



## **I Changed My Major Because of the Recession!**

Last June, as I looked over a recent issue of a local town newspaper, I came upon an article covering the area high school's 2009 class of graduates. As you might expect, the article included comments from graduating students and proud parents along with other graduation event details. While reading the article, I was struck by a comment made by one soon to be graduate who said that the current recession had led him to change his college major from political science to engineering.

Naturally, the career counselor in me kicked in and, if I had known this student, I would have asked him the following questions:

- What was it that drew you to your original college major choice of political science?
- Were you interested in a career related to political science and did you ever speak with anyone employed in this area?
- How do those who work in political science careers deal with the instability that comes with unpredictable voting outcomes and job market fluctuations?
- If you can't answer this last question, how might you get answers from those who are 'in the know'?
- How long have you considered engineering as a major?
- What do you know about engineering related career options?
- Have you ever spoken with anyone who works in an engineering related career?
- Have you ever job shadowed workers in either political science or engineering careers?

I would ask these questions not because I'm opposed to this graduate's decision to shift from a major in political science to engineering. Rather, my intention would be to see if this decision was made based on accurate career information and reflection about personal priorities or based on a knee jerk reaction to current economic conditions. Job market fluctuations are a reality and, yes, the current job market is a challenging one. Yet, that does not mean students need to ignore their career aspirations.

If I were coaching this student, my advice would depend on his answers to the questions above. If he were not informed, I would guide him to make sure his assumptions are accurate. I would also encourage him to consider scenarios that support exploration of these two interest areas over time. For example, one option might be to major in engineering while taking as many political science courses as possible (maybe even leading to a minor in political science). A major in engineering could also be combined with volunteer work related to his political science interests.

Bottom line...watch out for knee jerk fear based decisions based on an unusually tight job market. If you're a student, try asking yourself the questions listed above in relation to your own college major and career interests. If employment security is a concern, do your homework and learn about things you can do to create your own sense of security while doing work that you enjoy.

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**Note:** You're welcome to reprint this article as long as it remains complete and unaltered (including the "about the author" section) and you send a copy of your reprint to [susan@careeroptions4me.com](mailto:susan@careeroptions4me.com) .

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