# Selecting a Major Guide ◆ 2012 - 2013

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## Career Development Services

Florida Gulf Coast University  
10501 FGCU Blvd S.  
Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565  
(239) 590-7946  
Email: careercenter@fgcu.edu  
[http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/careers/](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.

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

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

**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/majorexplore.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”

Selecting a Major Planning Guide – FGCU Career Development Services Page 3
Career Exploration and Decision Making

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU
- Skills
- Interest
- Personality
- Values
- Needs
- Ambitions

INFORMATION ABOUT CAREERS
- Job Tasks and Activities
- Skill Requirements
- Educational Requirements
- Employment Information
  (Including Employment Outlook/Trends)
- Compensation Levels

GENERATE AND EVALUATE OPTIONS
- Will I like this job?
- Can I do this job?
- Can I complete the education necessary for this job?
- Will this job meet my needs?

DECISION MAKING
- Narrow down your options through reality testing (informational interviews, job shadowing, and volunteerism, or part-time employment.)
- Make a choice
- Monitor and re-evaluate

If you are having trouble generating options or making a decision, or just feel confused/overwhelmed by the process, meet with a counselor from Counseling & Psychological Services. Call 590-7950.

If you have questions about the careers that interest you or would like help gathering more information about them, meet with an advisor from Career Development Services.

Complete all four assessments in MyPlan.com

Gather information about different careers in MyPlan.com
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 “V84NJ4NT“ *
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, 2013, 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

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<th>Personal Qualities</th>
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<td>How well does each quality describe you?</td>
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Comparing Your Strengths to the Word 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.

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**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.

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Selecting a Major Planning Guide – FGCU Career Development Services
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?*

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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. 
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### Other Values

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17. 
18. 
19. 
20. 
21. 
22. 
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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
Your Experiences and Career Exploration

Your life has been a mosaic of experiences. It can be helpful to the career exploration process to reflect on the interesting and enjoyable things that you have done or have happened to you. In the space below, make a list of your memorable experiences. Feel free to use the following list to help you brainstorm:

- Classes
- Academic projects
- Research
- Internships
- Jobs
- School clubs
- Community service
- Religious activities
- Sports
- Hobbies
- Travel
- Vacations

For each experience you list, consider the following questions:

- What led you to choose that experience?
- What did you especially like/dislike about that experience? (Consider the activity, people, environment, etc.)
- What skills and personal qualities did you demonstrate or develop?
- What was most memorable and rewarding about that experience?

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

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

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