

# Helping Your Students Choose Their Major

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# Undeclared: our largest “major”

- ◆ In any quarter there are about 3000 students who are undeclared and about 1000 more who are a declared major, but are not following it.
- ◆ According to WikiAnswers, About 80% of college students change their major at least once, and most change their major three times over the course of their college career.

# Advantages of declaring early

- ◆ A major organizes and focuses academic interests.
- ◆ Students receive information about departmental opportunities, including internships, scholarships, research projects, and classes.
- ◆ Students can more easily
  - take courses in the major beyond the minimum requirements.
  - complete independent study within the major.
  - take advantage of honors courses and research.
- ◆ Students will have easier access to courses in departments that limit classes to their majors.
- ◆ Academic requirements will be clearly defined.

# Is there a deadline for declaring?

- ◆ Students must declare a major when they reach junior standing at 84 units.
- ◆ Athletes must declare at the beginning of their junior year.

# First: Understand the California Master Plan for Education

- ◆ Community Colleges – vocational.
  - Majors are predominately work related: nursing, hotel management, auto repair, bookkeeping.
- ◆ California State Schools – half academic, half applied.
  - Some majors are applied: graphic design, business administration, merchandising.
  - Some majors are academic: history, English, math
- ◆ University of California – research.
  - Majors are all academic, with a research orientation. There are a few applied classes, but these are neither the norm nor the mission of the UC.

# Major $\neq$ Career

- ◆ Because our majors are academic disciplines, for the most part, they are not career destinations.
  - Not all (or even a large percentage) of students who study psychology become psychologists.
  - Ditto for history and historians, sociology and sociologist, biology and biologists, math and mathematicians, etc.
- ◆ For the most part neither employers nor graduate/professional schools focus a great deal on undergraduate majors.

# Exceptions to the Rule

- ◆ Some careers DO require specific undergraduate majors:
  - Some positions in accounting, engineering, computer science, field and lab science, museums, etc., do require related majors.
- ◆ However, most do not.
  - College majors are not listed in most newspaper or online job listings.
  - At our career fairs and on-campus interviews, 75-80% of the non-tech positions don't prefer, let alone require, specific majors.

# Second : Understand your student

- ◆ Is your student a “science/technical” person?
  - *“Science/technical” majors include: biology, chemistry, all engineering majors, computer science, and similar.*
- ◆ If not already declared, students should speak immediately to an academic or undergraduate advisor to get started.
- ◆ These majors are usually dense, including sequence and lab classes.
- ◆ These majors generally require students to follow a more pre-established set of classes.
- ◆ If students later decide they are not a “sci/tech” person after all, they can use those courses for GE or elective units.

# Tools for researching majors.

- ◆ Take introductory courses in subjects that interest them.
  - Many introductory courses fulfill General Education, Special Subject, or University requirements. Taking introductory courses in new subjects can open up entire field of study that they didn't know existed!
- ◆ Use the bookstore.
- ◆ Explore web pages (College, departmental, Career Services, etc.).
- ◆ Use the General Catalog to review requirements.
  - <http://catalog.ucsb.edu>
  - Lists all of the majors, requirements and courses at the university.
  - Look for: the list of required courses including pre-major GPA requirements; a list of all of the general education and special subject courses,
- ◆ Use College of Letters and Science majors and minor sheets.
  - <http://www.registrar.ucsb.edu/majors.htm#majors>
- ◆ Ask departments for additional information sheets about the requirements for their major.

# People resources

- ◆ Juniors and seniors can describe majors from the student perspective.
- ◆ Undergraduate staff advisors can assist with major course selection and information.
- ◆ Undergraduate faculty advisors can assist with understanding the themes of the major .
- ◆ Departmental peer advisors can share information about their experiences in the major .
- ◆ The College of Letters and Science peer advisors can help plan classes, discuss different majors, etc. (For appts: (805) 893-2038 or stop by 1117 Cheadle Hall).
- ◆ Career Services counselors and peer counselors can help with the career information (For appts: (805) 893-4412 or drop in the Career Resources Room at Career Services from 10-4, M-F).

# The career connection?

- ◆ If a most careers don't require a certain major, how can students pick a major?
- ◆ The best criteria are:
  - Majors that they enjoy (interests)
  - Majors where they excel (skills)

# Interests

- ◆ Extracurricular activities
- ◆ Particularly enjoyable classes
- ◆ MyRoad
- ◆ Strong Interest Inventory – College Edition
- ◆ INT 64

# Skills

- ◆ The most important aspect of an undergraduate education is a high G.P.A.
  - While most employers don't set GPA requirements, it can be a bragging point
  - Practically ALL graduate schools DO have GPA requirements. The higher the G.P.A. the broader the student's choices are for graduate and/or professional school

# “I love my major but I’m doing poorly”

- ◆ Overall if students have one or two bad classes, they can still be competitive. However,
  - If they do poorly in prerequisite classes, it can eliminate certain majors as options.
  - If they do poorly in the majority of their major classes this can be an issue, especially for graduate/professional schools.

