

Ten Myths About Majors & Careers

(Adapted from Kansas State University)

Here's a list of 10 myths, related to majors and careers, that have the potential to lead students in the WRONG direction. Don't let these myths affect your ability to make the right choices for you.

MYTH #1: There is one perfect career for me.

THE FACTS

- There may be several majors and careers that appeal to you and match your interests, abilities, and values.
- Every UMass major provides a background for at least several career possibilities.
- Your decision should be made based on an understanding of yourself and the options available.

MYTH #2: Choosing a major means deciding what I will do with the rest of my life.

THE FACTS

- Choosing a major does not mean that you will be employed in a career directly related to that field.
- Most college graduates can anticipate one or more career changes during their working lives.

MYTH #3: I should choose a major or career field based on what's "hot" in the current job market.

THE FACTS

- It's risky to choose a major or career field based strictly on current market trends.
- A certain field may be growing in size, but economics and other factors can reverse the trend and change the job market.
- It is better to choose a major/career because you have a genuine interest and talent for it.

MYTH #4: People with humanities or liberal arts majors have trouble finding jobs because they don't have any marketable skills.

THE FACTS

- People who major in the humanities or liberal arts gain very valuable skills, especially in writing, organizational, and communications skills.
- These skills are highly prized by potential employers.
- A major in these areas can prepare you for a wide variety of jobs.
- Internships are crucial for building your resume and gaining valuable experience.

MYTH #5: Since I have general education credits and electives to complete, I can wait until I'm a junior to figure out my major.

THE FACTS

- You should begin the process of deciding a major now!
- It takes time and effort to think through the process of choosing a major, as well as try out courses in the majors you are considering.
- If you wait until later to begin the process of choosing a major, you may have to take extra courses and delay your graduation.

- The expectation is that you will have declared or applied for a major by the end of the first semester of your sophomore year.

MYTH #6: If I take the introductory course in a potential major, I'll know for sure it's for me.

THE FACTS

- It is a good idea to take courses in a major to learn more about it.
- Sometimes, you will need more than one course to know if the major will hold your interest and if you have the skills to succeed in it academically.
- Many majors restrict access to their upper-level courses, so you may need to declare a major just to have a better opportunity to explore it more. Remember, you are not locking yourself into that major!

MYTH #7: If I want to go to medical school, the only acceptable major is something in the natural sciences.

THE FACTS

- You can major in many different areas and pursue a health career.
- You will be required to complete science prerequisites, but medical schools seek many types of applicants, including students who have a liberal arts background.
- Medical and other professional schools such as law schools are looking for applicants who think critically, write well, and are well-rounded.

MYTH #8: A major should be directly related to a future career goal.

THE FACTS

- Some majors are directly related to career goals (such as accounting, engineering, or nursing), but most career fields are seeking applicants from a variety of majors.
- Employers are often most interested in the skills you have developed during your college career.
- It is important to major in something you are passionate about.
- In the years following graduation, many students will find themselves working in careers not directly related to their undergraduate majors.

MYTH #9: Most college freshmen have a major and career path planned out.

THE FACTS

- Each fall, about 25% of the incoming class enter UMass as undeclared students.
- Approximately 70% of college students nationally will change their major at least once during the course of their academic journey.
- Give yourself permission to explore and change your major if you find something else that is a better fit.

MYTH #10: Taking a career assessment test will tell me what I should choose for a major or career.

THE FACTS

- Career assessments are great tools, but they will not (alone) find you a perfect major.
- They can help you learn more about yourself, and tie your interests, abilities and values to major and career possibilities.