Choosing a College Major

By Sarah Mirjavadi, Hixson-Lied Success Scholar

Choosing an academic major can be quite overwhelming and stressful. The misconception that the majority of students decide their major prior to or upon entering a university increases the anxiety. The reality is that many students are actually undecided about their majors. There is also the pressure that by choosing a major, they are stuck with it for life! According to the University of Laverne’s website, 50-70% of students have changed their major at least once. In fact, most students change their major a few times before finding one with which they connect. With that, it is perfectly normal to be undecided (Exploring) or contemplating a change in your major. Throw away that unnecessary stress! It is better to explore majors and switch when necessary than to regret it later. Besides the pressure from misconceptions, choosing a major can be very frustrating due to the hundreds of options to choose from. So, how do you narrow down your options to help choose a major? The first step is to get to know yourself. Self-assess your interests and abilities. What kind of tasks, hobbies, classes, and so forth excite and appeal to you the most? Were you interested or involved in sports in previous years? Music? Science? Did you enjoy volunteering? What are your strengths and weaknesses? Were you good at math in high school? Were you good at selling chocolates to fundraise for the soccer team? It helps to grab a piece of paper and jot down everything that comes to mind. If needed, go online and take several self-assessment quizzes.

Don’t let the pressure from peers, parents, teachers, and others cloud your interests. To put it simply, listen to what you want. After self-assessing, you should have narrowed your options. Next, look at the majors you chose and dig deeper, visit the Degrees Directory page. This is beneficial to reflect on how the major will affect you in the future. Consider the financial implications. What classes are required and do you see yourself doing well in them? This is also a great time to ask classmates, professors, and alumni to get in depth knowledge on the major through their experience. If you can, take a class relating to it. The best part is that introductory courses relating to certain majors may satisfy general education requirements. If you are looking for hands on experience, consider volunteering, internships, job shadowing, and service learning.

Realize that when it comes to exploring different majors, UNLV offers great resources to help with the process. You do not have to figure out everything by yourself. The First-Year Seminar (FYS) course is a good start for career guidance. This is required for all undergraduates during their freshman year. Most FYS courses give an introduction to career exploration within their field. Through self-reflection, research, interviews, presentations, service projects and more, students finish the course with a better understanding on what they might want to pursue at UNLV. There are different FYS courses depending on what college you are under. Exploring majors (undecided / undeclared students) take COLA 100E. Another available resource is Career Services. They offer career counseling and a FOCUS 2 interest inventory assessment to assess your abilities, interests, and values. Career Services is also a great resource on finding where to gain experience. They host job fairs so you can gather more information on certain jobs and careers. Finally, there is advising. The Academic Success Center advisors are determined to help you explore and declare a major based on your goals. It is best to visit an academic advisor at least once a semester and if you need more guidance, make another appointment! Advisors enjoy getting to know students and setting them on the right path.

Not having a major or contemplating whether you should change it can be very discouraging and create worry. It is important to realize that you are not alone and many students can relate. You are actually given two years to declare your major, which is why those years can focus primarily on fulfilling general education requirements. If you have surplus time, consider volunteering, internships, job shadowing, and service learning. Set a career goal for yourself. The First-Year Seminar (FYS) course is a good start for career guidance. This is required for all undergraduates during their freshman year. Most FYS courses give an introduction to career exploration within their field. Through self-assessment, reflection, research, and appeal to you the most? Were you interested or involved in sports in previous years? Music? Science? Did you enjoy volunteering? What are your strengths and weaknesses? Were you good at math in high school? Were you good at selling chocolates to fundraise for the soccer team? It helps to grab a piece of paper and jot down everything that comes to mind. If needed, go online and take several self-assessment quizzes.

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What is SORCE?

SORCE is the Student Organization Resource Center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas that provides access to information for each of the 250 active organizations on campus and primary contact directories. SORCE also helps the organizations by providing support to help and improve programs in order to have a stronger and better UNLV.

How do I become a member of SORCE?

In order to become a part of SORCE, all student groups must be initiated and monitored by a currently registered University of Nevada, Las Vegas student. All student groups must have at least five actively enrolled UNLV students, who are in good standing with the university and are free of any sanctions. Also, it is mandatory that all student groups have a constitution on file. In addition, all student groups must comply with all the university’s policies and procedures. More information on policies and procedures can be found at https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/27/StudentConduct-Code.pdf.

Why should I join SORCE?

Everyone should get involved with SORCE because it is an outstanding program that benefits students. SORCE helps students get involved while teaching students leadership and budgeting skills that help build a great resume.

Where is SORCE and how can I contact them?

SORCE is located in the Office of Civil Engagement and Diversity in the Student Union, Room 305. You can contact the office by phone at (702)-895-5576 or through the website at https://unlv.collegiatelink.net/organization/SORCE. Alternatively, you can email Emily Pugh, SORCE’s primary contact, at emily.pugh@unlv.edu.

What resources does SORCE offer?

- Staff to assist with projects
- Limited free printing
- Arts and crafts supplies
- Poster making supplies
- Access to computers
- Mailboxes and storage spaces
- Checkout items: canopy tents, tables, TVs, game consoles, etc.