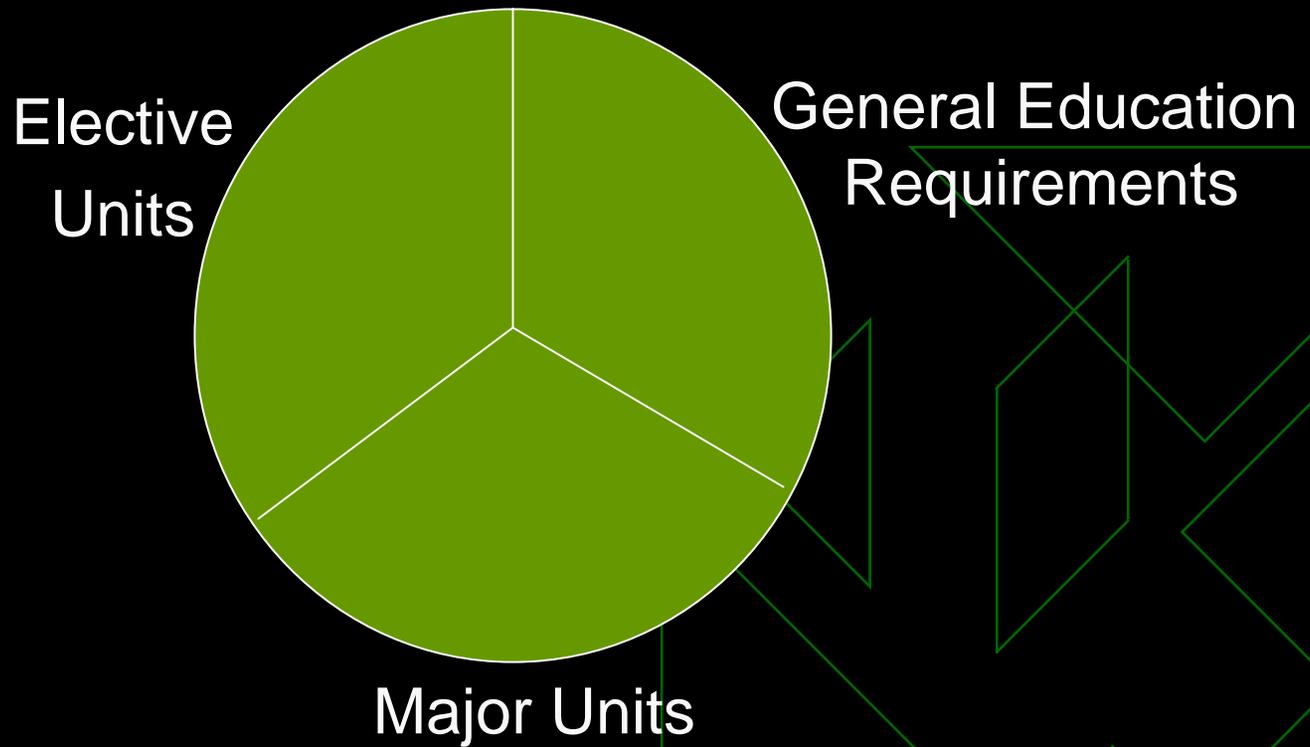
# Strategies for success

- Get a tutor
- Speak with the departmental undergraduate advisor and/or an advisor in the College of Letters and Science to brainstorm major options
- Speak with Career Services staff about career options
- Curtail non-academic activities
  - ◆ though at some point they will need to get involved in these to offer employers something beyond an BA
- Change majors

