

## CHAPTER 6

# CHOOSING A CAREER PATH AND MAJOR

**Y**ou may be seeking a college degree to achieve more money, job security or a promotion, or because it is a lifelong dream. No matter the reason, it helps to think carefully about *who you are* and *how you wish to use your degree before* you choose a degree and major.

Let me share how Amalia did this:

When she graduated high school, Amalia was eight months pregnant and working a part-time job. College was just “not an option.” Yet, once her son started school, she began to think about a career. Her part-time job was fun, but it wasn’t what she saw herself doing for the rest of her life.

Finally, she found a full-time job in a healthcare. She soon realized that most everyone in her position had more education. Although the position didn’t feel right for her, the fear of someone asking about the degree...she didn’t have... paralyzed her for ten years.

She said, “I felt trapped. I felt like the job was ruining my life and that I was not in control!” Then she attended a seminar at Bay Path where she took a personality inventory to determine her fit with her career.

Amalia’s scores showed clearly how much she was changing her natural self to fit in at work. Overwhelmed, she cried. The instructor whispered, “Tears are just a sign that change needs to happen.”

Her inventory had shown her the kind of career she would most enjoy, but she needed a degree. Amalia went straight home and filled out that college application. She chose a major and degree aligned with who she really was. Now she says, she has “real control” over her life.

Bay Path University’s career development staff offered these three strategies for choosing the right major and career for you.

### **1. Figure out what excites you.**

If you find that you are enjoying an experience – ask yourself, “Why do I seem to enjoy this so much?” And, “What is it about this experience that seems to ignite my passion?”

And, don’t forget to check with your college or university to see if you can get free personality and career assessments.

### **2. Choose a degree and major that matches your personality and passion!**

Choose two or three majors or careers that really interest you and seem to ignite your passion and then find out what the day-to-day work is like. Ask yourself if it matches your personality and the ways you like to work.

### **3. Try out your career choice!**

Ask the university if there are ways you can gain practical experience as part of your college work and get college credit for it. Also, try to network and shadow someone in the profession for a day or two. It's a great way to see what it's really like.

#### **The next step is planning to succeed.**

As you start to plan, first be sure to answer these questions:

- What is my goal? What do I really want out of this career?
- What are the educational requirements? Am I willing to do what it takes?
- What are my geographical limitations? Am I willing to relocate or travel?
- What is the timetable? How long can I wait to enter the field?
- Now ask yourself, what won't I compromise?

Be honest with your answers and develop your plans based on them.

#### **The final step requires building your safety net.**

Even if you have found your passion, and created your plan, you will need to create a safety net because something always happens. That safety net can be family and friends, staff and faculty at your college, members of religious or community organizations, colleagues at work, mentors, and others who will be there for you when things go off track. Get their buy-in upfront by sharing your plan.

Keep in mind that as you follow these steps the single most important thing is to be honest with yourself and remember to enjoy the process. This is an exciting time in your life.

Remember to:

- **find your passion,**
- **know yourself and what excites you,**
- **develop a plan and stick to it,**  
**and**
- **involve others in achieving your goals!**