

## Career Exploration

### *How do I explore different majors/careers?*

**Talk with a Smith Career Center (SCC) Career Advisor** in the Smith Career Center to learn more about different fields, industries, and the services offered. Career Advisors are available to assist students in exploring and defining career options. Some of the resources available include Individual meetings, Interest assessment and testing, Occupational reference materials, Career workshops, guidance through online resources.

Become involved in the **Academic Exploration Program (AEP)** at Bradley University to learn more about various majors available at Bradley University.

Attend the **Academic Majors & Minors Fair** during the fall semester so you can meet departmental faculty, current students, and alumni from majors you're interested in exploring.

Join **student organizations** or **professional societies**. Within these groups you may have opportunities to hear from speakers within the field, visit organizations, etc.

Learn how your **interests, skills, values, and personality style** relate to careers. Call 677-2510 for information about testing services.

Use the **Smith Career Center web site** to learn about different majors, the fields they work in, areas of employment, and strategies to help you prepare for continued education or the work force.

Complete **informational interviews** or **job shadowing** with professionals working in the fields that interest you. These professionals could be Bradley Alumni or parents of Bradley students. Contact alumni through LinkedIn and BUconnect.

Participate in SCC programs that assist with career exploration. Credit courses are available, such as ENC 301 and BUS 220.

## Majors, Skills, and Interests

Any major can equip you with the knowledge and "transferable skills" that can eventually be applied to a wide range of jobs in many different fields. You can expect to change jobs about every seven years and the major you choose should help you develop skills and competencies that will assist you as your career changes. Think about what you will need in any job – communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities, computer skills, and leadership/team-oriented skills. Adapted from *Deciding A Major* (Northern Kentucky University) and *Major Decisions* (The Pennsylvania State University)

### **Many components should be considered when choosing a career/major, such as:**

1. **What are your interests?** Consider...
  - Things you enjoy (activities, hobbies)
  - Work environment (indoors or outdoors)
  - Courses (projects, assignments)
  - Things that do not interest you
  - Would be interested in the careers/work related to the major you are considering?

2. **What are your abilities?** Think about...
  - Class and work performance
  - Talents (helping others, influencing, solving problems, working with numbers, using your hands, organizing)
  - Recognition and awards received for work, academics, activities
  - Do you have the ability to be successful in the major you are considering?
3. **What are your values?** Reflect upon...
  - Religious, philosophical, moral, ethical beliefs/teachings
  - Things which are important to you (personal service, financial security)
  - Political stand on topics
  - Importance of family
  - What majors match your values?
4. **What are your motivations?** Take into account...
  - Interests, abilities, values
  - Outside pressures (what you “should” do) vs. your personal goals and desires
  - Ease of major
  - Good jobs, high salaries
  - Would your motivation be strong enough to allow you to succeed in a major even if other factors seemed to direct you away from that major?
5. **What are the realities?** Weigh...
  - Situations that have a strong and overriding influence on your choice
  - Conflict between interests, abilities, and job availability
  - Investment in the future, risk
  - Do your interests, abilities, values, and motivations conflict with each other, or are they in agreement?

**Students choose a major based upon many different factors** – how well it will prepare you for your future career, money/earning potential, or even because of advice received from a trusted person (former teacher, friend, etc.). Other things that might influence decisions include the current job market, media attention on specific professions, global changes, and up-and-coming fields.

When you graduate from Bradley, the truly “marketable skills” which you take with you will be those that you learned from all of life’s experiences. As you look over the skills employers want in their employees, you will see that academic coursework, work experience, volunteer experiences, and family responsibilities all helped you acquire, develop and refine your skills.

**Consider some of these key transferable skills:**

Communication Skills

- Verbally communicate ideas and concepts
- Listen objectively
- Write in a grammatically correct, well-organized and appropriate style

#### Human Relations Skills

- Interact cooperatively with others
- Understand group interaction
- Instruct or train individuals

#### Planning Skills

- Evaluate positive and negative outcomes of all viable alternatives
- Accommodate multiple demands
- Set goals and implement a plan of action

#### Leadership Skills

- Motivate and sustain group cohesion
- Delegate tasks and responsibilities
- Earn respect

#### Attitude and Personal Skills

- Assume responsibility and accept criticism
- Take initiative
- Demonstrate commitment to work

#### Social Skills

- Relate easily in social situations
- Interact effectively with diverse individuals
- Dress presentably for a variety of situations

#### Valuing Skills

- Assess values and make ethical decisions
- Analyze situations using an interdisciplinary approach
- Respect values and customs of diverse cultures

#### Analytical Skills

- Think logically and critically
- Solve problems creatively and imaginatively
- Identify causes, consequences, and the meaning of events

#### Research and Investigative Skills

- Define a problem
- Identify and use appropriate resources
- Design a research model or plan

**Online Resources** (Available on the SCC web site)

**What Can I Do With This Major?** Use the “Information” by major to find an outline of common career areas, typical employers, and strategies designed to maximize career opportunities. Choose “Links” to find a list of web sites that provide information about listed majors and related careers. Go to the student section of the SCC web site, go to *Choosing and Using Your Major*, and then choose *What Can I Do With This Major?*

**Occupational Outlook Handbook** <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/> – A nationally recognized source of career information (duties, working conditions, training and education required, earnings, and expected job prospects.)

**Inside Jobs** <http://www.insidejobs.com/> - Dedicated to helping people shape confident futures through career exploration with data-driven information, engaging resources, and a community of career conversations. Discover what you want to become and the educational path to follow.

**LearnHowToBecome.org** <http://www.learnhowtobecome.org/> - This site helps students (or other aspiring professionals) understand what it takes to land their perfect career, from picking the right school all the way to climbing the company ladder. They are a one-stop, comprehensive resource that can guide individuals through each of the steps they need to take to begin, further, or change their career path.

**O\*NET OnLine** <http://www.onetonline.org/> - An occupational database containing descriptions on hundreds of standardized and occupation-specific descriptors.

**BU Mentor** (via LinkedIn) <http://www.linkedin.com> - Network and stay informed with professionals to exchange information, ideas, and job shadowing opportunities. Search for “Bradley University - BU Mentor Program” in LinkedIn.

**BUconnect, the Alumni Online Community** Access to the national online directory of Bradley alumni through the Alumni Relations Office. Meet with your Career Advisor to learn more.