

CHOOSING A MAJOR- Tip Sheet

The career development process includes a series of choices. Choosing a major is just one decision you will make throughout the process. For a complete list of majors offered at RMU, please refer to the website, www.rmu.edu, and click on “Academics” > “Undergraduate Programs.”

RESEARCHING YOU

In order to know what you want in terms of a major or career, you must first know yourself. This requirement may sound easy, but you will need to devote time to be able to clearly identify your interests, skills and values.

A. Identifying Interests

When choosing a major, it is important to identify your interests. What do you like to do?

- Meet with your success coach to take an interest inventory. No inventory or person can tell you what to do, but discussing the results of an interest inventory with your success coach will help you identify your interests and how they relate to the world of work. Your success coach can facilitate the process of exploring academic majors and career options.
- Make a list of hobbies or activities that you enjoy now or enjoyed when you were younger. What types of things do you lose track of time while working on?
- Make a list of courses you enjoyed most in high school.
- Ask family members and close friends what they view as your greatest interests.

B. Evaluating Skills

Whether choosing a major or career, you need to evaluate your abilities and skills. Each major and job requires certain skills that are needed in order to succeed.

- To begin evaluating your skills, consider the following questions:
 - What were my best subjects/classes in high school?
 - What classes have I done well in so far in college?
 - What skills have I used in previous jobs, volunteer experiences or extracurricular activities?
- Meet with your success coach to discuss your current skills and those you might like to develop.

C. Prioritizing Values

Understanding your values will help you narrow down career choices and lead to increased career satisfaction. Values are deeply held convictions that influence your thinking when faced with choices. They provide a frame of reference for evaluating information and weighing options. Values are also motivators that reflect what you consider most important in your life. For example, consider what is most important to you: the type of work you perform, the location or work setting, working conditions, rewards of work, etc.

- Meet with your success coach to complete a values exercise and/or to discuss how your values relate to careers.
- Explore online resources such as the following:
 - O*NET OnLine: www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Work_Values
 - Work Values Checklist: www.monster.com/career-advice/article/work-values-check-list

RESEARCHING INFORMATION

Research information about the major(s) that interest you and related careers.

Websites:

Career Resource Guides by Major: <https://www.rmu.edu/why-rmu/campus-experience/student-life/csspd/resource-guides>
These guides are a good starting place to research RMU majors and related career information.

Careeronestop: www.careeronestop.org

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, this site provides information on career exploration, training and jobs. It also features videos that show the types of work people do in nearly 550 careers. To access the videos, click on "Explore Careers > Video Library > Career Videos."

Checksheets: https://www.rmu.edu/OnTheMove/findoutmore.open_page?ipage=1195#concentration

Review checksheets for every major that interests you. Read through course requirements and descriptions. Which courses sound interesting? Which are you excited to take? Which courses do not sound appealing?

Minors: <https://www.rmu.edu/academics/undergraduate/minors>

Review the list of minors available at the University.

Occupational Outlook Handbook: www.bls.gov/ooah

Compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, this source of career information provides the opportunity to search by occupation or occupation group. Information includes typical duties, work environment, educational requirements, national wages, job outlook, employment and wage data by state, and links to similar occupations.

O*NET OnLine: www.onetonline.org

This database, developed for the U.S. Department of Labor by the National Center for O*NET Development, includes information on over 900 occupations. Research occupations using keywords, or by a variety of categories including Bright Outlook, Career Cluster, Green Economy Sector, Industry, Job Family, Job Zone and STEM Discipline. You may also search by interests, skills and values.

Vault: www.rmu.edu/csspd (also available through the "Career Center" > "Resources" section of Handshake)

Vault is a comprehensive online career resource. It contains several resources that are helpful for career research.

Career Advice

- Click "Explore Careers" to read about typical job duties, earnings, work environment, education and training, experience, skills and personality traits, employment prospects, outlook, tips for entry, career ladder, etc.
- Click "Research Industries" to gain an overview of various industries. Information includes primary products, background, defining events, current trends/issues, industry outlook, associations, etc.
- Click "Day in the Life" to gain insight on typical duties for professions based on in-depth interviews. Each listing includes an overview, an hourly breakdown of duties completed by the professional during one day, or a daily breakdown of duties for one week.
- Click "Career Q&A Videos" to watch informational interviews with professionals across multiple industries.

Vault Guides

- Vault Career Guides provide "the scoop" about the industry, practical information on getting hired, "day in the life" profiles, helpful resources, etc.
- Vault Guides to Jobs include information about typical duties, earnings, work environment, education and training, outlook, tips for entry, and more for specific job titles related to the title.
- To view a list of all the guides, click on "Vault Guides" on the main menu bar and then "Other Industries" listed under "Industry Guides."

Books:

- Go to the bookstore and look through textbooks for majors that interest you. Skim through the table of contents. Do you seem excited about the topics? Could you imagine yourself studying the topics for multiple semesters?

Networking:

- Talk with a faculty advisor in the major(s) that interest you to learn more.
- Talk with upper-level students in majors that interest you. Ask faculty or your success coach for suggestions. You may also search the “Community” section of Handshake to identify students enrolled in your major(s) of interest.
- Search LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com>) and Robert Morris University to find alumni who have graduated from majors that interest you. Join the Robert Morris University Career Network, a LinkedIn group that provides an opportunity for RMU students, alumni, faculty and staff to connect with each other about career-related topics. Ask alumni about skills they learned in their major and how those skills relate to their current job, what a typical day is like at their job, most/least favorite parts of their job, etc.

TESTING OUT OPTIONS & MAKING DECISIONS

- Look at the class schedule for the semester and identify classes that look interesting to you. Contact the professor for the class and ask if you could observe a class.
- Join related clubs and organizations.
- To test out career interests, consider the following:
 - Informational Interviews
 - Shadowing
 - Volunteering
 - Part-time Jobs
 - Work-Study Positions (Student Employment Program)
 - Internships

As you gain more information and engage in different experiences, you will need to continually re-evaluate your choices and plans. Please remember that the Center for Student Success and Personal Development (CSSPD) staff is available to assist you at any step along the way. To schedule an appointment with your success coach, contact the CSSPD at 412-397-6862 or center4success@rmu.edu.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Center for Student Success and Personal Development- www.rmu.edu/csspd

- Academic & Career Coaching
- Career Development Tip Sheets (Informational Interviewing, Student Employment Program)
- Career Resource Guides by Major
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Talent Track (work-study positions)
- Tutoring
- Vault (online career development resource)

Career and Professional Development Center- www.rmu.edu/cpdc

- Handshake (listings for part-time jobs, internships and full-time positions)
- Job Fairs & Events (career fairs, networking events, workshops)
- Tip Sheets (Academic Internship Program, Experiential Learning)

Counseling Center- <http://studentlife.rmu.edu/rmu-counseling-center>

- Personal Counseling

Faculty/Academic Advisors- listed on your checksheet

- Academic Advising/Scheduling

Student Activities- <http://studentlife.rmu.edu/student-activities/activities-and-student-organizations>

- Activities and Student Organizations > Academic and Professional Organizations