



Staff Work

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## Test Drive Your College Major

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## Test Drive Your College Major

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### Disciplines

Higher Education

# Test Drive Your College Major

Nov 18, 2021

A few months ago, I sat down with a high school senior who had recently finished taking Introduction to Business online at Dordt University in Sioux Center as one of his electives. I asked him why he chose to take the university course as a high school student, and his answer surprised me. The student explained his primary interest is art, but he enrolled in a business course because he wanted to learn more about business to determine whether he would choose it as his minor in college.

The curious art student is not alone. The ACT completed a study of students who graduated high school in 2013 to measure how many students change their minds about their major. The study found that 49 percent of 2013 high school graduates reported the same major as college sophomores compared to what they intended to take when they took the ACT ([www.act.org/content/act/en/research/reports/act-publications/college-choice-report-class-of-2013/part-three-persistence-and-transfer/planned-declared-major-consistency.html](http://www.act.org/content/act/en/research/reports/act-publications/college-choice-report-class-of-2013/part-three-persistence-and-transfer/planned-declared-major-consistency.html)). Approximately half of the students changed their minds.

Today's students still struggle with the tough decision of what to study in university. Students face the pressure of choosing the right major to make the best of their college experience. In my role of helping students navigate their dual credit course selection, I find that undecided students make low-risk choices. They choose general courses required for all majors — a wise, practical decision. However, based on my three years as the director of online education at Dordt, I wonder if students should instead lean into their interests and choose a dual credit course in an area that guides their decision to choose a major. Rather than waiting for inspiration to strike, students could take a test drive to experience their field of interest.

Dordt offers online courses in several majors for high school students to test drive their interests and explore their calling. The Dual Credit program offers courses in the fields of business, education, nursing and social work, providing an opportunity for high school students to experience a major before committing to it in college. The courses include experiences that purposefully immerse the students in the field. For example,

Introduction to Education includes a practicum experience where students spend 10 hours in a classroom learning about what it is like to be a teacher.

Dordt built the Dual Credit program throughout the past three years to provide high school students with the opportunity to get started in college and pursue their interests. High school juniors and seniors can sign up whether they attend a local high school, homeschool or live anywhere else in the country. Students use the Dual Credit program to pursue electives, get ahead, make more room in their college schedule, graduate early or challenge themselves.

Circling back to our curious art student, he further explained how Introduction to Business guided his thinking about studying business. The course exposed him to various fields of business. As a result, he learned that he doesn't like accounting but could see himself integrating his interest in art with a career in marketing. I'm glad this student took a chance to explore something new. His experiment allowed him to move forward into his college career with greater confidence.