Frequently Asked Questions about Exploring Majors

When must I make a decision about my major?
You will be prompted to declare a major once you have hit 48 credits (generally the second semester of your sophomore year), but you may still make changes to your major after that.

Are there any advantages to being “undecided”?
Yes, as an undecided major you may find yourself exploring and discovering a major you never considered before. Many students coming to college with a major already chosen end up changing their major anyway.

Where can I get help choosing my major?
The Career Development Center and Academic Counseling are always ready to help you in this process. You can make an appointment to walk through the process of exploration, and complete the exercises in this guide. There is also an extensive library of career resource information online at https://link.stthomas.edu/majorexploration.

Will being undecided delay my graduation?
Every student’s situation is unique, so be sure to meet with Academic Counseling early to talk about the best scheduling options for you. Because there are Core curriculum requirements and other electives required for every major, you certainly have time to do some exploration throughout college.

What courses should I take while I am “undecided”? 
Some good recommendations from both Academic Counseling and Career Development are to take all of the Core Curriculum courses that are required at UST, and any courses you think look interesting or might lead to a major. Try taking some introductory courses in a major you might pursue. Then, if intrigued, take one or two more in the same subject to get a more in-depth look as to what is involved in that discipline.

How are majors related to careers?
Each major at St. Thomas can lead to a wide variety of career choices. A major does necessarily not predict the kind of job or career a person will pursue after graduation. Majors in the liberal arts can help you develop many types of skills. If you want to be an engineer, a doctor, an artist, or a biologist, there are certainly majors that lead to those professions. However, there are many jobs and careers that can be developed after graduation with any kind of liberal arts degree.

Should I choose a minor?
Whether or not you choose a minor is entirely up to you, though it is important to discuss how the classes will fit in your four-year plan with an academic counselor. A minor can show a potential employer of your varied interests or extra skills. It also gives you a chance to study some area of interest in further depth without actually majoring in that subject.

Where should I declare my major and minor?
Visit Academic Counseling for information and meet with the department appropriate to the intended major/minor.
Clarify Your Work Values: Know what’s important to you

Values are a set of principles that determine attitudes, choices, and action. Mapping your value priorities can help lay important groundwork for making sound career decisions that fit your values, interests, and talents. Work-related values lie behind our choices about work. Some people value creativity; others place a premium on income or contributing.

*Underline all the values most important in your work life for the next few years. Then narrow down the list and circle the top ten values that are absolutely essential to express or satisfy in your work. Prioritize those top ten.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Content</th>
<th>Work Setting</th>
<th>Work Relationships</th>
<th>Inherent Values</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>flexibility</td>
<td>challenging</td>
<td>teamwork</td>
<td>integrity</td>
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<td>leading</td>
<td>deadline pressure</td>
<td>trust</td>
<td>status</td>
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<td>competence</td>
<td>surroundings</td>
<td>cultural identity</td>
<td>prestige</td>
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<td>mastery</td>
<td>time freedom</td>
<td>caring</td>
<td>achievement</td>
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<tr>
<td>risk</td>
<td>security</td>
<td>competition</td>
<td>respect</td>
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<td>leading edge</td>
<td>high earnings</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
<td>responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>detail-oriented</td>
<td>action-oriented</td>
<td>diversity</td>
<td>power</td>
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<td>social activism</td>
<td>structure</td>
<td>collaboration</td>
<td>influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>learning</td>
<td>relaxed pace</td>
<td>humor</td>
<td>appreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td>excellence</td>
<td>casual</td>
<td>harmony</td>
<td>helping</td>
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<tr>
<td>focus</td>
<td>quiet</td>
<td>autonomy</td>
<td>belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creativity</td>
<td>organized</td>
<td>autonomy</td>
<td>community</td>
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<tr>
<td>variety</td>
<td>excitement</td>
<td>equality</td>
<td>equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>growth</td>
<td>pressure</td>
<td>independence</td>
<td>independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>predictability</td>
<td>contributing</td>
<td>service</td>
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<tr>
<td>control</td>
<td>location</td>
<td>authenticity</td>
<td>service</td>
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<tr>
<td>adventure</td>
<td>public contact</td>
<td>commitment</td>
<td>authenticity</td>
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<tr>
<td>helping</td>
<td>comfortable</td>
<td>balance</td>
<td>commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>initiating</td>
<td>income</td>
<td>honesty</td>
<td>balance</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>having an impact</td>
<td>fairness</td>
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**Top ten:**

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.  
6.  
7.  
8.  
9.  
10. 

