

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?

- Make a list of hobbies or activities 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.
- Meet with your success coach to discuss taking an interest inventory. No inventory or person can tell you what you should do, but discussing the results of an interest inventory with your success coach will help you identify your interests and how they relate to academic majors and the world of work. Your success coach can facilitate the process of exploring academic majors and career options.
 - Strong Interest Inventory: contact the Center for Student Success
 - O*NET Interest Profiler: <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>

B. Evaluating Skills

Whether choosing a major or career, you need to evaluate your abilities and skills. All majors and jobs require 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?
- Explore online resources such as the following:
 - Browse by O*NET Data- Skills (Basic and Cross-Functional): <https://www.onetonline.org>
 - Skills Matcher: <https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/Assessments/skills.aspx>
- 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
 - Work Values Matcher: <https://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/Assessments/work-values.aspx>

RESEARCHING INFORMATION

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

Websites:

Academic Majors at RMU: <https://www.rmu.edu/academics/undergraduate>

RMU offers more than 60 undergraduate areas of study across four academic schools. After clicking on a specific major, click “4-Year Course Plan” or “Degree Requirements and Courses” to learn more about the major.

Career Resource Guides by Major: <https://www.rmu.edu/why-rmu/campus-experience/student-life/css/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 > Learn about Careers > Career Videos.”

Firsthand (formerly Vault): www.rmu.edu/css

Firsthand is a comprehensive online career resource. The following sections are most helpful for career exploration:

The Library

- Click “*Explore Careers*” for articles on various careers/topics.
- Click “*Get the Job*” and then “*A 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 “*Guides*” for access to an online career library. The Vault Guides to Jobs series includes information about typical duties, earnings, work environment, education and training, outlook, tips for entry, and more for specific job titles related to the profession. Click the red “View” button for a profession/publication of interest. Click the “TitleInfo” link under the publication title to view a list of the job titles featured. Use the arrows to read the publication online.

Careers

- Click “*Professions*” and then “*All Professions.*” Select a profession of interest to read about typical job duties, earnings, work environment, minimum education level, skills and personality traits, employment prospects, outlook, career ladder, related professions, etc. Most profiles also feature a Career Q&A video.
- Click “*Industries*” and then “*All Industries.*” For each industry, an overview is provided as well as information on background, structure, outlook, resources/professional associations and related professions.

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

Review the list of minors available at the University.

Occupational Outlook Handbook: www.bls.gov/ooh

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, Hot Technology, Industry, Job Family, Job Zone and STEM. You may also search by interests, skills and values.

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 “Discover More Students” section of your Handshake profile to identify students enrolled in your major(s) of interest.
- Search Robert Morris University on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com>) to find alumni who have graduated from majors that interest you. (On the RMU page, click the “Alumni” tab to search alumni by title, keyword or company.) 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, favorite and most challenging parts of their job, etc. The Informational Interviewing Tip Sheet provides additional information and suggestions.

TESTING OUT OPTIONS & MAKING DECISIONS

- Browse courses in Banner. For course descriptions that really interest you, contact the professor and ask if you would be permitted to 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 (CSS) staff is available to assist you at any step along the way. To schedule an appointment with your success coach, contact the CSS at center4success@rmu.edu or 412-397-6862.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Center for Student Success- www.rmu.edu/css

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

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

- Handshake (postings for part-time jobs, internships, full-time positions and events)
- Job Fairs & Events (career fairs, networking events, workshops)

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

- Personal Counseling

Faculty/Academic Advisors- listed on your Banner profile

- Academic Advising/Scheduling

Student Activities- www.rmu.edu/revolution

- Activities, Student Organizations and Events