



UNDECIDED MAJOR

WHAT IS AN UNDECIDED MAJOR?

If you are entering Minnesota State University, Mankato without a specific field of study, you are an “undecided student.” Nationally, over one of every four students is unsure of a major when they enter college. Of the students who have majors upon entering college, nearly 75% of students change their majors, and many do so more than once. Compared with students who have a major upon entering college, undecided students are equally prepared for college and graduate in a similar amount of time. (Krock, Howard, Hull, & Woodard, 1997)

What is a major?

Your major is the field in which you choose to specialize during your undergraduate education. Your choice of a major will play a significant role in how you spend your time at college – what classes you take, what organizations you belong to, and who you’ll spend most of your time with. Pursuing a major allows you to develop intellectual skills and demonstrate your ability to grasp a subject from the fundamentals through advanced study. It’s not a decision to take lightly – you’ll devote much of your academic time and energy to the completion of your major requirements.

What classes should I take?

Trying out courses in a diversity of majors can help narrow down what you like and don’t like. You can explore a wide range of classes in the general education curriculum. This variety provides an opportunity for you to explore potential majors and complete general education requirements at the same time.

However, it isn’t necessary to limit yourself to classes only in the general education curriculum. If there is a class that sounds interesting but doesn’t meet a general education requirement, it can still help you in your studies by offering insight into a field of study and providing credits you can put towards graduation.

What is the general education curriculum?

The general education program integrates a broad foundation of knowledge and skills with the study of contemporary concerns. The goals and competencies within the curriculum are reflective of those capabilities essential for all college-educated adults facing the twenty-first century.

A Bachelor of Science degree requires the completion of a minimum of 44 General Education credits distributed across 11 categories. A Bachelor of Arts degree requires an additional 8 credits of a single foreign language for a total of 52 credits. Detailed information about General Education Requirements can be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin.

How to choose a major:

1. *Gathering information:* Now is the time to get started on the very important process of gathering information you will need to choose your future major. Choosing a major requires you to gather information in three main areas:

a) *University majors and programs:* the Undergraduate Bulletin provides a list of academic programs, course descriptions, and requirements for graduation. Your academic advisor is available to discuss these options with you and to recommend courses that would give you an opportunity to “sample” these programs. Taking a variety of courses will provide valuable information about your abilities and interests in these possible fields.

b) *Self-awareness:* Research shows that a better person-career match leads to greater life satisfaction and success. Knowing your unique pattern of interests, values, abilities, personality characteristics, and lifestyle requirements will help you make a better match with a major or career. This information can be obtained through a variety of means, such as discussions with your advisor and/or professors, career testing and counseling, Web-based self assessment programs, job experience, classroom experience, or life experience. Make a commitment to find out more about yourself and keep a record of what you discover for use in future decision making.

c) *Occupational information:* Information about occupations can be obtained in books and career files in the Career Development Center; internship or employment experiences; volunteer/community service experiences; talking to professors or people who are already working in fields of potential interest (also known as “informational interviews”); web-based information sites.

2. *Making your decision;* Choosing a major is a process that takes time and care. Once you have gathered a sufficient amount of information in the areas above, you can begin the decision-making process. Most people will have to “recycle” back to gathering information from time to time. Decision making involves:

- Putting all the information together and summarizing it.
- Matching your summary to possible majors.
- Weighing the benefits and costs of each possible choice.

RESOURCES FOR UNDECIDED STUDENTS

Professors, advisors and career counselors can offer supportive and objective assistance in determining a major. As an undecided student, it is recommended that you take advantage of the numerous services designed specifically to help with your decision.

Office of New Student and Family Programs

mnsu.edu/newstudent

The Office of New Students and Family Programs offers academic advising for all undecided students. Your advisor can help you with assessing your academic progress, career and life planning, development of study skills, and appropriate course selection.

First Year Seminar

mnsu.edu/newstudent/seminar/

First Year Seminar is a course designed to assist students with their transition to the University. Class size is intentionally limited in each class section to allow students to make connections with other students, get to know your instructor on a 1-1 level and explore tools necessary in finding personal success at Minnesota State Mankato.

Career Development Center

mnsu.edu/cdc/

The Career Development Center (CDC) counselors provide numerous services to undecided students, including help with choosing academic majors, identifying career options, assessing the availability of jobs in a certain field, and finding an internship.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

Office of New Student and Family Programs

Minnesota State University, Mankato
103 Preska Residence Community
Mankato, MN 56001

Phone

507-389-5498 (V)
800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTY)

Fax

507-389-5183

Web

mnsu.edu/newstudent

You are encouraged to visit the campus.

To arrange for a visit, please call:

Office of Admissions: 507-389-1822

Toll-free: 800-722-0544

For additional information about course requirements, please visit <http://www.mnsu.edu/supersite/academics/bulletins/>

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