Interview - Shelly Volsche

By Mario Verduzco, Hixson-Lied Success Scholar

Transitioning into college from high school is not something that should be taken lightly. Unfortunately, many new college students have to learn that the hard way. However, here at UNLV, freshmen are required to take a first-year seminar that can guide them into becoming successful college students. Students who do not know what their major is or are exploring majors are able to take the COLA 100E: First-Year Seminar for Exploring Majors.

Just like every professor in the university, the COLA 100E professors are here to help their students succeed. They want their students to become the best persons they can be. I had the pleasure to meet and interview Mrs. Shelly Volsche, a COLA 100E instructor.

This is Mrs. Volsche’s first year teaching COLA 100E full-time, but she has been teaching for years now. Working towards her PhD in Anthropology, she discussed that it is a lot of work to be a full-time instructor and a PhD student, but teaching the class is very rewarding. She really loves her students and tries her best to relate to them.

In order to gain some insight on her perspective of being a COLA 100E professor, I asked her, “What do you do or tell students in your classroom to help them become successful in their college careers?” While referring specifically to her class, she said, “One thing I tell my students is that it’s okay not to know. That it is okay that you have not decided on your major because in reality, a lot of people do not know either, and those students that seem like they have it all figured out probably do not.” This led up perfectly to my follow up question, as I asked her “What is your favorite thing about teaching students with exploring majors?” She reported that her favorite part is when the students have that realization of what they want to do. Although some may take longer than others, it is beautiful to see them grow. “I tell them that I took a twelve year break,” says Mrs. Volsche, “so it is never too late to find that passion.”

Lastly, I asked Mrs. Volsche something she wishes she had known or wished she had access to when she was completing her undergraduate education. She discussed that she wishes she had someone to talk to, someone to sit down with before making any huge decisions. To end with a little bit of fun, I asked Mrs. Volsche what she likes to do on her free time. She told me that she loves anime, watching Netflix, and eating sushi. Professors are here because they want to help you grow and succeed, and Mrs. Volsche is no exception.
UNLV Alumni Association
By Joel Jimenez-Vargas, Hixson-Lied Success Scholar

Lots of people say that college is the best four years of your life. During those four years, students learn a lot from their academic classes but also make tons of friendships and memories that they will never forget. If the college experience is that amazing, why would anyone want to graduate and stop their involvement with their university? This is why here at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), we are extremely lucky to have the UNLV Alumni Association.

To have a better understanding of what the UNLV Alumni Association does, I interviewed Amy Bouchard, the Senior Director of Administration and Communications at the UNLV Alumni Association. Amy Bouchard describes the Alumni Association as an organization that “seeks to engage alumni or graduates in the life of the university.” The Alumni Association is an independent, nonprofit organization that partnered with UNLV to help all of the university’s graduates and friends stay involved with the university and its various events. In addition to the events UNLV has already planned, Amy emphasized that the Alumni Association “hosts a number of events and activities surrounding other things that the university is doing but more with an alumni focus.” Some of these events are tailgate parties before football games, or even alumni receptions such as the one they recently held in Hawaii.

One of the main purposes of the organization is networking. Making professional connections is very important for the graduates’ careers and the Alumni Association tries to make networking as easy as possible by organizing events such as mixers and college-based chapters. Amy described these college-based chapters by saying how “graduates from those particular colleges get together to network and host their own events and activities.” A lot of times, it is better to make connections with alumni that have the same interests as you, which makes the college-based chapters perfect to meet UNLV graduates with similar interests and professional careers.

To end our conversation, Amy encouraged recent UNLV graduates to learn more about the Alumni Association and become members. In fact, the Alumni Association recently launched a brand new social networking platform specifically designed for UNLV alumni called UNLV Connect. Any current UNLV student or alum can join and start networking with fellow students or graduates. This is a great way to learn more about the Alumni Association and begin getting involved with the organization. The website for UNLV Connect is http://www.unlvconnect.org and for more information, feel free to visit the Alumni Association website at http://www.unlvalumni.org.

UNLV Alumni

Barrick Lecture Series
U.S. Astronaut Captain Scott Kelly
By Vivian Sam, Hixson-Lied Success Scholar

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas’ Barrick Lecture Series features well-known speakers, such as political figures, journalists, and experts in various fields, two to three times annually. The lecture series is made possible by generous donations from the late philanthropist, Marjorie Barrick, who named the lecture series in honor of her husband, Edward Barrick. Barrick and her husband focused on supporting educational and social programs in Las Vegas. The lecture series began in 1981, and distinguished speakers since then have included financial journalist Louis Rukeyser, entrepreneur Malcolm Forbes, former U.S. presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, and primatologist Jane Goodall. More recent presenters include Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev and former Governor of Florida Jeb Bush.

In October, I was able to attend the most recent lecture delivered by U.S. astronaut Captain Scott Kelly. His lecture highlighted lessons learned from his childhood through his 340-day mission in space. From his whimsical stories of his path to a career as an astronaut, I became inspired to take risks in life to accomplish large goals. One story in particular stuck with me. While aboard the International Space Station, Kelly received word from experts on Earth of a space rock that was closely headed toward the station. Knowing that there was a high possibility that the two could destructively collide, he and his crewmates simply had lunch. From this, I came to understand that not all aspects of life are always in your control, and that it is not beneficial to worry about inevitable situations. Of course, the asteroid fortunately bypassed the ISS.

