

# Assessment Note

Office of Academic Assessment and Institutional Research  
*Ball State University*

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## Why Do Students Change Their Major?

Approximately 1,088 Ball State students who matriculated in Summer 2000 or Fall 2000 had changed their major by the beginning of the Fall 2001 term. Because we were interested in why students had changed their major, we selected a random sample of 200 students to interview by telephone. We were able to find usable local telephone numbers for 171 of these students. Of the 88 students with whom we talked, 75 students completed our survey. The findings of this survey regarding students' reasons for changing their major are explored below.

### 1. Most students changed their major because of the attractions associated with the new major.

Eighty-eight percent of students indicated that a major reason for changing their major was the interesting career possibilities of the new major. Three-fourths of students reported that a major reason for changing their major was that the courses were more interesting (75%). Sixty-six percent of students indicated that having many job openings in the new field was a major reason for changing their major. Four out of ten students reported that a major reason for their major change was that faculty in their new major seem interested in students (40%). (Table 1)

Table 1

	Major Reason
	<i>percentages</i>
<b>About Your New Major</b>	
Career possibilities interest me	88.1
Courses are more interesting	74.6
Many job openings in the field	65.7
Faculty seemed interested in students	40.3
Contact with faculty	38.8
Easy to relate to other students	35.8
Advisors are well-informed and helpful	34.3
Had no difficulty getting into courses	29.9

**2. The majority of students did not change their major because they were dissatisfied with their previous major.**

Thirty percent of students reported that a major reason for changing their major was that they did not like the potential jobs in the field. One-fourth of students indicated that a major reason was that courses were not interesting (26%). (Table 2)

**Table 2**

	<b>Major Reason</b>
	<i>percentages</i>
<b>About Your Old Major</b>	
Did not like potential jobs in the field	29.6
Courses were not interesting	25.5
Courses were too time consuming	14.5
Workload was too much	13.0
Too few jobs in the field	11.1

**3. Surprisingly, most students who changed their major had very little experience in their previous major.**

Although most students indicated they had changed their major after they began coursework at BSU (92%), they also reported that they had little or no experience in their previous major. Sixty-four percent of the students reported they had taken no more than two courses in their major before they made a change. (Table 3)

**Table 3**

	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>Number of major courses taken before deciding to change majors</b>	
0-2 courses within the major	63.8
3-5 courses within the major	22.2
6-8 courses within the major	5.6
9-11 courses within the major	4.2
12-15 courses within the major	4.2