship Captain; Truck Driver
I. Agriculture, Forestry & Related - Aquaculturist; Farm Manager; Forester; Nursery/Greenhouse Manager; Tree Surgeon/Arborist
J. Computer & Information Specialties - Actuary; Archivist/Curator; Computer Programmer; Computer Systems Analyst; Website Developer
K. Construction & Maintenance - Carpenter; Electrician; Firefighter; Plumber; Security System Installer
L. Crafts & Related - Cabinetmaker; Chef/Cook; Jeweler; Tailor/Dressmaker; Winemaker
M. Manufacturing & Processing - Printing Press Operator; Sheet Metal Worker; Tool & Die Maker; Water Plant Operator; Welder
N. Mechanical & Electrical Specialties - Locksmith; Millwright; Technicians in various fields (for example, Automotive, Avionics, Broadcast, Sound)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
O. Engineering & Technologies - Architect, Engineers (for example, Civil, Mechanical) & Technicians (for example, Energy, Quality Control) in various fields; Production Planner; Surveyor
P. Natural Science & Technologies - Biologist; Food Technologist; Geologist; Meteorologist; Physicist
Q. Medical Technologies - Dietician/Nutritionist; Optician; Pharmacist; Radiographer Technologists in various fields (for example, Medical, Surgical)
R. Medical Diagnosis & Treatment - Anesthesiologist; Dentist; Nurse Practitioner; Physical Therapist; Physician; Veterinarian
S. Social Science - Anthropologist; Criminologist; Political Scientist; Experimental Psychologist; Sociologist

ARTS
T. Applied Arts (Visual) - Animator; Fashion Designer; Graphic Artist; Software; Photographer; Set Designer
U. Creative & Performing Arts - Actor; Composer (Music); Dancer/Choreographer; Fashion Model; Musician; Writer/Author
V. Applied Arts (Written & Spoken) - Advertising Copywriter; Columnist; Editor; Interpreter; Librarian; Reporter/Journalist

SOCIAL SERVICE
W. Health Care - Athletic Trainer; Dental Hygienist; Health Services; Administrator; Psychiatric Technician; Recreational Therapist
X. Education - Athletic Coach; College/University Faculty; Educational Administrator; Teachers in various specialties (for example, Art, Foreign Language, Music)
Y. Community Services - Counselors in various specialties (for example, Mental Health, Rehabilitation); Lawyer; Social Service Director; Social Worker
Z. Personal Services - Flight Attendant; Gaming Occupations Worker; Hairstylist/Barber
What is your Holland Code?

Dr. John Holland theorized that people work best in environments that match their personality preferences. According to his research, people and work environments can be loosely classified into six different groups.

While you may have some interests in and similarities to several of the six groups, you may be attracted primarily to two or three of the areas. These two or three letters are your “Holland Code.” For example, with a code of “RES” you would most resemble the Realistic type, somewhat less resemble the Enterprising type, and resemble the Social type even less. Research shows that people are most satisfied if there is some degree of fit between their personality and their work environment.

**Investigative**

“Thinkers”

People who like to observe, learn, investigate, analyze, evaluate, or solve problems.

**Realistic**

“Doers”

People who have athletic or mechanical ability, prefer to work with machines, tools, plants, or animals or to be outdoors.

**Enterprising**

“Persuaders”

People who like to work with people – influencing, persuading, performing, leading or managing for organizational goals.

**Artistic**

“Creators”

People who have artistic, innovating, or intuitional abilities and like to work in unstructured situations.

**Social**

“Helpers”

People who like to work with people – to inform, enlighten, help, train, develop, or cure them – or are skilled with words.

**Conventional**

“Organizers”