All Barrick Lectures are free of charge, but require a ticket for entrance. In the upcoming lecture on December 8, “Simple Dreams: A Conversation with Linda Ronstadt,” journalist and author Ray Suarez will be interviewing singer and Grammy Awards winner Linda Ronstadt. Ronstadt is well known for her songs “Blue Bayou” and “You’re No Good.” UNLV faculty, staff, and students can pick up two tickets per person for this event starting November 16. Tickets will be open to the general public on November 19 at the UNLV Performing Arts Center Box Office.

For more information on upcoming and previous lectures, please visit www.unlv.edu/pac/barrick.

Distinguished Past Barrick Lecturers:

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SQ3R Reading Method
By Yana Ryjova, Hixson-Lied Success Scholar

Do you believe the myth that you work best under pressure, leading to sleepless, caffeine-induced nights cramming for exams? Do you think that frantically skimming the textbook before a midterm seems like a good idea? Does your method of studying include trying to memorize all the facts and key terms from your textbook? If you answered yes to any one of these questions, it may be time to revamp your study skills. Now, what if I told you that there was a way to study smarter, not harder?

The SQ3R reading method is a simple strategy for studying that can help students effectively learn material and store information into long-term memory. This method is described by its letters and includes five crucial steps for textbook reading. I am going to outline:

- **S** - Survey
- **Q** - Question
- **R** - Read
- **R** - Recite
- **R** - Review

**Step 1: Survey**

With the SQ3R reading method, the first step is to survey the material. This step is important in prefacing the chapter and taking a quick preview of what the chapter will be covering. Take a few minutes to read over the chapter introduction and objectives to figure out what are the main points of the chapter. Then, look through all of the headings and sub-headings in the chapter to understand how ideas and concepts are organized. This is also a great time to preview any pictures and captions that catch your eye. Finally, read over the chapter summary and list of key terms at the end. While this seems like too much work before diving into the chapter, it is a crucial first step in studying.

Surveying the material will give you a chance to preview the main concepts and takeaways of the chapter. Then, look through all of the headings and sub-headings. For example, if a heading in biology refers to prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells, you might ask yourself, “What is the difference between prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells?” or “What makes up a prokaryotic cell compared to a eukaryotic cell?” By framing the headings as questions, you begin to think about what the professor might ask you on a test.

**Step 2: Question**

After surveying the chapter, the next step is to ask questions. This step is important, as asking questions about the material will lead to active, **purposeful** reading. The first question to ask is, “What do I already know about this topic?” Once you answer that, try to create questions out of the headings and sub-headings. For example, if a heading in biology refers to prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells, you might ask yourself, “What is the difference between prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells?” or “What makes up a prokaryotic cell compared to a eukaryotic cell?” By framing the headings as questions, you begin to think about what the professor might ask you on a test.

**Step 3: Read**

After you have created questions, it is time to read the chapter to find answers to those inquiries. When reading, do your best to find specific details that will help answer your questions. This way, you can read purposefully, actively learning instead of mindlessly memorizing facts and key terms.

**Step 4: Recite**

After reading with a purpose, it is important to recite the material to help you avoid forgetting what you have just learned. After each section, try to answer the question you have created without referencing your textbook. By practicing orally and recalling the information right after you have read it, you make sure that you were paying attention and get an idea of what concepts you still may not fully understand. The practice of quizzing yourself will allow you to go back and review concepts that you had trouble remembering and help you solidify ones that you understood well. This is also a great time to summarize the section to review the main ideas and the most important facts.

**Step 5: Review**

The final step in the SQ3R method is to review the material. It is impossible to learn everything from just reading the chapter over once. By reviewing frequently and in smaller increments, you will avoid cramming and will store far more information into your long-term memory. To review, try to go back one day after reading and revisit the Recite step again. The next day, orally recite the information again and review any notes or highlights you have made. Make flashcards for any concepts that you have a lot of difficulty understanding and remembering. By studying just a little bit everyday using the SQ3R method, you will not have to spend a long time reviewing the night before an exam. After reading and answering questions, it is important to recite the material to help you avoid forgetting what you have just learned. After each section, try to answer the question you have created without referencing your textbook. By practicing orally and recalling the information right after you have read it, you make sure that you were paying attention and get an idea of what concepts you still may not fully understand. The practice of quizzing yourself will allow you to go back and review concepts that you had trouble remembering and help you solidify ones that you understood well. This is also a great time to summarize the section to review the main ideas and the most important facts. The SQ3R method might take more time at first, but it will definitely pay off in the end. It can be easily applied to a wide range of subjects including biology, psychology, and economics. This method of studying is shown to be effective for improving reading comprehension, as well as helping students retain information and consolidate ideas and concepts into long-term memory. Finally, it helps students study for an exam long before the deadline. As finals will shortly be around the corner, I suggest trying out the SQ3R method - a smarter way to study!