You are about to invest several years of your life studying something in detail. Make sure it is something in which you are interested! Planning puts you in charge and allows you to design your own future. Some people are reluctant to make decisions because they are fearful of making the "wrong" decision while others just don't know where to start. The following model can provide you with ideas for getting started on exploring your options and choosing your major.

**Step 1: Define the Decision to be Made**

The decision-making process begins with defining the decision that needs to be made. In this situation, you need to choose your major. Remember that the major you choose will not necessarily dictate your career choice. Frequently, major choice and career choice are two separate decisions.

**Step 2: Know Yourself**

Identify your most important interests (what you enjoy), skills (what you do well), and values (what motivates you). Discover the "real you" and what you want to achieve.

Some questions to ask yourself:
- What activities do I enjoy during my spare time?
- What classes have I most enjoyed?
- What activities do I do well? What have I done in the past that makes me especially proud?
- In what type of classes do I perform best (e.g., lectures, seminars, labs, discussion)?
- What clubs and organizations have I been involved in? What did I like/dislike about these experiences?
- What were my favorite (and least favorite) jobs? Which skills did I particularly enjoy using/developing?

**Resources available through the SJU Career Development Center:**

- Career Assessments including the Strong Interest Inventory and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. They also offer FOCUS, an online assessment tool that can help you assess your interests, skills, and values. If you would like to learn more about these assessments, call Career Development (610-660-3100) to schedule an appointment with a career counselor.

**Step 3: Identify and Investigate a List of Possible Majors**

Develop a list of majors that you would like to explore. Consider how your strengths, interests, and goals compare with possible majors – you will naturally gravitate toward some majors and eliminate others. The SJU Course Catalog and/or the University Website can help you to identify a list of options. Your faculty advisor and the HSB Advising Center can also be instrumental in helping you to identify options based on your interests and talents.

Some questions to consider as you investigate majors:
- How many courses are required to complete this major?
- Who are the faculty in the department?
- Is it possible to double major or complete a minor in Arts & Sciences?
- What specifically interests me about this major?
- Why would I expect to do well in this course of study?
- What are the skills I will need to possess or develop to be successful in the study of this major?
- Is co-op available? If so, what type of placements are typical for students in this major?
- Does this major allow for internships or study abroad? If so, what are the requirements?
- Looking through the SJU Catalog, how many of the courses offered in this major genuinely appeal to me? Which ones are most interesting?
- What is the connection between this major and my career plans?
- What are examples of careers pursued by SJU graduates with this major?
Some strategies for investigating majors include:

- Review the requirements for majors in the SJU Course Catalog or on the University Website
- Talk with professors in departments of interest to you
- Review the textbooks you would be using in your classes
- Visit classes/audit classes
- Take an introductory course in a field of study that is interesting to you
- Talk with students in the major or alumni who graduated with the major
- Meet with a counselor in the Career Development Center
- Use the resources available on the Career Development Website and the HSB Advising Center Website

Step 4: Evaluate and Decide

Time to make a choice! Develop a system to compile, review, and evaluate the information you gathered about specific majors. Choose the alternative that has the greatest probability of producing a satisfying result. Be aware of and address any obstacles that may hinder your decision-making ability. This may include anxiety, perceived expectations, your own thoughts, financial concerns, others’ opinions/needs, etc. If you are encountering obstacles or feeling “stuck,” talk with a career counselor in the CDC, your faculty advisor, or a staff member in the Advising Center.

Step 5: Take Action and Re-Evaluate

Follow through on your decision. Meet with your advisor/professors to develop an academic plan. Remember that decision-making is an ongoing process. Once you have declared a major you will find yourself continually evaluating whether or not you made the best choice. As you take more classes and gain experiences you will determine if you made the best choice for you.

SOME MYTHS ABOUT CHOOSING A MAJOR

- **Myth:** Choosing a major and a career are basically the same thing
  A major focuses your course of study and allows you to develop expertise in a specific subject area. Ideally it is an area of study that excites you and utilizes your strengths and abilities! During your time in college, take advantage of experiences such as internships, co-op, and study abroad to help define your career and work interests. Although you may choose to pursue a job/career related to your major following graduation, do not feel that you are limited. Employers in many industries are more interested in a student’s practical experience (e.g., internships, co-op), transferable skills (e.g., communication skills), and positive attitude rather than his/her major in college.

- **Myth:** Somewhere there is a test or an expert that can tell me what to do for the rest of my life
  Myth! Career interest inventories and personality inventories can help you identify your skills, interests, values, and preferences for work and indicate some majors or career areas to consider, but that’s all. The answers are inside you – don’t be fooled into thinking that a “test” knows you better than you know yourself.

- **Myth:** The major I choose now will determine my lifelong career
  Studies have shown that within ten years of graduation most people are working in careers that are not directly related to their undergraduate major. People change and careers change. New types of jobs emerge every year, and most of us have no idea what those jobs will be and what education/training will be required. Because of this, emphasis should be placed on choosing an area of study that interests/excites you as well as developing the transferable skills (e.g., writing, communication, technical, problem-solving, interpersonal) that employers want and that graduates will need in order to adjust to rapidly changing careers.