People who like to work with data, have clerical or numerical ability, and like to carry things out in detail or follow through on others’ instructions.
# What is your Holland Code? (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realistic</th>
<th>Investigative</th>
<th>Artistic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Enterprising</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are you?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Inquisitive</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Well-organized</td>
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<tr>
<td>Straightforward</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Accurate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanically</td>
<td>Scientific</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Idealistic</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>Numerically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclined</td>
<td>Observant/</td>
<td>Unconventional</td>
<td>Insightful</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>inclined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Precise</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Outgoing</td>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>Methodical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Scholarly</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>Conscientious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserved</td>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Efficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-controlled</td>
<td>Intellectually self-confident</td>
<td>Original</td>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>Talkative</td>
<td>Conforming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Introspective</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Extroverted</td>
<td>Practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>Forgiving</td>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
<td>Thrifty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Like to?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Like to?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Like to?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Like to?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Like to?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Like to?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tinker with machines</td>
<td>Explore a variety of ideas</td>
<td>Attend concerts, theatre, art exhibits</td>
<td>Make decisions</td>
<td>Make decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work outdoors</td>
<td>Work independently</td>
<td>Read fiction, plays, and poetry</td>
<td>Start your own business</td>
<td>Be elected to office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be physically active</td>
<td>Perform lab experiments</td>
<td>Work on crafts</td>
<td>Campaign politically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use your hands</td>
<td>Deal with abstractions</td>
<td>Take photography</td>
<td>Meet important people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build things</td>
<td>Do research</td>
<td>Express yourself creatively</td>
<td>Have power or status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend/Train animals</td>
<td>Be challenged</td>
<td>Deal with ambiguous ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on electronic equipment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can you?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Can you?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fix electrical things</td>
<td>Think abstractly</td>
<td>Sketch, draw, paint</td>
<td>Teach/Train others</td>
<td>Initiate projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve electrical problems</td>
<td>Solve math problems</td>
<td>Play a musical instrument</td>
<td>Express yourself clearly</td>
<td>Convince people to do things your way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch a tent</td>
<td>Understand scientific theories</td>
<td>Write stories, poetry, music</td>
<td>Lead a group discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play a sport</td>
<td>Do complex calculations</td>
<td>Sing, act, dance</td>
<td>Mediate disputes</td>
<td>Sell things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a blueprint</td>
<td>Use a microscope or computer</td>
<td>Design fashions or interiors</td>
<td>Plan and supervise an activity</td>
<td>Give talks or speeches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant a garden</td>
<td>Interpret formulas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organize activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate tools and machine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lead a group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Follow clearly defined procedures
- Use data processing equipment
- Work with numbers
- Be responsible for details
- Collect or organize things
- Work well within a system
- Do a lot of paperwork in a short time
- Keep accurate records
- Use a computer
- Write effective business letters
Stanislaus State Majors and Concentrations

- **AGRICULTURAL STUDIES B.A.**
  - Agricultural Biology
  - Agricultural Economics
  - Sustainable Agriculture
  - Special Concentration

- **ANTHROPOLOGY B.A.**
  - Forensic Anthropology
  - Medical Anthropology

- **APPLIED LEADERSHIP B.A.**

- **ART B.A. or B.F.A**
  - Graphic Arts
  - Mixed Emphasis
  - Painting
  - Sculpture
  - Video and Time-Based Media

- **BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES B.A. or B.S.**
  - Biology Education
  - Ecology
  - General Biology
  - Molecular & Microbial
  - Organismal Biology
  - Environmental Sciences

- **BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION B.S.**
  - Accounting
  - Computer Information Systems
  - Finance
  - General Business
  - Management
    - Human Resources
    - International Business
    - Strategy/Entrepreneurship
  - Marketing
  - Operations Management

- **CHEMISTRY B.A. or B.S.**
  - Environmental Sciences

- **CHILD DEVELOPMENT B.A.**
  - Early Childhood
  - Middle Childhood
  - Child Development Services

- **COGNITIVE STUDIES B.A.**

- **COMMUNICATION STUDIES B.A.**
  - Relational & Organization Communication
  - Public Communication & Media

- **COMPUTER SCIENCE B.S.**

- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE B.A.**
  - Law Enforcement
  - Corrections
  - Forensic Science
  - Juvenile Justice
  - Criminal Legal Studies

- **ECONOMICS B.A.**
  - Banking, Investment, & Managerial Economics
  - International Trade & Alternative Economic Systems
  - Economics & Public Sector
  - Labor Economics
  - Economic History

- **ENGLISH B.A.**

- **ETHNIC STUDIES B.A.**
  - Socio-cultural Emphasis in Ethnic Minority Families
  - Socio-political Focus on Ethnic Experiences

- **GENDER STUDIES B.A.**
  - History, Society, & Inequality
  - Culture, Ideology, & Representation
  - Ethnicity, Nationality, & Sexuality

- **GEOGRAPHY B.A.**
  - Cultural/Social Geography
  - Physical Geography & Environmental Studies
  - Geospatial Technology
  - California Studies

