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**Major Decisions** | How to figure out your major and/or change it

People change their minds about things everyday. In the short run, they make decisions easier and see results quicker when it comes to deciding what to eat for breakfast or deciding when to work out in the gym. Other times, however, people make tough decisions that may affect their lives in the long run. Take paying bills for instance. Bills are always there, and we always have to pay them. It appears that the tough decision lies with how we allocate or divide money to pay for other things. If we divide it the wrong way, our money may come up short to pay for other things in the long run. This is one thing that college students have to decide for themselves. However, it is not the only tough, long run decision they have to make in their academic career.

Changing majors is a great deal-breaker for college students. Not very many students do it; and if they do, they risk having to start all over. Regardless of how many requirements that majors have, most students have found ways to get away with changing majors with few consequences. So, what are the “ifs and buts” of changing career paths? Well, one thing that Southern Illinois University Edwardsville requires for all of its career programs is general education.

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Many uninformed students do not understand the purpose of general education. I remember my freshman year when a student was presenting an argument for our speech communications course. Her topic was why SIUE should not require its students to take general education courses. Her argument was basically this: it takes up time away from our major career paths. She presented a good argument, however, she forgot one minor detail. Her arguments could only agree with students who were absolutely sure they wanted to take that career path. Her argument contradicted the fact that the easiest way to change a major, if the student decides to do so, is having those general education courses already completed to continue on without starting all over. Furthermore, if the student decides to switch majors, the courses taken from the original major become the general education courses required by SIUE.

Another argument against her point was that many students do not even have a major chosen – and they usually go through to their junior year before deciding. In this case, all of their classes are general education courses. This in itself is the easiest way for students to actually choose a major. Many students do not want to take or do not believe that highly formulated placement exams would determine what their career should be. Furthermore, choosing a major is something the student should decide for his or herself simply because people change their minds all the time. Many students would rather live the experience themselves than to just guess what a major has to offer. Students must also be aware that external factors, such as time constraints and financial aid issues, may (but are not limited to) determine career paths.

However, some students do prefer the placement exam method. SIUE has a catalog for prospective students admitted into the university. With this, administrators

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examine its students' reading, writing, math skills, as well as other skills. These tests essentially provide students with some guidance on how they may decide on a major. For more information, visit [Placement Testing](#).

It goes to show that deciding on a major is not an easy step-by-step process. Having completed general education courses is also a great way to change your major. Furthermore, students must know that it is okay to change their minds.

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