

## Does Your Major Matter? By Donald Asher

Well-meaning oldsters still ask college students: "What are you going to do with *that* degree?" The question should be, "What do you want to do?" The major is just not that important anymore. Any major prepares most students for most jobs. Internships are far more important than a specific major. Sure, if I don't major in chemical engineering, I'm not likely to get a job in a chemical engineering lab, but even in high technology companies about one quarter of the management-track jobs are held by people without a technical degree. College today is what high school was a generation ago. It is a basic introduction to knowledge and thinking, a basic entry ticket to a certain type of job. So what of the major? Isn't it a critical indicator that the student possesses the skills needed to perform in that first-level, management-track job? Does it matter much at all? Let's ask corporate recruiters -- the very people who go out to college campuses looking for the best hires they can find. It turns out, the No. 1 major that recruiters in America look for is "any."

There's a platitude among corporate recruiters: "Hire for attitude, train for skills." They are interested in a certain type of eager, presentable young person, and not too worried about specialized knowledge. An articulate art major with clear goals is preferred over the business major without a clue. According to a survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, here are the skills they seek most, in order of preference: Communication skills, strong work ethic, teamwork skills initiative, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, analytical skills, flexibility/adaptability, computer skills, technical skills, detail-oriented and organizational skills.

A student who is engaged and involved in college could develop this skillset within any major. Louise Paradis, assistant director of the career center at Portland State University, got tired of students and parents asking "What can I do with a major in \_\_\_\_\_?" So she developed the Famous Majors Game, which she provides to career centers nationwide. "I made the game as a way to share with students that what they study is not connected to what they ultimately do," says Paradis. "Even though the game is skewed toward famous people, it still gets the idea across that your major is an academic focus, but it can translate into many job titles." For example, Jon Stewart, the host of Comedy Central's satirical news program "The Daily Show," was a psychology major. And Stephen Colbert, host of "Daily Show" spin-off "The Colbert Report," majored in philosophy. YouTube founder and CEO Chad Hurley was an art major. And before earning billions of dollars in his self-made media empire, Ted Turner studied classics.

Paradis says, "I tell people it matters that your child gets a degree. It matters that they finish, that they study something that they enjoy, but only a few careers require specific preparation. It comes down to this: Do they have the skills the employer is seeking? Can the student articulate those skills to the employer? Can they communicate, solve problems, interact effectively in a group, think critically, do research, write to professional business standards? That's what matters."

It also helps to have the right internships while still in college. Ryan Miller studied philosophy and math as an undergrad, and now he designs cutting-edge software for a hedge fund in Greenwich, Conn. "Studying analytical philosophy, one develops certain powers of critical thinking, the ability to deal with abstract concepts," says Miller. "I don't think it gets much more abstract than what one finds in a good philosophy department. Abstract reasoning, problem solving and even basic logic have been very valuable in my work." Miller says that software development is all about logic and problem solving. What hedge funds do is about as complex and sophisticated as the financial industry really gets, so the nature of the work gets quite abstract, like reading Russell, Frege or Wittgenstein, except it's about money." Critical to his success, however, were two summers he spent working for a bank. "I started out flipping burgers as a summer job, then I got an assignment in commercial banking, next, private banking, and finally equity research in Manhattan." Internships are a critical component for translating a college education into employability.

The University of Texas at Austin did a study of earning power of alumni by major, and here is what the study author, Dr. Daniel Hamermesh, concluded: "We believe that the evidence presented here suggests that perceptions of the variations in economic success among graduates in different majors are exaggerated. Our results imply that given a student's ability, achievement and effort, his or her earnings do not vary all that greatly with the choice of undergraduate major." Now, to be fair, they do vary greatly by two things: parental income, which no student can control, and graduate education, which is purely up to the student. The biggest single factor in lifetime earnings is post-undergraduate degree attainment. That does matter.

