Career Journal

Explanation

Some students enter the university knowing exactly the career path they want and naturally fall into the right curriculum of study without ever having to question their decision. A good number of students enter the university with multiple interests and want to explore all their options before making a decision about their major and career path. Others enter the university wondering if college is going to work out for them or not, so they choose to delay a decision about their major course of study while they discover more about themselves and being a college student. Some students declare a major right away but later discover that they didn’t know very much about that academic discipline and find it holds very little or no interest at all for them.

As academic advisors for students who enter the University without a declared major or subsequently become undecided, we prompt advisees to do some soul-searching about their major and their future career path. The process begins with questions about who they are, what their talents, interests, and passions have been, what their work experiences have been, what are they familiar with job-wise and due to family-held occupations, etc. The intention of this questioning is to encourage students to think about important things, such as: Who am I? Where am I going? What do I want to become? What can I do with my talents or passions? What are my values? As a result, more questions arise, such as: How do I deal with all the choices that are out there – many of which I do not even know exist? Who does? Where can I go for help? What career path will pay me the most money? Will earning lots of money bring the kind of life satisfaction I want/need? Will I ever find a job that I like? Will I truly be happy if I pick that career path? Will I have to relocate? What will that look like if I do? What about graduate or professional schools? The questioning phase is ongoing because the answers to these questions evolve over time. The good news is that when students take time to explore these things, they often come to insightful conclusions about themselves and major/career decisions with which they are comfortable.

Having conversations about your academic major and career path should begin with your academic advisor and/or faculty mentor and those who work closely with students in the university student support services area. The Career Services Office is staffed with professionals who are trained to help students through the process of exploring major and career decisions. They use a variety of testing instruments to help students measure their unique strengths and interests, assist with resume construction, interviewing skills, and job applications.

Exercise

The following exercise is meant to help students think about their major and ultimately their career path after college. The assignment is to utilize three resources using at least two from list “A,” Resources, to discover more about yourself and major/career paths that may interest you, or to further explore the major/career path you have already chosen. Then write a summary of your findings, especially addressing the questions listed in “B,” Questions to Consider.

A. RESOURCES

- My Majors: www.mymajors.com
- My Plan: www.myplan.com
- Salaries: www.mysalary.com
- IU South Bend Career Services Office (Administration Building)
- Meet with a professor at IU South Bend in your major interest area
- Talk with an upper division student in your major interest area, or alumnus who graduated with your major interest area.
- Job Shadow someone who works in the field of your interest
- Attend an event on campus, such as a lecture or club meeting, which relates to a specific major or career of your choice

B. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What attitudes or dispositions are necessary to be a success and enjoy a job in this field?
- What skills are necessary to be a success in this career?
- Is there just one very specific degree that leads to this career, and if so, which one? Or would a number of undergraduate degrees be acceptable? Which ones? Where could you earn that degree?
- For personal interviews, you might want to ask these kinds of questions:
  - What personal rewards and costs is part of the job?
  - How have those rewards/costs impacted your attitude toward your job and/or your future in this industry?
- What challenges have you encountered in this job? Were they expected?
- What positive changes and personal growth have you experienced as a result of your involvement in this career?
- What negative aspects are most difficult about your job?
- What advice would you be willing to share with someone about working in this field?
- What advice would you have liked to have received when you were first thinking about this career yourself?