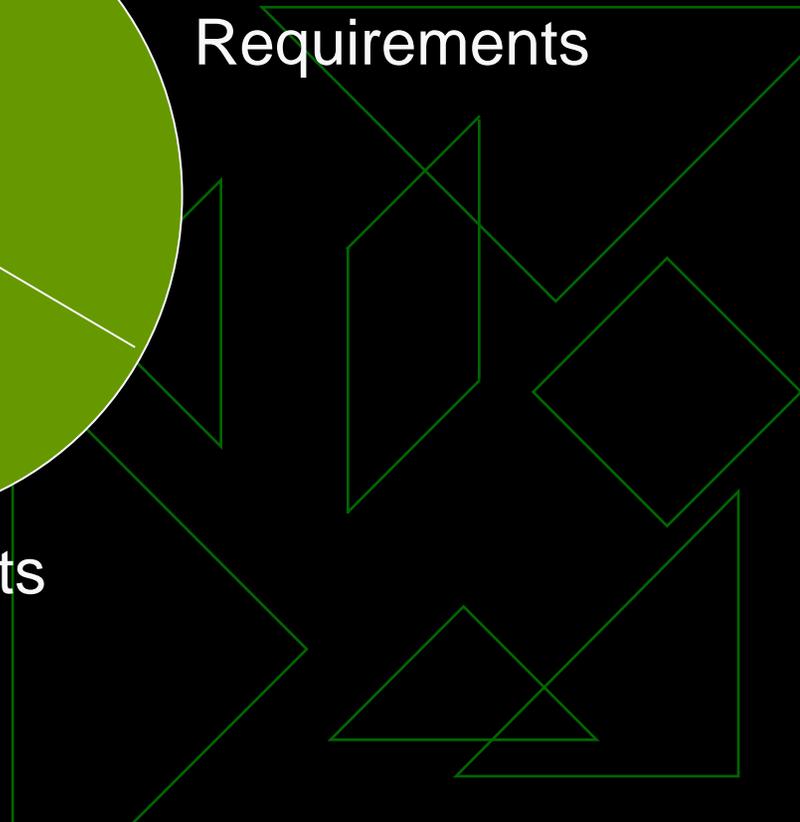
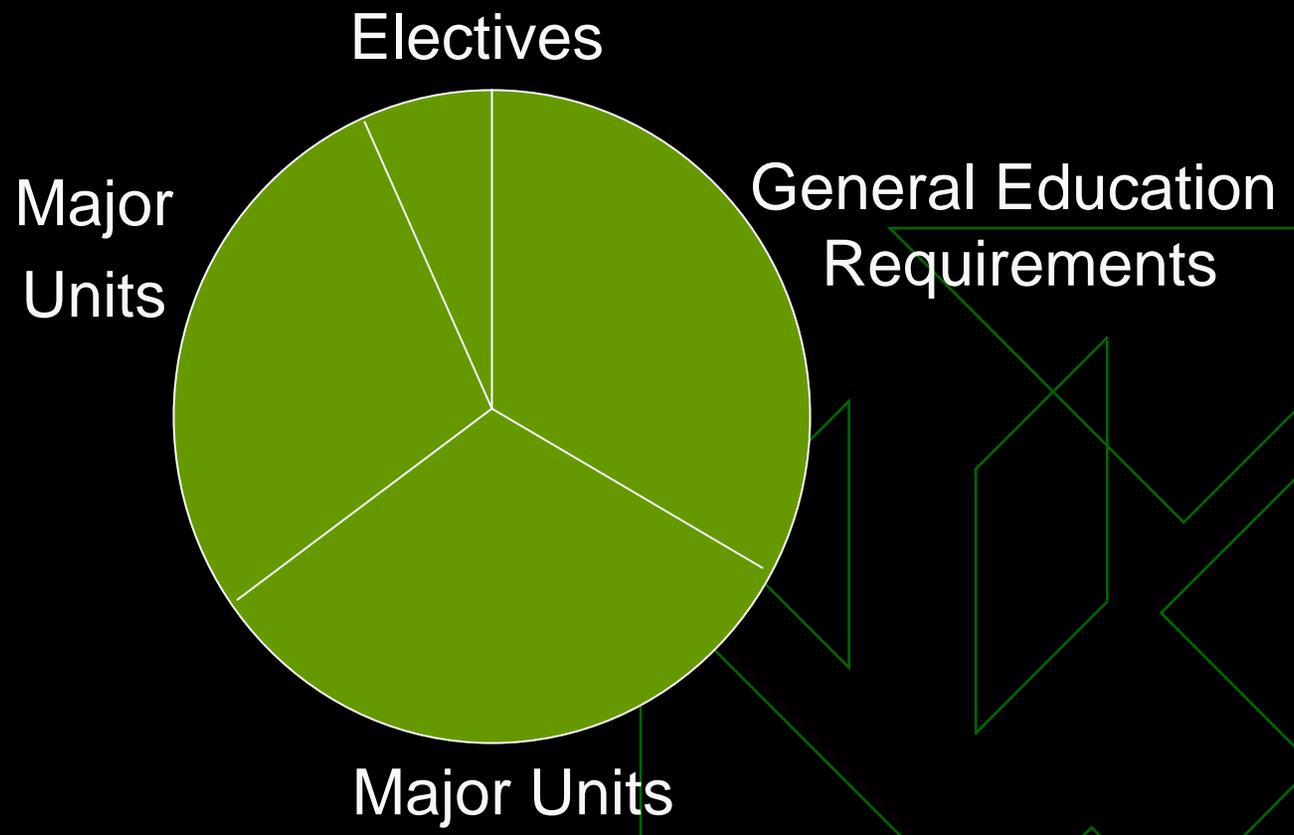
# How units are spent

*General overview.*

*For specifics see the College Catalog or talk to the College of Letters and Science.*



