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What to Do If You Don't Have a Major

By Patrice Darby, Associate Director of Student Success

Office of Student Success Services (OS3)

Some students come to college because it is a part of their plan to be in a specific career. Others come to college to have new experiences that will lead them to a career they will like and be good at. Both options are common ways to start college. Many students who haven't chosen a career yet come to college without declaring a major. The Registrar's Office will list their major as "undeclared". Without a list of classes they must take for their major, how do students choose their classes? The Academic Advisor can help students choose courses, even if they haven't yet decided on a major.

During the first year, students focus on the LEAD curriculum. "LEAD stands for **Learning Through Experiential and Applied Discovery**. Think of it as an all-encompassing, integrative pathway that will prepare you for whatever your next step is—research, graduate school, or the workforce."¹

For LEAD, students choose to follow the CORE Exploration or the CORE Inquiries curriculum. For CORE Exploration, students will take:

- CORE101 Liberal Arts Seminar
- Foreign Language Study
- COREP Professional Pathways
- One class in each of six areas: Arts, Cultural Literacy, Humanities, Mathematics, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Natural Science with Lab.

[CORE Inquiries](#) are specific sets of courses that fit a certain theme like Justice or Public and Environmental Health. The student's Advisor will help them pick classes that meet these requirements. The goal is to give students a range of classes so they can figure out what they're interested in and what they are good at. If the student comes to SMCM from another college or university, the Advisor will check their transfer credits and suggest a related major.

As students learn more about different subjects, they should talk to their professors and their advisor to learn more about the majors. At SMCM, students can choose more than one major and minor (but they do not need to choose a second major or a minor to graduate) so they should explore how their interests can fit together. We ask students to choose a major by the end of their second year. They do this by logging into the Portal and updating their major under

¹ <https://www.smcm.edu/academics/lead/>

the “My Academics” tab. Students who declare by the end of their second year tend to graduate on-time.

Why Declare a Major?

1. Students get placed higher on the waitlist for courses in their major.
2. They get invited to departmental picnics, lectures, and special events.
3. They get connected with an academic advisor in their major who can connect them to internships, graduate schools, and jobs.
4. They get connected with other students in the major which helps increase their sense of belonging and comfort.
5. Listing a major on a resume or job application looks so much better than listing "undeclared".

What if they aren't sure?

Even if a student isn't 100% sure they know what they want to major in, they should still declare what they think they *might* want to major in for all the reasons above. The great thing is that it takes ~45 seconds for them to change their major if they ever change their mind, and they can change their minds as often as they like. Once your student settles on a major, they should reach out to a professor in their department and ask them to be their advisor. Most of the time students reach out to a professor whose class they've taken.

The Office of Student Success Services (OS3) has a Majors/Minors Fair each fall so students can explore the majors and minors that we offer. The student's Academic Advisor and staff in OS3 can help any student with advising, course selection, and choosing a major. Helping students make progress toward finishing their degrees is what we do!

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