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**Major mayhem: Everyone wants my major,
what do I do?**

Agenda

We will cover:

- What are selective majors
- Review process for selective majors
- How to prepare to apply to a selective major
- Alternate majors
- Majors with auditions or supplemental materials
- The undeclared major option
- Alternative pathways to selective majors
- Beyond the major

What is a selective major?

Majors that are selective receive more qualified applicants than spaces available.

A selective major may strongly recommend additional criteria and preparation including:

- specific courses
- supplemental applications
- general interest in the subject area

The more students prepare for the major, the more competitive they will be.



“Selective” majors are those majors that are very popular, campuses cannot offer admission to all qualified students.

In order to increase their chances of admission to a selective major, students should consider taking recommended courses and getting involved in clubs and other activities related to the major, outside of the classroom.

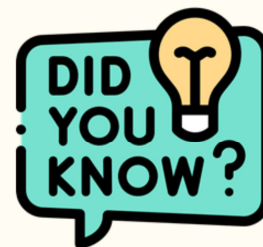
Although students are not required to do these “extra” recommended criteria, it will make the student more competitive.

Also to increase their chances of admission to the major, students should apply to several schools and not just 1-2.

Definition of selective major

UC campuses may use the following terms to indicate that a major is selective:

- Capped
- High-demand
- Screening
- Selective



Campuses that use the term "Selective"	Campuses that use the term "Screening"	Campuses that use the term "High-demand"	Campuses that use the term "Capped"
UC Davis UC Irvine UCLA UC Merced UC Riverside UC Santa Barbara	UC Santa Cruz	UC Berkeley	UC San Diego

Each campus calls their "selective" majors by different names

Examples of selective majors at some campuses:

UCSB: If the major is a factor in admission it is considered selective. That includes majors with an audition - music and dance; majors with a supplemental application - all nine programs in the College of Creative Studies, and all five majors in the College of Engineering where space limited.

UCLA: Does not review by major for the College of Letters & Science; Additional supplemental applications are considered for majors in the specialty schools: Arts & Architecture; Music; Nursing; Theater, Film & Television. All applicants to the School of Engineering receive an additional review where performance in mathematics and science courses is considered.

UCSC: For freshman applicants, at this time, only the Computer Science B.S. and Computer Science B.A. majors are selective. Freshman applicants must list Computer Science as their primary major choice on the UC Application if they are interested in it.

UCB: Majors in the College of Engineering and Chemistry and the high demand majors in the College of Letters and Science and majors in the Haas School of Business.



Review process for selective majors

Does the major choice affect admission decisions?

IT DEPENDS!

Can depend on...

The campus student applies to and,

The major and academic school applied to

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Everyone's favorite response when it comes to higher ed... it depends!

For the UCs a determining factor is what campus the student is applying to and whether that campus considers major in the selection process. This can get more granular as well, major choice even within a specific campus may vary depending on the selection process for different academic schools, such as a school of engineering.

The biggest take away is each campus can provide specific insights on the role that a major may play in the selection process. Encourage students to research about specific majors they are interested in.

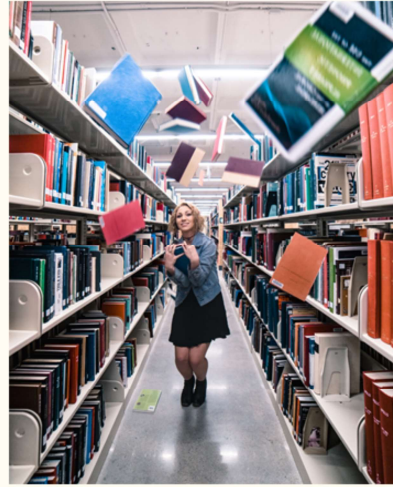
You can also find detailed information by campus in the UC Quick Reference Guide on pages 28-29

(https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf)

How are selective majors considered in the comprehensive review process?

Some factors campuses may consider...

- Activities, rigor of coursework, course selection, grades or discussion of subject matter that demonstrate an interest in the subject area of major
- Supplemental application materials if requested by the campus



For campuses that consider major in the review process, how will the major – especially those selective ones – be reviewed?

Please remember, each campus will approach the comprehensive review process independent of each other. All campuses will use the same [13 factors of evaluation](#) while reviewing applications, counselors and students are encouraged to review those factors no matter which major the student selects, including students applying as undeclared.