# Double Majors



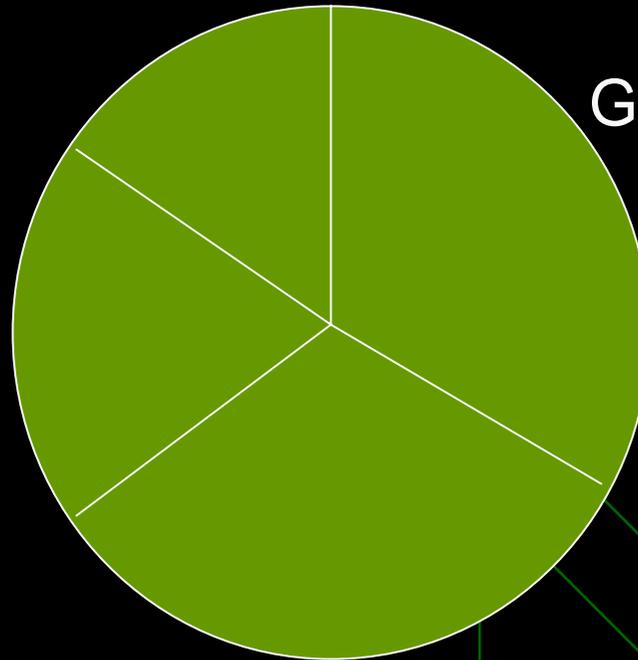
# Major/Minor



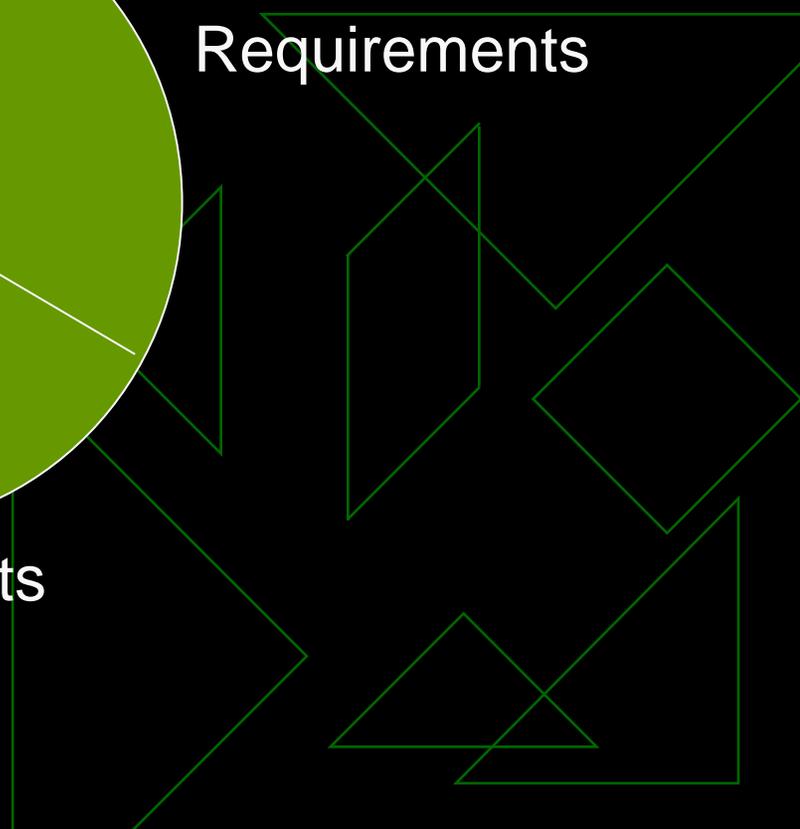
Electives

General Education  
Requirements

Minor  
Units



Major Units



# Impact

- ◆ If majors/minors are divergent (quantitative vs. qualitative), the impact is significant.
- ◆ If the majors/minors are similar, there is not much impact.
- ◆ **HOWEVER**, additional majors and/or minors can “spin” students’ primary major.

# My Student is Majoring in Postmodern Extraplanetary Communication!

- ◆ Support a non-career related major with extracurricular activities.
  - Internships.
  - Part time jobs.
  - Summer experiences.
  - Career-related, business or computer classes here or elsewhere.
  - Club/athletic leadership positions.
  - ToastMasters.

# Why Employers Like UCSB Students

- ◆ Best and brightest.
- ◆ Students offer a wide range of skills:
  - Research skills, critical thinking, problem solving, public speaking, writing, etc.
- ◆ Some employers appreciate the broader world view of our students.
  - International exposure.

# Web Support

- ◆ [www.career.ucsb.edu](http://www.career.ucsb.edu)
- ◆ <http://www.advising.ltsc.ucsb.edu/explorations/issues/F08/index.php>
- ◆ <http://career.ucsb.edu/parents/careeralliance.html>
  - To receive Career Alliance (Career Services' monthly parent newsletter)