



Academic Exploration Program A Guide For Parents

Many first year college students are unsure about a specific course of studies or a future career path. Choosing a major might require them to explore several options. We realize and appreciate that high school seniors may not be prepared to make a definite choice about an academic major. That's why we offer our Academic Exploration Program (AEP)

Goals of the AEP

- In addition to providing a foundation of support for academic success, the AEP is designed to help students:
- Develop a record of success and academic excellence in their field of study
- Plan electives and/or a minor which complement their major and enhances their future employability. The possibilities are endless: an accounting major with a computer science minor; a business administration major with a management concentration; an English major with a marketing concentration; a fine arts major with a communications studies minor; an education major specializing in early childhood education, etc.
- Challenge themselves with upper level courses, team projects, oral presentations, research projects, independent studies, cooperative education, and academic internships.
- Develop solid written and oral communication skills, research and analytic abilities and computer literacy, regardless of their major.
- Supplement their academic course work with extracurricular activities as well as volunteer work and service learning, especially those opportunities that develop leadership and other competencies that are highly valued by employers.

A Parent's Role in the Going-to-college Process

There are a variety of stories that families tell about the roller coaster ride of the “going-to-college” process, but what is clear is that parents have a very difficult and delicate role to play in college decision-making. How do parents find the right balance between indifference and over-invested interest and influence, in order to help their children in the college quest? The road to college is a journey that is both exciting and scary; there is no one right way to handle all the challenges. The following information can help families “enjoy the ride.”

Parent should begin by assessing their own ideas, motivations and desires in the college selection process, in order to separate their own aspirations from those of their children. Parents want the best for their children, but need to guard against mixing their own lives and goals with those of their children.

Parents can use the following questions from an article written by Mary K. Krogman in the *Journal of College Admissions* (1990). These questions can help to enhance self-

knowledge and encourage reflection on whether parents are supporting their children in their journey towards independence, or are trying to live through their children, directing them, and protecting them.

1. What are my wishes, hopes, or secret script for my child?
2. If I attended college what was that experience like?
3. If I did not go to college, how do I feel about that, and how does it influence my relations with my child?
4. What is my peer pressure like? Am I overly influenced by what my friends' children are doing, and where they are going to college?

Components of the Academic Exploration Program

Academic Advising

Academic advising is available to all degree-seeking students at the College. Traditional students are required to meet with their advisors before registering for classes. Registration clearance on the Web must be provided by the academic advisor. Each student's relationship with her or his advisor is important. Through discussion with and academic advisor and the use of services provided by the AEP, a student is better able to:

- Clarify academic, life and career goals
- Understand the nature and purpose of higher education
- Gain information about the educational options and requirements as well as policies and procedures
- Plan a program of study consistent with interests and abilities
- Select and schedule appropriate courses
- Integrate institutional educational objectives

Linked Courses

Students in AEP will be placed in linked courses. Linked learning enables students to examine how the perspectives of two or more disciplines contribute to understanding a subject under review, providing a unique opportunity to explore the language, reasoning, methodology, and distinctive intellectual contributions of participating departments and divisions. Linked learning also prepares students for problem-solving in professional and public settings.

The benefits students receive from linked learning include:

- Knowing other students in their classes. Students can ask questions, form study groups and get extra support when class projects are due and exams are scheduled.
- Quickly develop friendships – friends to hang out with, go to a movie, or join a campus club.
- Taking a seminar for new students that helps them learn the ropes of being a successful college student.
- Strengthening their critical thinking skills as they explore topics in depth. Students who have been a part of learning communities report that they were highly motivated to learn, found their learning to be meaningful, and, as a result, experienced success in college.

- Connecting with faculty and staff who take an interest in them and care about their success.

The Learning Center

The Learning Center is a centralized system of support that enhances the ability of every motivated student to succeed in his/her studies at the Mount. It encompasses a Writing Center, Math Center, Peer Tutoring Program, diagnostic and placement testing, instructional and adaptive software, courses in basic academic skills, individualized assistance with study skills and learning issues, and academic support for students with disabilities.

Career & Experiential Education Center

The Career and Experiential Education Center provides a comprehensive approach to career preparation, professional development, personal growth, and service to the community with experiential learning as the key component. Students learn skills in career decision making, personal reflection, assessment, and life planning while fostering the integration of academic and career goal development in a global context.

What are the Myths and Realities of Choosing a Major

- Many students believe that certain majors offer greater advantages in the job market than others do. Although this might be true in some areas, success in the job market often has more to do with motivation than with a particular major. Although future employment is an important consideration, we believe that it should be neither the most important nor the only criteria in selecting a major. Generally we recommend that students major in what they like and in which they have the skills to succeed. If you like the area of study you have chosen, you'll be motivated to work harder, your grades will be higher, and you will have greater opportunities.
- While it is true that for some careers there is a direct link between major and job/career (you cannot become a nurse without a nursing degree, or a physical therapist without a physical therapy degree), many careers do not require a specific major. You can work in business fields such as management, marketing, or human resources with liberal arts degrees in English, history, communication, or philosophy, etc. In many cases the degree is the start of the career. Most employers look for employees with certain skills:
 - Communication – writing, speaking and listening
 - Technology proficiencies
 - Organizational, management, teamwork and leadership abilities
 - Adaptability (changing with the times and a willingness to keep learning)
 - Analytical thinking and problem-solving.

How long will your son or daughter be in the Academic Exploration Program?

Students typically declare their major by March of their sophomore year. AEP advisors will guide students through the declaration procedures and deadlines.