



# Career Services

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The College of St. Scholastica  
1200 Kenwood Avenue Duluth, MN 55811 218.723.6085 Tower 2150  
[www.css.edu/career.xml](http://www.css.edu/career.xml)

## Talking with Parents about Career Choices

Do your parents seem more anxious than you are about making a decision on your major and career? Are their “helpful questions” beginning to seem more like “annoying nagging?” Following are some suggestions to help you communicate with your parents about your career choices.

### Keep Your Parents Informed

- **Take time to occasionally update your parents on your career thoughts and decisions.** You may have been considering changing majors for over a year, but if you haven't let your parents in on this debate, they may think you are jumping to a quick conclusion when you inform them that you are going to change majors.
- You may or may not want to share every detail of your life with your parents, but it will benefit you to tell them about some of the activities you are doing to help you make career decisions. Let them know if you are working with a career counselor, talking with your academic advisor, conducting informational interviews, reading a book on career opportunities or selecting volunteer work that will allow you test out a career. **Parents are much more patient when they know you are actively taking steps to make decisions on a major and career.**

### Actively Involve Your Parents In The Process

- **Take this opportunity to ask your parents about their career.** What do they like/dislike about their current position? How did they make their decisions on careers? What would they do different if they had the chance to do it all over again?
- **Do they have friends working in the fields you are considering?** Ask if they will assist you in setting up a time to conduct an informational interview with this person.
- **Ask your parents what they think your strengths are.** Ask them what has led them to believe these are your talents. Be prepared to listen to their answers without judging their response.

### Educate your parents

- It may have been some time since your parents went through this process. Tell them that you are not trying to be ornery or obstinate when you answer “I don't know,” to their questions. Explain that you really do not know and that you need time to take a look at your interests, skills and values as well as research career and majors before making your decision. And more importantly, **remind them that it will probably take more than a week or even a month to make these decisions.**
- In preparation for, or in response to their questions, **gather and share pertinent data with your parents.** For example, what types of careers are available for your major? What is the difference between your major and related majors? What is the average starting salary for a college graduate in your field? Is graduate school necessary to enter the field you are considering? What was the placement rate for your major last year?
- Your parents want you to be happy and to be successful. However, **sometimes parents need a gentle reminder that what might make them happy won't necessarily make you happy.** Parents have a wealth of wisdom and valuable insight, but in the end, you are the one that will be getting up every Monday to go to your job.
- Explain why you believe this will be a good career path for you. **Try to use tangible, concrete and specific information.** For example, “*Mom, I think I am going to declare Communications as my major. I have always enjoyed writing, and my work for the campus newspaper has shown that I am a very talented writer. My Professor for Human Communication suggested I consider a writing career and a career counselor has helped me explore the career opportunities available for this major.*” This “marketing” of yourself and the major/career can be a challenging task, but it will be excellent practice for your first interview where you will be expected to convince the employer why you are right for the job!