Evaluating Skills
Skills represent your talents and abilities. Discovering your skills and abilities is an important key to making career choices. There are different types or groups of skills:

**Self-management skills** are personal characteristics or traits, such as being accurate, open, logical, or thoughtful. Place check by the self-management skills you have:

- _____ Adaptable
- _____ Aggressive
- _____ Assertive
- _____ Ambitious
- _____ Calm
- _____ Confident
- _____ Cooperative
- _____ Dependable
- _____ Diplomatic
- _____ Energetic
- _____ Enthusiastic
- _____ Flexible
- _____ Frank
- _____ Idealistic
- _____ Innovative

- _____ Logical
- _____ Loyal
- _____ Methodical
- _____ Optimistic
- _____ Organized
- _____ Patient
- _____ Persistent
- _____ Practical
- _____ Precise
- _____ Realistic
- _____ Resourceful
- _____ Reliable
- _____ Risk taking
- _____ Sensitive
- _____ Tactful

**Transferable skills** are skills acquired in one setting which can be applied to other settings. The same writing and research skills which helped you prepare a paper on “Business Ethics” can be transferred to an English paper. Below is a list of transferable skills. Check those which apply to you:

- _____ Research
- _____ Writing
- _____ Producing
- _____ Budgeting
- _____ Evaluating
- _____ Comparing
- _____ Teaching
- _____ Coordinating
- _____ Planning
- _____ Organizing

- _____ Problem solving
- _____ Communicating
- _____ Supervising
- _____ Managing
- _____ Negotiating
- _____ Explaining
- _____ Motivating
- _____ Reviewing
- _____ Clarifying

**Work content skills** are crucial to one's performance in certain occupations, such as writing a computer program, speaking Spanish, or knowing how to operate certain types of equipment. These are usually the types of skills that are developed in your classes as well as through on-the-job training.
Exploring your Personality and Interests

**Personality**
Your personality may influence the way you work independently, with other team members, customers or supervisors. For this part of your workbook you may like to seek the assistance of others, including peers, supervisors or friends. Ask them if they have any thoughts on how you operate in a role. Are you generally a positive person? Do you consider yourself creative or an imaginative? Are you driven by self-motivation or do you need to gain drive from others?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like/am...</th>
<th>Example</th>
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**Interests**
List all the interests you hold. There may be an interest or hobby that could potentially be the focus of your work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do I excel in certain areas or subjects? (What are they?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>What things really excite me?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What activities do I love to do?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do I enjoy some classes more than others? Which ones?</td>
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<tr>
<td>My ideal job would be?</td>
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Researching career options can involve a variety of sources to get accurate and up-to-date information. When researching career options keep in mind that job titles can vary, so it is important to be creative and use several variations in titles when researching. One source might call the position Human Resources Hiring Manager and another may call the position Personnel Recruiting Manager.

When conducting research, you need to consider several factors: 1) what type of information are you seeking, 2) what resources are available and 3) what should I know about this occupation/field?
**Student Interview Form for Undecided Majors**
Identify a student who is majoring in the area of studies you are exploring, and interview them to gain more information.

After the interview, reflect on what have you learned about the major and its potential suitability for you.

**Suggested Questions**
*(These are only a suggestion. Please add your own. Check the ones you plan to use.)*

Why did you choose this major?

What have you enjoyed most about this major?

What are the difficulties you have encountered with this major?

Which classes have you enjoyed most?

Have you decided on a career path with this major?

Have you joined any clubs or activities associated with this major?

What skills and abilities should I have to succeed in this major?

Additional questions you wish to ask:
Faculty Interview Form for Undecided Majors

Set up an appointment with a faculty member who teaches in the area/major you are considering.

**Suggested Questions:**

Why did you choose to go into this field of teaching?

What other kinds of experience do you have in this field?

What is involved in the academic study of this major?

What skills and abilities should I have to be successful in this major?

What kinds of career paths are alumni taking after graduating with this major?

Is graduate school necessary for further success in this field?

Is there internship possibilities associated with this major?

What kinds of classes will I need to take in this major?

Is there a minimum GPA associated with this major?
Is this Major Right for Me? A Checklist

Obtain the most up to date degree list from the University of St. Thomas Academic Counseling website at www.stthomas.edu/academiccounseling. As you look at each degree sheet and read about each major you are considering, complete the following checklist. It will help you eliminate many majors and determine which ones deserve further consideration.

Be honest with yourself. Remember that you will be happiest with a major that you are interested in, rather than pursuing a major because it is a "hot major" or because there is pressure from friends and family to go a certain direction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Major 1</th>
<th>Major 2</th>
<th>Major 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content area something you would enjoy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have the skills for this major?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you motivated by a strong academic interest in this major?</td>
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<tr>
<td>List positive reasons why this major could be an acceptable choice.</td>
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<td>List any negative aspects to choosing this degree.</td>
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<tr>
<td>List three or more career possibilities associated with this major.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are this major and its career possibilities consistent with your values?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department Characteristics:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Size</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Activities and clubs</td>
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Based on my research, is this field a good fit for who I am and where I want to go?
Options and Activities for Major Exploration

Meet with a Career Development Center Counselor. Call (651) 962-6761 to make an appointment.

Meet with an Academic Counselor by calling (651) 962-6300 to make an appointment. Academic counselors will work with you to understand your degree evaluation, major and minor requirements, transfer credits, and administrative processes at UST. They will help you create four year plans for various majors (or combinations of majors and minors) so you can see the different options, and will talk with you about where to fit a study abroad experience as well. They can also guide you through difficult times and facilitate connections with faculty, tutors and other helpful offices on campus.

Take the MBTI, Strong Interest Inventory, or PathwayU career assessments. You can sign up to take these interest inventories through the Career Development Center and have a counselor help you understand your results.

Enroll in Core Curriculum courses, introductory and survey courses.

Consider job shadowing and informational interviews to gather career information.

Complete the exploratory activities in this guide such as interviewing students, faculty, and exploring your interests.

Visit the Career Development Center website for more information about Exploring Majors and Careers at https://link.stthomas.edu/majorexploration.