- **GEOLOGY B.S.**
  - Applied Geology

- **HEALTH SCIENCE B.S.**
  - Health Leadership & Administration

- **HISTORY B.A.**

- **KINESIOLOGY B.A.**
  - Exercise Science
  - Health Promotion

- **LIBERAL STUDIES B.A.**

- **MATHEMATICS B.A. or B.S.**
  - General Music
  - Music Technology

- **MUSIC B.M.**
  - Piano Performance
  - Instrumental Performance
  - Visual Performance
  - Music Education – Instrumental
  - Music Education – Choral
  - Composition
  - Jazz Performance

- **NURSING B.S.**
  - Pre-Licensure BSN Track
  - RN to BSN
  - ASBSN

- **PHILOSOPHY B.A.**

- **PHYSICAL SCIENCES B.A.**
  - Applied Physics
  - Earth & Space Sciences
  - Environmental Sciences

- **PHYSICS B.A. or B.S.**

- **POLITICAL SCIENCE B.A.**

- **PSYCHOLOGY B.A.**
  - Developmental Psychology
  - Experimental Psychology

- **SOCIAL SCIENCES B.A.**
  - International Studies
  - Urban & Community Studies

- **SOCIOLOGY B.A.**
  - General Sociology
  - Human Services
  - Drug and Alcohol Studies
  - Social Deviance & Criminology
  - Social Inequality
  - Body, Culture, & Society

- **SPANISH B.A.**

- **THEATRE ARTS B.A.**
Stanislaus State Minors

- African American Studies
- Agricultural Studies
- Anthropology
- Art History
- Art
- Biological Sciences
- Business Administration
- Chemistry
- Chicano Studies
- Child Development
- Cognitive Studies
- Computer Information Systems
- Computer Science
- Criminal Justice
- Economics
- English
- Environmental & Resource Studies
- Ethics
- Ethnic Studies
- Exceptional Children & Youth
- Forensic Science
- French
- Gender Studies
- Geography
- Geology
- Gerontology
- History
- Journalism
- Kinesiology
- Latin American Studies
- Mathematics
- Microelectronics
- Music
- Permaculture
- Philosophy
- Physical Sciences
- Physics
- Political Science
- Portuguese
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Spanish
- Speech Communication
- Theatre Arts
- World History
## Major and Career Exploration Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Choice 1</th>
<th>Major Choice 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Major:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concentration (if applicable):</strong></td>
<td><strong>Concentration (if applicable):</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ACADEMIC PREPARATION

- [ ] Read the University Catalog description for the major
- [ ] Read the major department website to learn about their program and faculty
- [ ] List GPA or other requirements to be accepted into this major:

  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  ____________________________

- [ ] Review the required courses for the major
- [ ] Review the course descriptions and pre-requisites in the University Catalog.
- [ ] List the pre-requisites for required courses:

  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  ____________________________

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  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  ____________________________

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- [ ] List the pre-requisites for required courses:

  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  ____________________________

### Online resources:

- [ ] University catalog [http://catalog.csustan.edu/](http://catalog.csustan.edu/)
- [ ] A – Z directory (department websites) [https://www.csustan.edu/directories](https://www.csustan.edu/directories)
- [ ] My Next Move Interest Profiler [https://www.mynextmove.org/](https://www.mynextmove.org/)
- [ ] What Can I Do With This Major [https://www.csustan.edu/career/new-focus-2/explore-options](https://www.csustan.edu/career/new-focus-2/explore-options)
- [ ] O*Net [https://www.onetonline.org/](https://www.onetonline.org/)
- [ ] Career One Stop [https://www.careeronestop.org/](https://www.careeronestop.org/)
- [ ] Princeton Review [https://www.princetonreview.com/career-search](https://www.princetonreview.com/career-search)
# Major and Career Exploration Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Choice 1</th>
<th>Major Choice 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major:</td>
<td>Major:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration (if applicable):</td>
<td>Concentration (if applicable):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CAREER PREPARATION**

- Does the major department provide any opportunity for internships or other experiential learning? What are they?
- Are there any student organizations associated with this major? What are they?
- Related careers:
- Required knowledge, skills and abilities:
- Work duties/responsibilities:
- Required education and training:
- Salary range:
- Resources used to gather information:
- Steps you are taking or plan to take to prepare for your career:

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- Salary range:
- Resources used to gather information:
- Steps you are taking or plan to take to prepare for your career: