

A First Year Student's Perspective on Adjusting to University Life and Selecting a Major

During high school college seems so far away, and so does the path you will take in the future to your career. It seems as though college is a place that will be so much fun where things will just fall into place like: your major, grades in classes, and a job. But when you actually arrive on campus and start the college life you realize that things aren't quite that easy. Classes are harder than they were in high school, there is more material, and the teachers expect more maturity and organization from you. You find that you have to balance a job, studies, your health, and social events. Very quickly you learn college isn't the easiest place to be anymore, and that it requires a lot of effort and planning to succeed.

For me, this realization came before I even started school - when I began adding up the hours I would need to work to support myself, and the time I was going to have to spend studying. When school started it was very exciting: new classes, teachers, friends, and a large campus full of opportunities. I was slightly overwhelmed, but anxious to get my feet wet. I was finally able to choose some of my classes and I picked the ones I enjoyed the most in high school.

The one class I was really looking forward to was Chemistry. In high school science was my favorite subject, and I actually looked forward to doing chemistry and biology homework. And as much as my friends would call me a "science nerd," I would still tell them all about the things I learned and found interesting in class that day. My high school teachers always pushed me to think about a major in the science field. However, I did not heed their advice, telling them that there was no money in the world of science, and that I would not have enough patience to become a teacher. I also wanted a more glamorous job with a larger salary, so I applied under a journalism major with a minor in biological sciences. This, I thought would be a great combination, one that not many people would have and something I could do a lot with. After almost a semester of school I realized that maybe my choice of major was not so ideal, and this realization came to me because of Chemistry 30A. I had enjoyed the course so much, and had been so interested in all of the topics that it actually became my main priority. Every Sunday I would complete the week's readings and homework, in preparation for the problem solving class on Tuesdays, and devoted Wednesday nights as my study night. The suggested 3-5 hours of studying was no longer something I found ridiculous, but normal. Often times I would find myself surpassing the 5 hours and not even minding in the least bit. On the weekends when I would call home to talk with my parents I would always tell them about Chemistry; what I was learning, the labs, and most of all my good grades on tests, pop quizzes, and labs. Both were very proud, and not the least bit surprised when I started talking about changing my major to something in the science field.

My decision that I was changing my major to Biological Sciences finally came about two weeks ago. My enjoyment level and understanding of the concepts in Chemistry 30A made me realize where my career path would lead. I now know that it is not about the money, or the glitz and glamour that should be the deciding factor in my major, but what I truly enjoy. Because a career is something that you devote time, money, and energy to achieving, and it must be something that you truly desire. For me, that something is science, and as "nerdy" as my friends may think that I am, at least I know in my freshman year what lies in my future. I thank the course of Chemistry for that, because although I would have realized sooner or later that my future would lie in the science field, it may have taken me many wasted units and semesters to figure it out. I now have a jumpstart on what the horizon holds for me, and I can walk into it with my feet firmly planted on the path that will lead me to success.

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