Eric Schwaab majored in international studies as an undergraduate, then became a financial adviser on Wall Street. "In one sense your undergraduate education may have very little to do with what you end up doing in life," says Schwaab. "But in another sense, it is the foundation. I learned how to read and write and think on my feet and hold my own in an argument." Those are skills essential for someone who must convince clients he's capable of managing their money. But, he goes on to say, "I found out though that communications is much more complex than just a good argument, and so I went back to school to get an M.B.A. in marketing, to better understand the challenges of good communications, particularly client acquisition. Undergraduate education should be more for broadening your horizons, breaking out of your preconceptions and predispositions from the world you grew up in. Graduate education is the opposite. It is more for honing in on very specific challenges. So it is almost like undergrad is about expanding your mind, and graduate education is about focusing it back down on something narrow and important to you.

*Donald Asher is a nationally known writer and speaker specializing in careers and higher education. Reprinted from MSN Encarta; used with permission.*

# McGINLEY INTEREST INVENTORY

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Declared Major \_\_\_\_\_

As you look at each of the following college majors ask yourself if it is at all interesting to you. Keep in mind that the major may be of interest to you even though you would not select it as your academic major or career path. If the college major interests you, circle "L" for LIKE and if it does not interest you circle "D" for DISLIKE.

- |     |                              |     |                              |
|-----|------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| L D | Industrial Arts Education    | L D | Emergency Medical Technology |
| L D | Veterinary Medicine          | L D | Range Management             |
| L D | Music Theory & Composition   | L D | Art Education                |
| L D | Adult & Continuing Education | L D | Secondary Education          |
| L D | Food Services                | L D | Fashion Merchandising        |
| L D | Court Reporting              | L D | Accounting                   |
| L D | Forestry                     | L D | Construction Trades          |
| L D | Biology                      | L D | Computer Science             |
| L D | Medical Illustration         | L D | Fashion Design               |
| L D | Occupational Therapy         | L D | Elementary Education         |
| L D | Hotel Management             | L D | Marketing                    |
| L D | Secretarial Science          | L D | Bookkeeping                  |
| L D | Electrical Technology        | L D | Fire Fighting                |
| L D | Geography                    | L D | Chemistry                    |
| L D | Radio/TV Production          | L D | Journalism                   |
| L D | Philosophy                   | L D | Nursing                      |
| L D | Human Resources Development  | L D | Labor/Industrial Relations   |
| L D | Broadcasting Technology      | L D | Banking                      |
| L D | Architectural Drafting       | L D | Engineering                  |
| L D | Geology                      | L D | Pharmacy                     |
| L D | Interior Design              | L D | Music Performance            |
| L D | Counseling Psychology        | L D | Human Nutrition              |
| L D | Business Administration      | L D | Agricultural Business        |
| L D | Insurance Underwriting       | L D | Editing/Proofreading         |
| L D | Military Science             | L D | Optometric Technology        |
| L D | Food Science                 | L D | Animal Science               |
| L D | Advertising                  | L D | Theatre & Dance              |
| L D | Social Work                  | L D | Speech Pathology             |
| L D | International Marketing      | L D | Insurance & Risk Management  |
| L D | Legal/Assisting              | L D | Quality Control Inspection   |
| L D | Radiologic Technology        | L D | Welding Technology           |
| L D | Sociology                    | L D | Mathematics                  |
| L D | Architecture                 | L D | English Literature           |
| L D | Special Education            | L D | Physical Therapy             |
| L D | Sales                        | L D | Small Business Management    |
| L D | Bank Teller                  | L D | Customs Inspection           |

