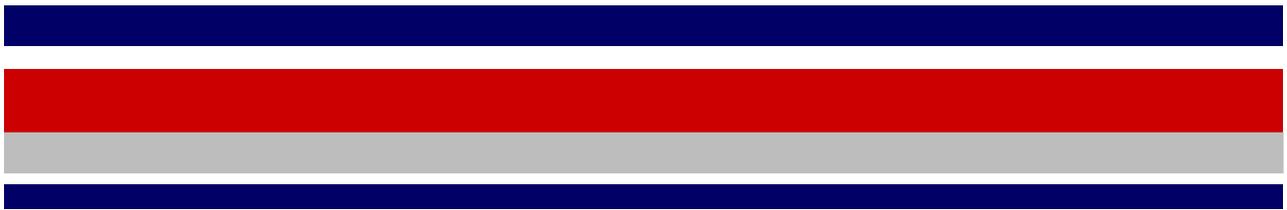




Guide to Choosing a Major



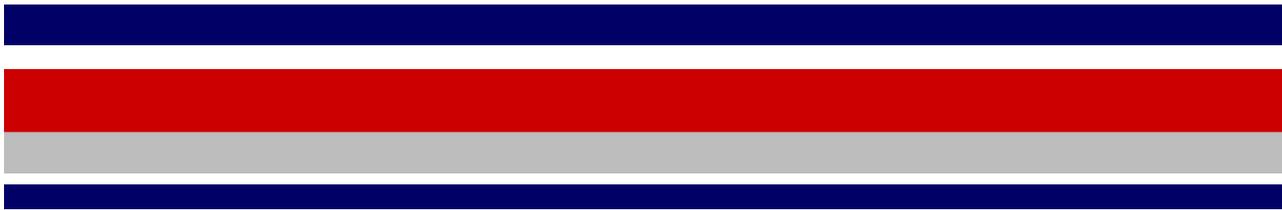
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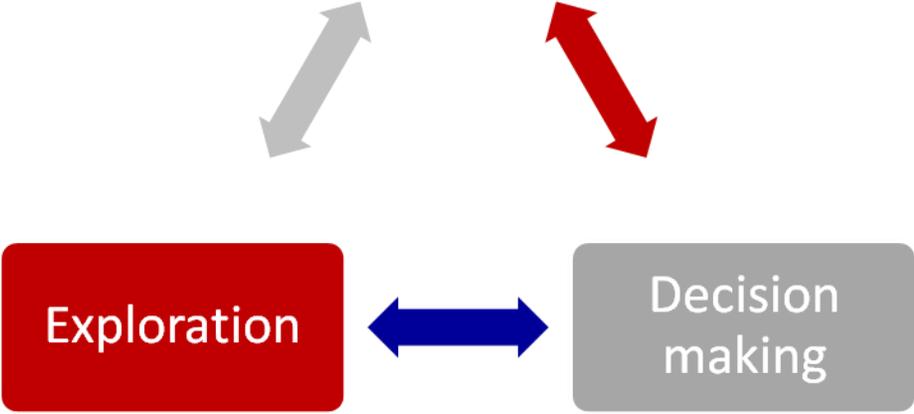
MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE



*Beverly Brewer Stark CAREER CENTER
Technical Building 1
Senatobia Campus*



Assess yourself



ASSESS YOURSELF

The process of choosing a major or career often begins with self-assessment. Consider taking one or more of the assessments below to learn more about your Interests, Personality, Skills & Abilities, and Values. After taking one or more assessments, meet with a career counselor to discuss your results and generate ideas for majors and careers to research. Keep in mind that no single test can tell you "what you should be" and that successful career planning may require more than one appointment.

Strong Interest Inventory

The Strong Interest Inventory (SII) ® is available on the internet and takes about 30 minutes to complete. After completing the inventory you will need to schedule a follow-up appointment to receive your results. To request the username/password and to make an appointment for the interpretation CALL 562-3954 or email kwatson@northwestms.edu

Choices-Interest Profiler

The Choices-Interest Profiler is available on the internet and takes about 20 minutes to complete. This inventory categorizes your interests into six typical work environments. It provides results immediately and allows you the option to explore potential options at that time. You are encouraged to create a portfolio to save your results and come back to at a later time. From this site you can also identify work values, basic skills and research careers.

Click on **site ID tab**-Username: 26914 Password: careers

Click on **Choices Planner**

Assess your interests by clicking on **Interest Profiler**

Values Inventory Worksheet

WORK AND LIFESTYLE VALUES

In addition to considering interests, skills, and personality, students should consider their values when choosing a major or career. Work values are characteristics about jobs and work environments such as salary, amount of independence, required hours, etc. People tend to feel most satisfied when their work satisfies their values. Print and complete the checklist to help prioritize YOUR values. There is no right or wrong answer.

As you research potential majors and careers, consider whether or not they fit your values. You can make an appointment with a career counselor if you would like to discuss your findings.

Skills Checklist

At the college level and beyond, it's difficult to objectively measure your skills through a test. Completing the attached checklist will allow you to self-rate your skills and abilities. As you research careers of interests, consider the required skills and whether or not these are skills you feel you possess or could develop. Other ways to identify your skills include reflection on your personal accomplishments, classroom performance in various subjects, previous jobs or volunteer positions held, and feedback you receive from others.

