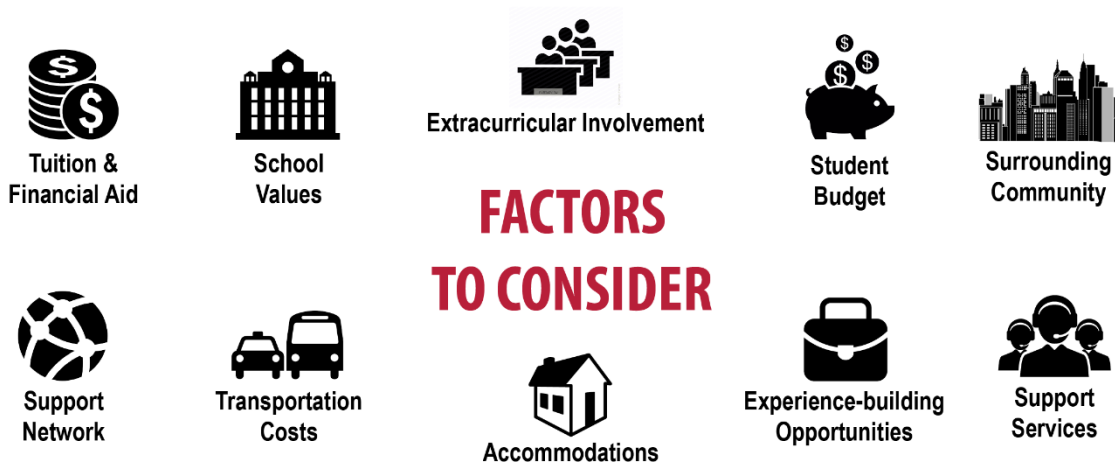# MAKING MAJOR DECISIONS

Selecting a university to attend is a big decision. Gathering information about universities and programs that you're interested in can help you weigh all your options. Keep reading for some helpful tips and considerations to make as you try to pick a program that is right for you.

FINDING A SCHOOL THAT FITS

Most programs are offered at more than one university, so you might find yourself torn between a few options. Here's a helpful exercise. Describe the experience you want to have. Using the factors listed below, write out your expectations of university, and then compare those to each school you're considering.

Here are some things to research or think about when choosing a school:

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Tuition & Financial Aid · School Values · Extracurricular Involvement · Student Budget · Surrounding Community · Support Network · Transportation Costs · Accommodations · Experience-building Opportunities · Support Services

CHOOSING A SUBJECT AREA

Once you've decided on where you want to go, you might have to pick a program to apply to. Here are a few important tips to keep in mind:

YOU CAN CUSTOMIZE YOUR DEGREE. If you're interested in both History and Math, you might not have to choose between the two! Most universities offer combinations of Majors and Minors, certificates, specialist combination programs, or even general degree programs that allow you to pick individual courses you are interested in.

STUDY WHAT YOU LIKE. Choose degree programs and courses based on what interests you. Studies show that you will get more out of your learning and discover opportunities in courses you genuinely enjoy going to. Taking courses you enjoy will also motivate you to work hard and strive to do well.

RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH

CAMPUS VISITS AND TOURS: Visit the campus to get a feel for the school and community atmosphere. Guided tours can tell you about school values, allow you to hear personal experiences from students themselves, and introduce you to the support services in place for students. You could even reach out to department representatives to get an idea of expected workload, student life, and school culture at each institution.

MAJOR MAPS: Major Maps are degree and career planning documents specifically designed for each major at Queen's University. They provide a yearly breakdown of considerations a student should make to maximize the value of their degree, culminating in a list of potential career outcomes from each major and skills that graduates learn through the course of their degree. While they are tailored for Queen's programs, then can still help you get ideas about programs at other schools too! Find them here: http://careers.queensu.ca/majormaps

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW CAN I FIND ALUMNI OR CURRENT STUDENTS TO SPEAK WITH ABOUT MY PROGRAM?
If you are unable to find someone who has studied in a program or specific university you're interested in, you can always reach out to the school for resources. Visit your program's webpage and seek out a contact email for general questions (often found under a "Contact Us" tab).

CAN I CHANGE MAJORS?
You might be afraid to commit to a major because it feels as if it is set in stone once you've declared. That's not necessarily the case- changing a major in your later years could often be as simple as taking extra courses to fill requirements. For more information on changing majors, check in with programs advising office for rules specific to each university.

HOW DO I FIND MY WAY THROUGH THIS DECISION PROCESS?
Staying organized can help ease your stress! Use the attached worksheets to organize you research, and help you sort out your findings to analyze the results and come to a decision that works for you. Check out the example worksheet to see a sample of how to use them. Use the research sheet to collect data, and then the decision matrix to clarify your thoughts.

CONCLUSION

There is no such thing as the perfect major, and there are often many different paths you can take to reach your career goals. While there are some programs that are designed to prepare students for specific, professional careers such as Computing or Nursing, the majority of degree programs are interdisciplinary and provide learning experiences and skills that can be applied to a variety of career options. Make sure you do your research and make use of advising resources available to help you make an informed decision!