# McGINLEY INTEREST INVENTORY (CONT.)

L D	Plumbing	L D	Computer Science Technology
L D	Medical Science	L D	Dentistry
L D	Languages	L D	Commercial Art
L D	Parks & Recreation Management	L D	Law Enforcement
L D	Public Administration	L D	Sports Administration
L D	Data Processing	L D	Medical Records Technology
L D	Aircraft Mechanics	L D	Vehicle & Equipment Operations
L D	Anthropology	L D	Molecular Biology
L D	Landscape Architecture	L D	Commercial Photography
L D	Psychology	L D	Early Childhood Education
L D	Law	L D	Real Estate
L D	Office Management	L D	Library Technology
L D	Automotive Mechanics	L D	Floral Design
L D	Economics	L D	Physics
L D	Art History	L D	Theatre Design
L D	Student Personnel Work	L D	Athletic Training
L D	Purchasing	L D	Travel Services Marketing
L D	Taxation	L D	Printing PRes Operation
L D	Silk Screen Making & Printing	L D	Business Machine Repair
L D	Statistics	L D	Zoology
L D	Creative Writing	L D	Painting
L D	Geriatric Services	L D	Political Science
L D	Public Relations	L D	Finance
L D	Credit & Collection	L D	Surveying & Mapping Technology
L D	Cartography	L D	Oceanography
L D	Botany	L D	Astronomy
L D	Arts Management	L D	Cinematography/Film
L D	Physical Education	L D	Child & Family Studies
L D	Communication	L D	Regional & Community Planning
L D	Reservation Assisting		

## DIRECTIONS FOR SCORING

The college majors on this inventory are listed in groups of six. Majors within each group relate to six themes which are used to identify different areas of the World of Work and a person's occupational interests. These themes are: **Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.**

To determine which of the six themes represent the general areas of work that best match your interests, please do the following: count all the "L"s circled in the number one position of each group and place that number on the line next to the letter R. Next, count all the "L"s circled in the number two position, placing this number next to the I. Continue counting "L"s circled in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth positions, placing these numbers next to the A, S, E and C.

R \_\_\_\_\_ I \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_ C \_\_\_\_\_  
 1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6

The letters having the highest scores represent the areas of work that might be of particular interest to you. These letters are \_\_\_\_\_.

# HOLLAND THEME DESCRIPTIONS

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Theme Code \_\_\_\_\_

THEME	ORIENTATION	TASKS	CHARACTERISTICS	OCCUPATIONS	COLLEGE MAJORS
Realistic (R) Score _____	"Things" Mechanical, Outdoor, Action	Produce, Build, Repair, Operate, Assemble, Apply	Mechanically and technically competent, Physically strong, Adventurous, Practical, Conservative, Independent	Engineer, Forester, Police Officer, Carpenter, Veterinarian, EMT, Voc-Ed Teacher	Civil Engineering, Geography, Administration of Justice, Wildlife Management, Range Management, Radiologic Technology, Military Science, Vocational Education
Investigative (I) Score _____	"Ideas and Things" Science, Math, Intellectual Pursuits	Analyze, Observe, Research, Investigate, Identify, Evaluate	Pursue ideas and theories, perform abstract tasks, Independent, Self-motivated, Curious, Unconventional, Original	Computer Programmer, Biologist, Physician, Economist, Sociologist, College Professor, Physical Therapist	Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Psychology, Animal Science, Pre-Med, Dietetics, Atmospheric Science, Pharmacy
Artistic (A) Score _____	"People and Ideas" Creativity, self Expression, Arts	Originate, Design, Write, Imagine, Perform, Compose	Imaginative, Non-conforming, Expressive, Impractical, Impulsive, Idealistic, Sensitive, Independent, Intense	Commercial Artist, Lawyer, Advertising Exec., Architect, Librarian, Writer, English Teacher, Musician	Communications/Mass Media, Theatre, Fashion and Interior Merchandising, Law, Anthropology, Art, Music
Social (S) Score _____	"People" Social Interaction, Humanistic Services, Team Effort	Help, Teach, Counsel, Communicate, Inform, Support, Train	Cooperative, Caring, Understanding, Responsible, Insightful, Ethical, Friendly, Achieving	Elementary Teacher, Nurse, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist, Recreation Leader, Ag Extension Agent, Minister	Special Education, Child and Family Studies, Counseling, Psychology, Social Work, Speech pathology, Educational Administration
Enterprising (E) Score _____	"People and Data" Business, Leadership, Politics	Influence, Direct, Manage, Sell, Communicate, Plan, Persuade	Seek power and status, Competitive, Goal-oriented, Ambitious, Risk-taking, Optimistic, Self-confident, Persuasive	Small Business Owner, Corporate Exec., Stock Broker, Life Insurance Agent, Realtor, Elected Public Official, Sales Rep	Business Administration, Political Science, Marketing, Communication, Agricultural Economics, Hotel Management
Conventional (C) Score _____	"Date and Things" Data, Detail, Precision	Organize, Record, Schedule, Monitor, Operate, Process	Prefer structure, order, routine and subordinate position, Accurate, Systematic, Efficient, Conscientious, Persevering, Practical, Dependable, Stable	Accountant, Banker, Credit Manager, Court Reporter, Math Teacher, Secretary, Dental Assistant, Proofreader	Accounting, Finance, Dental Hygiene, Legal Assisting, Bookkeeping, Surveying, Medical Records Technology