Once you have evaluated your interests, values, and skills, how do you put all that information together? Your interests and values will likely point you to certain industries, companies or job functions. Knowledge of your skills will help you determine if those industries, organizations, and job opportunities are likely to offer your work you can skillfully do or learning to do and will enjoy doing.

Self-assessment is a lifelong practice, one that most people will return to again and again over the course of their professional careers. As you gain work experience and your skills grow, your interests and values are likely to shift; you can return to this to help you move confidently into new areas of work and career.

Additional resources on self-assessment:

University of Waterloo online Career Development Manual, Self-Assessment: www.edm.uwaterloo.ca
John Holland's Self-Directed Search online: www.self-directed-search.com
CareerZone: general interests and related jobs (Holland categories): www.nycareerzone.org/graphic/assessment/index.jsp
www.masscis.intocareers.com for descriptions of various occupations, their tasks, requirements, and skills needed.

EXPLORATION

After learning more about where your interests are, you can use that information to explore majors and careers. When making your decision it is important to know factors such as what someone does in that career, wages, education requirements and the future outlook.

What Can I Do With This Major? Use this link to learn about more than 75 majors and how they lead to various career fields.

Majors and Careers by Interest Explore majors and careers at Northwest that match your interests. This site is especially helpful for those students who know their results from the Strong Interest Inventory or Choices-Interest Profiler

Explore opportunities to gain relevant work experience, for example: internships and summer jobs. Get involved in student professional organization and extracurricular activities such as campus organizations, a class project, or volunteer. Learning how to build your network and cultivate mentors. Conduct informational interviews with people in fields that interest you and keep the information because you might need to talk with a contact again.

Highlighted Sites for Exploration

Career One Stop Contains occupational information that will increase your overall understanding of the job market, including supply/demand and wages.

Occupational Outlook Handbook This is the Government's publication on career guidance, providing essential information about hundreds of occupations.

O*Net Find occupational information on hundreds of jobs.

Virtual Job Shadow Virtual Job Shadow is an engaging career exploration tool for students and job seekers. Through online videos, Virtual Job Shadow provides a behind-the-scenes look at life on the job.

Other Sites to Research Majors and Careers

The Career Project Research careers by reading personal accounts of people in a wide variety of jobs.

Career Zone Important information on hundreds of careers in a concise format.

CityTownInfo.com Read real life career stories from professionals in various fields.

Princeton Review's Find a Major If you already have a good idea of what you want to study in college, use this site to learn more about it.

WorldWideLearn's Guide to Majors A wealth of information about majors and careers



DECISION MAKING

Create an action plan

- Determine your career goal

- Determine the time frame to reach your goal

- Have a back-up plan

If you plan of transferring, be sure to meet all admission requirements to the school you plan to attend. Check on this during your freshman year to begin any necessary preparation. Don't wait until the last minute!

Many students feel pressure to make a choice, just remember make the most realistic and best choice for YOU!

DECISION MAKING STRATEGIES

There are a number of strategies that you can employ to improve your decision making.

- **Clarify decision difficulties.** List the things that make your decision a difficult one. Once you clearly define the problems, the solutions are often easier to see.
- **List how you can obtain support.** Don't underestimate the help available from friends, relatives, counselors, and others. Although the decision must ultimately be yours, you don't have to go through the decision making process alone.
- **Consider whether a deeper issue may be complicating things.** For example, parental pressure, lack of confidence, or motivational problems that may be clouding your decision.
- **Consider a full range of alternatives.** There could be alternatives that you may not see at first glance. Talking to others is one of the best methods to explore such alternatives.
- **Spend time clarifying your goals.** Decisions should be put within a larger context. If you do not have clear goals, you will find it difficult to make wise choices. Once your goals are clear, the best choice between alternatives often becomes more evident.

- **Make sure that you have a realistic view of the consequences.** It is common to overestimate the negative consequences of a decision. Keep things in perspective.
- **Seek additional help.** If you typically have difficulty making any decision of importance, schedule an appointment with a counselor in the Student Development Center to explore your decision-making style.

Use a step-by-step decision making process.

1. Clarify the decision. What needs to be decided?
2. Identify your options. Narrow down your list of options to those you consider most viable.
3. Consider pros and cons. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
4. Choose among the options. This is the point in the process where you must assume the most responsibility; a choice must be made and you are the only one who can make it.
5. Take some action. How are you going to implement the decision?
6. Review your decision. Continue to gather information after a decision is made and revise your decision as necessary.

Adapted from Gary Lynn Harr's book, Career Guide: Road Maps to Meaning in the World of Work, 1995.



If you still need some help deciding. The Career Center offers the following class:

Career Exploration: LLS 1321

"Career Exploration" is a one-credit course designed to help freshmen and sophomores learn about themselves and how to investigate potentially satisfying major and career options. Learning objectives include identifying interests, skills, values and personality traits; increasing knowledge of various majors; learning career options with majors; locating and utilizing academic and career informational resources; developing decision-making and goal setting skills.

Class topics include:

Career Assessments including the Strong Interest Inventory, Work and Lifestyle Values, Personality and Career, Skills and Abilities, Gaining Experience, Researching Majors and Careers, Decision-making, Goal Setting.