Campuses that consider major may use those 13 factors to look at...

- 1) Major interest, which can be coursework, activities, or discussion of experiences relevant to their major choice
- 2) Supplemental application materials such as portfolios, auditions, additional writing pieces, any other materials requested

Frequently asked question

**Are freshman applicants
admitted directly to their
major?**

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Are freshman applicants admitted directly to their major?

It depends...some campuses will admit freshman applicants directly to their major while others will admit students to the college/school.

This varies by campus and by college/school, specific information can be found in the Quick Reference Guide on pages 27-28.

https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf

Frequently asked question

Are all majors open to Freshman applicants?

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Are all majors open to freshman applicants?

Short answer is no...some majors may not be open to freshman applicants as there may be specific requirements students need to complete at the UC campus before they can declare a major.

See “Check Majors” website: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/campuses-majors/majors/>

Some majors and some of the UC campuses are not open to first-year (freshman) applicants.

Some majors admit students into “pre” status, which means that they will be officially admitted to the major upon completion of a specific GPA in prerequisite courses.

Unavailable majors

There are majors and degree paths that UCs offer that are not available to first-year applicants, but are available after they enroll.

For these students we recommend...

- Exploring majors in the same academic college/school
- Researching if their desired school has a recommended path to their planned major

Students need to check with each UC campus about the major they are interested in and if it is selective and/or unavailable to freshman applicants

We know that students trying to figure out what they are interested in or wanting something specific might seek out campuses that offer those programs, only to be confused when it isn't available as an option on the application.

Whether it's a more specialized biology program not available to first years or a BFA program that requires a later audition after the first year, it can be hard to learn that the program they are interested in requires patience.

Students should know that sometimes some of these programs require that students start in a specific closely related major and then change into their desired major, as an example at UC Riverside if a student wants to pursue a BS in Psychology, they should apply to the BA in Psychology program.

Typically, the individual schools or academic units will have more information on the path they most often see students take when changing into these majors that are not available to first year applicants.

Which UCs review alternate majors on the application?

- Students can select an alternate major at all UC campuses
- Not all UC campuses will guarantee a review of the alternate major
- Alternate majors are not a pipe dream!
- Students should consider whether or not the alternate major they are choosing is selective
- Alternate majors do not have to be related (and sometimes *should not* be related) to the first choice major

Students can list a selective major as an alternate major, but they will want to show their preparedness for that major as well as their first choice major.

Unfortunately there is no guarantee that a campus will be able to admit a student to their alternate major (if they are not admitted to their primary major) even if a campus allows an alternate major to be listed.

Alternate majors should not be used as a “backdoor” into a different, more selective major.

As mentioned in the previous slide, most campuses will not allow major changes into a selective/competitive major if the student was not admitted directly into the major.

More specific information by campus can be found on the [Quick Reference Guide](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf) on page 28.
https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/quick-reference-guide-to-uc-admissions.pdf



Preparing for a selective major

How to prepare for a selective major

Explore major **interest**

- Is there opportunity for additional coursework in this area of study?
- What activities, hobbies, or awards do they have or want to have that are related to this major?
- Where does their interest in this area come from?
- How does their future career path relate to this major?



Students getting ready to apply to a selective major first and foremost should have an interest in the subject matter and actually like the major they choose!

Students should not just select a major simply because one or more of their friends said they were applying to it.

The highly selective majors at UC campuses are challenging to get admitted to and challenging to change into. These are rigorous programs that lots of students want to pursue.

Let that interest show! Perhaps that means:

- 1) Taking an extra course(s) in the desired field of study. This could include community college courses/honors level courses.
- 2) Participating in some activities related to the field by participating in a student club or hobby related to their major
- 3) Be prepared to explain how they were exposed to this field and how their future career path relate to the major

All of these factors can help ground your student's preparation for their selective major choice and help them put their best self forward on the application.

How to become a competitive applicant for a selective major

- Details, details, details
- Know what is required (and meet those requirements)
- Keep track of important deadlines
- If given the option, select an alternate major



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Details:

- List all courses and grades as completely and accurately as possible including honors, AP, IB courses and exams.
- Provide as much relevant information as possible in Activities & Awards sections and PIQs related to selective majors.
- Utilize additional comments sections to provide context about academics, accomplishments, activities, and involvements

Requirements:

- Students should review requirements for admission and any additional requirements for their major well ahead of time and plan accordingly.
- Student should check to see if their major requires supplemental information, applications or auditions and keep track of any supplemental deadlines.