# OCCUPATIONS BY RAISEC THEME TYPES

REALISTIC (R)	INVESTIGATIVE (I)	IR	ARTISTIC (A)
Carpenter	Biologist	Biologist	Advertising executive
Cartographer	Chiropractor	Chemical engineer	Art museum director
Corrections officer	College professor	Chemist	Art teacher
Electrician	Electronics designer	Chiropractor	Author
Emergency medical technician	Electronics technician	Dentist	Broadcaster
Forest ranger	Geographer	Electrical engineer	Fine artist
Forester	Internist	Electronics technician	Interior decorator
Horticultural worker	Mathematician	Experimental psychologist	Lawyer
Police officer	Physician	Geographer	Librarian
Rancher	Scientific researcher	Geologist	Musician
Skilled crafts	Statistician	Laboratory technician	Photographer
Telephone technician	Technical writer	Manufacturing engineer	Poet
Tool-and-dye maker	IA	Medical researcher	Public relations director
	Astronomer	Obstetrician	Reporter
RC	Clinical psychologist	Optometrist	AE
Drafting technician	Economist	Pathologist	Ballet dancer
Farmer	Experimental psychologist	Physicist	Beautician
Prison warden	Language interpreter	Research & development manager	Children's clothes designer
RCE	Medical researcher	Respiratory therapist	Costume designer
Estimator-maintenance and construction	Physician	Science teacher	Fashion model
Highway patrol officer	Scientific illustrator	Surgeon	Flight attendant
	Sociologist	Urologist	Illustrator
RE	IAS	Veterinarian	Interior decorator
Baker	Counseling psychologist	IRC	AEC
Building contractor	Pediatrician	Computer programmer	Editor
Professional athlete	Psychiatrist	Dental hygienist	Public relations writer
REC	IC	Information systems manager	AEI
Auditor	Computer operator	Medical technologist	Commercial artist
RES	Medical technician	Systems analyst	AER
General engineer	Pharmacist	IRE	Sculptor
RI	ICE	Equipment maintenance analyst	AES
Auto mechanic	Financial operations assistant	Food scientist	Advertising and sales promotion rep
Carpenter	Material price estimate & budget planner	Inspection analyst	Cinematographer
Cartographer	ICR	Operations research analyst	Graphic artist
Civil engineer	Management systems analyst	Scientific programmer	Photographer-public relations
Electrician	Program plans assistant	IRS	Photographer-publicity
Machinist	IE	Human factors engineer	Public relations representative
Mechanical engineer	Pharmacist	Osteopath	Publicity coordinator
Petroleum engineer	IEC	Physical therapist	ACS
Pilot	Drafting systems specialist	Respiratory therapist	Art Coordinator
Radiologic technologist	Fire protection engineer	Science teacher	AI
Veterinarian	Office management analyst	IS	Anthropologist
RIA	Operations planning analyst	Educational psychologist	Ballet dancer
Architect	Personnel selection analyst	Hospital supervisor	Landscape gardener
RIC	Production assurance specialist	Pediatrician	Medical illustrator
Shipping/receiving clerk	IER	ISA	AIR
RIE	Electronic data systems analyst	Clinical psychologist	Media specialist
Microphotographer	Information retrieval systems analyst	ISR	Sculptor
RIS	Inspection operations analyst	Dietitian	AIS
Athletic trainer	Material cost analyst	Registered nurse	Orchestra conductor
Tool designer	Systems development engineer	Safety/Industrial hygiene engineer	Technical writer
Writer, technical publications			AR
RS			Chef
Emergency medical technician			Drafting technician
Industrial arts teacher			Landscape gardener
RSE			ARI
Athletic director			Architect
County sheriff			
Highway patrol officer			
RSI			
Cabinet maker			

