

You and Academics: Who Are You?

You might have recently graduated from high school or transferred from another college or even returned to school after a number of years away. Whatever your situation, you know yourself well in some ways but you're still figuring out who you are as a college student. Choosing a major, a minor, or even the occasional elective class is another way of getting to know yourself. What do you want to spend the next few years thinking about? Of course you wonder how any particular major would prepare you for a career, but for the moment just try to focus on how *interested* you are in various majors (don't worry; we'll help you understand the major/career connection too). Here are some suggestions that may help:

- Notice what kinds of course descriptions interest you most and see if you find a pattern in those courses—is there anything they have in common?
- Pay attention to the classes you most look forward to attending, and consider what it is about them that draws your interest. Do they have anything in common?
- Consider the coursework that you most enjoy and be clear about why it appeals to you. If the courses you find most interesting are not courses you tend to do well in, talk with your instructors and actively seek out any tutoring resources available to try to improve your grades in those classes.
- If you find that you continue to be interested in an academic area in which you struggle to receive satisfactory grades, it's important to consider that it might not be realistic to pursue a major in that field. Be open to thinking about what other academic areas could be interesting to you and provide you with a greater chance of success. An Academic Advisor can help you with this! Try not to get fixated on a direction that isn't working for you.
- If you're having trouble deciding on a major, explore what exactly is getting in the way of your decision.
- Look at the snapshot of each John Jay major, since it will give you a great quick idea of what kind of work that major involves.

- Consult on-line resources such as the Undergraduate Bulletin, which lists all the requirements and pre-requisites for every John Jay major.
- Talk with people who can give you some perspective and guide you! Major Coordinators and Minor Coordinators are happy to discuss your major/minor concerns. Academic Advisors and Peer Advisors can offer you invaluable help in clarifying your interests, answering questions regarding general education requirements, and helping you pull the different pieces of your academic plan together as they offer on-going support. Working your way carefully through all the self-assessment questions here can give you a good idea of what you want to discuss with an advisor.
- Talk with the coordinator for your major and look at your major department's website to get a full idea of any opportunities available to you in that department (research, conferences, internships, etc.)
- Become very aware of the kinds of skills you're developing in your chosen major that provide excellent foundation for the professional world. This is not only personally satisfying, but can give you some things to talk about at job interviews.
- Though most professions don't require any particular major as preparation, consult with the Center for Career and Professional Development to consider *kinds* of careers that may be particularly suited to the perspective and skills you're developing in your major.
- If you already know your major, have you considered adding one of John Jay's minors to your academic plan?
- Look into ways to supplement your courses, maybe by finding a study abroad program that lets you pursue work you enjoy in a totally new setting. Also look into research opportunities in areas of interest as well as community service that matters to you. You're a student but also a *person* with interests outside the classroom, so engage in a variety of experiences and then consider how they connect with each other.
- If you already have a strong interest in pursuing graduate school after earning your undergraduate Bachelor's degree, find out what you should be thinking about and doing NOW.