Alternate majors:

- Student should be strategic when choosing an alternate major and be comfortable completing their degree in that major if accepted to their alternate major.
 - Consider an alternate major that will align with ultimate career path goal.
- Keep in mind that some campuses will not allow major changes into a selective/competitive major if not admitted directly into the major.



Majors with auditions or supplemental materials

Auditions and supplemental applications

Students applying to majors requiring auditions or supplementals may be asked to submit more information following the submission of the UC application.

- **Deadlines may vary**
- **Students should continue to check their email after submitting!**



It is VERY important that students pay attention to their email. All UC campuses will use the student's email they listed on their application to contact them if they have questions about their application and/or they need the student to complete an audition or supplemental application.

Supplemental applications will be requested following the application submission period. Students should **carefully** review instructions and deadlines for submitting additional materials or signing up for auditions.

Students should also note that they often **cannot make changes** to their supplemental materials submission so they should review all parts of their supplemental materials prior to submitting.

Supplemental applications

Not all highly selective majors require supplemental information and not all majors that request supplemental information are highly selective.

Supplemental application materials are critical to the selection process.

Not all majors that are considered highly selective will ask for a supplemental applications.

Not all majors that request supplementals are considered highly selective or will show up on “most popular” lists for the campuses. However, supplementals often play a noteworthy role in the review of applicants to any majors asking for additional materials whether it be additional statements or an audition. Supplementals are usually **not** optional for these majors and students must be aware that if they wish to apply for these majors they must complete the supplemental application piece as instructed.

Supplemental applications

May include...

- Portfolio submission
- Auditions/interviews
- Additional written statements
- Work samples/resume
- Letters of recommendation
- Other information relevant to their chosen major

Supplemental applications will vary from major to major and from campus to campus.

Often even if two campuses are offering the same major and asking for a supplemental application, the items being asked for in those supplemental applications may be different.

It is important that students read the instructions for supplementals carefully so as not to miss any sections of a supplemental application or any deadlines.

Auditions for performing arts

- Attending an **in-person** audition following the submission of the supplemental application may be required.
- Not all music, dance, and theater programs require auditions, but many do. Students should check the requirements for their intended programs prior to applying.

Auditions are typically for performing arts students and may require students to attend **in-person** auditions following the submission of their supplemental application.

- Students will typically receive sign up instructions with audition dates and times after the application submission period has ended.
- Students should check their email regularly following the submission of their application

Not all Music, Dance, and Theater programs require auditions, but many do. Students should check the requirements for their programs prior to applying.

- Students should note that many **BFA** programs are **not** available to first-year applicants and will require an audition later on in the performing arts program, in which case they often will start in a **BA** program.



The undeclared major option

What is the undeclared major option?

The undeclared major option allows students to apply to a UC campus without choosing a specific major if a student is unsure about the area of study they want to pursue.



Benefits:

- Students have flexibility to explore different areas of study before declaring a major.
- Applying undeclared does not affect or hurt prospects of admission.

Campuses may offer an undeclared major option:

- 1) That allows a student to choose between any college/school available at that campus
- 2) Other campuses may offer an undeclared option within a specific college for students that want to pursue a general area of study
- 3) At UCSC, a student's major does not determine which college they are in. Students can select undeclared and then list a general area of study they are interested in.

Case study: Advising clusters

Advising clusters are groups of majors to help exploratory students identify potential majors at UC Santa Cruz. New freshman may, on their application for admission, identify an advising cluster to a 'proposed' major by the end of their first year, and must be formally qualified for and declared in a major by the end of the sophomore year.

Source: <https://advising.ucsc.edu/planning/your-major/clusters/>

- This option may not be open for all majors or areas of study such as engineering.
- May work for students who are interested in a broad area but have not decided on a specific major.
- Provides students with flexibility to explore similar majors and coursework before deciding on a final major choice.

Frequently asked question

**Will applying as
“undeclared” negatively
affect the review of my
application?**

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Students are often nervous about selecting the “undeclared” option. They believe that it will negatively impact how their application is reviewed.

Will applying “undeclared” negatively affect an applicant?

No, because campuses understand that freshman applicants may not:

- know what area of study they are the most interested in
- have decided what career they want to pursue
- have had opportunities to be exposed to the vast majority of majors that are available at UC.