# OCCUPATIONS BY RAISEC THEME TYPES (CONT.)

AS English teacher Foreign language teacher Music teacher Writing teacher	ENTERPRISING (E) Athletic director Beautician Buyer Florist Foreign correspondent Funeral director Personnel director Personnel manager Realtor Restaurant manager Retailer Sales development representative Sports reporter Travel agent Waitress	EIR Auctioneer Dancing teacher Nursery manager Optician Pest controller Preventative maintenance analyst Professional athlete	CAE Public information assistant
SOCIAL (S) Elementary ed teacher Guidance counselor Priest Public health nurse Social science teacher Special education teacher	EA Chef Professional dancer	EIS Controller Special programs administrator-education	CAI Drafting systems coordinator
SA Foreign language teacher Minister Music teacher Social worker Writer, children's books	EC Manufacturer Marketing support representative Office manager Optician Purchasing agent Restaurant manager Retail clerk Stockbroker Store manager Travel agent Wholesaler	ERA Stockbroker	CE Administrative assistant Certified public accountant Courtroom stenographer IRS agent IRS revenue officer Order processing coordinator
SAI Speech pathologist	ECI Environmental/Hygiene specialist Financial/Accounting analyst Financial operations controller Investments manager Records management coordinator	ERIC Facilities coordinator Operations planning coordinator	CEI Document control coordinator Financial operations assistant Logistics assistant Material auditor Material price estimate and budget coordinator Project auditor
SAR Occupational therapist	ECR Agribusiness manager Factory manager Farm supply manager	ERI Material management specialist Operations research specialist Pilot	CER Price estimating and budget analyst Procurement specialist Property records coordinator
SC Airline ticket agent Licensed practical nurse	ECS Auto sales dealer Funeral director Hotel manager Travel bureau manager	ES Computer salesperson County extension agent Industrial salesperson Life insurance agent Personnel director Sales manager TV announcer	CES Accountant Agribusiness manager Business education teacher Credit manager Data processing clerk Food service manager
SCE Home economics teacher Rehabilitation counselor School administrator	EI Computer salesperson Marketing executive Marketing representative Product market analyst	ESA Attorney Buyer Contract specialist	CIE Document control representative Property auditor
SCI Dental hygienist	EIC Investments manager Property specialist	ESC Business manager Employment manager Financial operations controller Labor relations representative Nursing home administrator Receptionist Traffic manager Travel bureau manager	CIR Mathematics teacher
SE Football coach Juvenile parole officer Labor arbitrator Manager, childcare center Mental health worker Recreation leader Vocational counselor	EIS Human resources representative Public relations technician Technical librarian Training coordinator	ESI CONVENTIONAL (C) Accountant Bank cashier Banker Bookkeeper Computer operator Facilities maintenance Hospital records clerk IRS tax auditor Office manager Printer Production manager Proofreader Secretary	CR Production coordinator
SEC Employment interviewer Home economics teacher Professional employment representative School administrator	EI Computer salesperson Marketing executive Marketing representative Product market analyst	CONVENTIONAL (C) Accountant Bank cashier Banker Bookkeeper Computer operator Facilities maintenance Hospital records clerk IRS tax auditor Office manager Printer Production manager Proofreader Secretary	CS Bank cashier Dental assistant Dietary assistant Food service manager
SEI Loan officer Training specialist			CSA Secretary
SI Registered nurse			CSE County welfare worker Dietician Employment manager Executive housekeeper Executive secretary Facilities supervisor IRS revenue officer Nursing home administrator
SIA School psychologist Speech pathologist			CSR Data processor File clerk
SR Athletic trainer Physical education teacher			
SRE Agricultural extension agent Building supervisor Recreation leader			
SRI Occupational therapist			