**College Admissions: 5 Majors You Need to Choose Before You Apply**

Monday, September 28, 2015

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While many students will apply to colleges with a major designation of “undecided”, there are pitfalls to doing that. In larger universities, it can be VERY difficult to switch from the colleges of arts and sciences into the business or engineering college. Other times, a major like nursing or physical therapy may be filled and not have openings after freshman year. Occasionally, students will not even think when they are applying to a college that the school does not offer some of the majors that they may want to pursue. For instance, very few colleges have architecture at the undergraduate level. Thinking all of this through is critical before you finalize your college selections and fill out your apps. Here are some of the majors that usually require you to apply as a freshman or you will miss out.

**Engineering**

Engineering is usually found at full service universities as opposed to liberal arts colleges, so targeting the right schools is important. Most universities have a specific college of engineering to which you must apply as a freshman. Many will allow students to enter as an undecided engineering major and then determine an exact discipline after taking the introduction to engineering class.  So, while you usually don’t need to know if you want to specialize in civil, mechanical, electrical, biomedical or industrial when you  apply, you do need to know that you want to be an engineer. Math SAT scores and GPA are very important in the engineering admissions process. Most programs are also looking for students with calculus and strong biology, chemistry and physics grades. Some programs also require SAT II Subject Tests.

**Architecture**

Undergraduate architecture programs are few and far between. So, if you think you may want to pursue architecture, your college list needs to be focused on those colleges. Many of the programs require a studio art portfolio and prefer high school calculus and high SAT Math scores. Sitting for the AIA exam does require a Master’s degree today, and some universities offer a 5-year streamlined program.

**Health Sciences**

If you have aspirations to become a nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech pathologist or pharmacist, you usually need to decide that before you apply to college. While you may be able to pursue these professions later at a Master’s level, most undergraduate programs require that you apply as a freshman. It is usually very hard to transfer into one of these majors once you have matriculated at a large university. Most programs in these areas are highly selective and look for strong math scores on your SAT. Some require a math and/or science SAT II Subject Test. Keep in mind, that many of these professions (with the exception of nursing) require a Master’s degree, and some universities offer combined programs which can shorten the total number of years you spend in school. Check with each college before you apply to understand the duration of the program, the degree you will receive and your total costs.

**BFA Programs**

If you want to major in studio art, music, theatre or dance, there are two options, a BA or BFA program. A Bachelor of Fine Arts degree is considered a terminal degree whereas a Bachelor of Arts degree is often followed by an MFA (Master of Fine Arts). BFA programs are very rigorous and are typically more selective than BA programs. They usually require an audition or portfolio review for acceptance. Students audition or submit portfolios during the admissions process, and the exact requirements vary from college to college. This means that students need to hone their craft for several years before applying, create an artistic resume of their accomplishments, and spend the summer after 11th grade putting together audition or portfolio materials.

**Business**

Larger universities usually have a college of business. While some allow students to transfer in after freshman year, others have very few spots open sophomore or junior year. That means that your best chance to pursue a business degree is by acceptance to that major as a freshman. Keep in mind that many business colleges within a large university are more selective than the college of liberal arts.  Admission committees are usually looking for a higher GPA, high school calculus and strong SAT scores.

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