Another FAQ about undeclared majors

Will it be easier for me to get admitted if I apply as “undeclared” and once I am at UC, I can then switch into the major I am really interested in?

Is it easier to be admitted “undeclared” and then switch to another major after enrolling at UC?

Not necessarily.

- Applying “undeclared” is not a back-door into a selective major
- Some majors require students apply directly to them when applying for admission
- Some specific majors may require an additional application process for students once they are at UC.

Pro tip: When not to select undeclared



Majors that require a supplemental application

- In these instances, the declared major does make a difference and will play a role in the selection process.
- There are particular majors that require students submit applications, such as performance-based majors like Dance or Theater.
- Letters of recommendation, essays, etc., may be required.

Selective majors

- Restrictions are likely to be in place that make it challenging for undeclared students to later change their major into selective majors (check with the campus on these restrictions before applying undeclared).



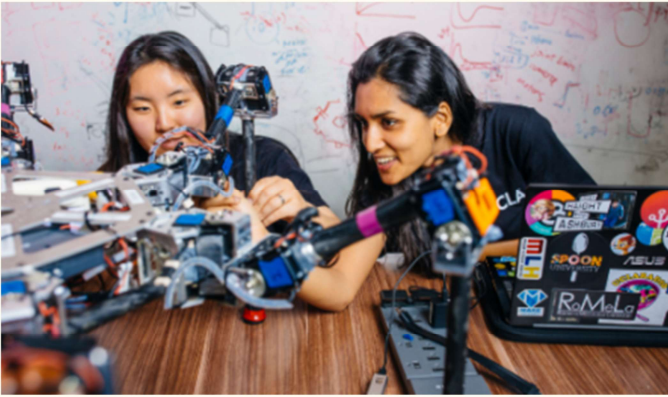
Three popular majors/fields and alternate pathways

Everyone wants the health fields or biology



- Psychology
- Public Health
- Physical Sciences
- Natural Resources

Computer Science seems to be popular too



- Data Science
- Statistics
- Mathematics
- Information Systems

...and of course everyone wants to go into Business!



- Global Studies
- Legal Studies
- Political Science
- Economics
- Political Economy

Friendly reminder #1

- **Students should not apply to a major they have no interest in.**
- Rather, try to help them understand which majors besides their first choice could lead to similar career goals.



Friendly reminder #2

- **Students may not be able to switch into a highly selective/competitive major after being admitted.**
- Students should select a major on UC Application that they are interested in or an Undeclared option.
- Less selective majors are NOT backdoors to selective majors.



Friendly reminder #3

- **Students do not have to apply to the same major at all UCs.**
- Different campuses often have different levels of selectivity, even for similar majors.





Beyond the major

Top priority for students

- Have an honest conversation with your students about their top priority.
- Campus, Major or Career?



Don't forget about minor programs

Minors can help students:

- Achieve their educational and career goals by supplementing their majors
- Broaden their education in another field that connects with their major
- Stand out when applying for jobs or graduate/professional school

Examples:

- **Education minor** for teaching career
- **Statistics minor** for data analyst career
- **Hydrology minor** for water/geology career



For example, students can major in Music and minor in Computer Science (if available) and still go into the computer programming career field.

Although not all UC campuses have a minor for each of their major programs, many do.

UCSC has a minor in Computer Science and Economics for example.

Students do not need to list their intended minor on the UC Application, but they should be applying with the idea of which UCs have minors in the field the student is interested in.

Minors are not required but can be a great way to supplement a student's education.

Undergraduate research opportunities

Research opportunities available for all majors

Hands on experience that applies classroom lessons to real world scenarios

Preparation for professional career tracks that includes resume and network building

The University of California is at its heart a research institution, and undergraduate students are a vital part of this mission. Students can do research with professors and/or conduct their own independent academic research at any UC campus, regardless of their major. Conducting research is not only a way to make the most of the UC experience but can make students stand out in graduate school applications or resumes. Research opportunities can be related – or not! – to a student’s major.

Other opportunities on and off campus

- Study abroad programs
- Pre-professional programs
 - Pre-Health
 - Pre-Law
- Student organized clubs
- Jobs
- Internships



There are a large number of opportunities on every UC campus, both on and off campus, that students can take advantage of in order to reach their educational and career goals.

Students should get involved in campus and community activities as much as possible, but without overwhelming themselves. This is also true at their high school, get involved outside the classroom as well as in it.

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Thank you!