

# Should I risk college choice as a 'pre-major'?

A common question that pops up quite a bit at college application time is "What does it mean to be a pre- (fill in blank of a major such as business or engineering) major?" The time has come for me to tackle this one since it is helpful not just for seniors applying this application season, but also for juniors and even sophomores who are starting to explore which colleges are a good fit for them.

Being able to access your major of choice can be a critical factor in choosing the right college so understanding precisely what it means to be a pre-major is essential.

First, I should clarify that I am not referring to majors such as pre-med or pre-nursing that use the "pre" to signal that the major is a pathway to graduate school in these fields.

Instead, it means that a student is admitted to that college/university for that major, but on a conditional basis. Usually the student will need to take certain major-related introductory courses (which count toward graduation) and demonstrate ability by meeting minimum GPA standards in order to be admitted to that major. Sometimes the department only admits students on a pre-major basis, but other times it admits a subset of students directly while the rest are admitted with pre-major status.

Along the path from



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pre-major to major there are often pre-major advisers to help students navigate this transition. Once these conditions are met, students can apply to become a full major, typically starting in their second or third years.

Requirements in the application process vary but tend to include a statement of interest in addition to grades that meet the standards. Keep in mind, though, that meeting these GPA requirements does not always guarantee admission; plus, it may not be as easy as to attain the minimum GPA as it sounds.

So, what is the minimum GPA required? Again, it varies depending on the selectivity of the college itself and the type of major. At the University of Arizona, for instance, family studies and human development is a pre-major, and students are required to have a minimum GPA of 2.6 in the prerequisite courses in order to apply to be a full major.

At Baylor University, students admitted as pre-psychology majors must attain a 2.25 in their major-related courses in order to be admitted to the

psychology major. And at University of Oregon, students declare pre-major international studies, or PINS, and then once the PINS prerequisites are completed with a minimum GPA of 3.0, students may gain access to the international studies major.

Another example of this type of pathway is the engineering program at the University of Washington. Students who are pre-engineering must take the required courses, which may take anywhere from one to three years, and then they can apply to the engineering program. Since it is a very competitive program, students are warned from the beginning that admission to the major is not guaranteed even when the minimum requirements are met.

And, it is important to note that meeting the minimum GPA can be quite challenging and the competition to do well may be very strong. With respect to engineering and computer science, in particular, I have heard these courses referred to as "weeder" courses since they may (but not always) act as a way to "weed out" certain students who struggle with the rigorous curriculum.

I should also note that sometimes pre-major is a path to help students explore and then declare the right major for them. The pre-major studies at Seattle

University, for instance, is specifically for students who do not know what they want to major in yet. They "provide the framework, programming and resources necessary to help students make informed decisions about choosing a major."

Where and which majors does this pre-major status occur? To my knowledge, there is not a nice and easy centralized database for researching this issue. In a nutshell, it seems to be mostly a large, public school phenomenon, but not always; and it seems to be an issue with competitive and/or technical majors such as computer science and engineering, but not always.

So, is pre-major status worth it? For many students, starting as a pre-major is actually a non-issue. They want to go to that particular college/university and do not mind waiting to declare/be accepted into the major. They are willing to accept the uncertainty that it may not work out.

For others it is — or maybe should be — a cause for concern. What happens if the GPA requirements are not met? What happens if they are unable to gain acceptance to this major? They may happily choose a different major in the end, but it is important to consider this as a real possibility. In this case, students would need to find an alternative major.

The pros of pre-majors include giving students a chance

to see if they are truly interested in a subject; providing a chance for students to determine if they are cut out for pursuing the major; and gaining access to pre-major advising.

The cons include the added stress related to the GPA requirements/additional application process, as well as the uncertainty of whether students will eventually be admitted to their desired major. If forced to choose an alternate, there may not be programs of interest at that school.

In the end, this becomes a major versus school decision — what is more important: attending that particular college/university regardless of major, or a guaranteed spot in your desired major? It is a very individual decision.

So, do the research, talk to advisers within the major at the college, ask for data about the number of students who are eventually admitted, and maybe even try to connect to students who have successfully made it to full major to hear how the process went. No matter which path you choose, though, just remember that there is a right college for you!

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## LAWSUIT: Attorney says filing premature

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The lawsuit was filed prior to the November election but voters nonetheless approved the senior housing development, which was on the ballot as Measure L.

Voter approval allows for development of 74 acres of agricultural land north of Covell Boulevard and just west of Sutter Davis Hospital to provide up to 560 dwelling units, including for-sale, single-family detached homes and affordable senior apartments, with 80 percent of units restricted to buyers and renters aged 55 and over.

Because the development required a General Plan amendment redesignating the land from agricultural to residential and mixed-use, voters had the final say in a vote under Measure R and approved the project by a vote of 55.7 percent to 44.3 percent. But final details of the project — including a development agreement — will be worked out later.

In announcing back in October the City Council's decision to defend against the lawsuit, Mayor Brett Lee said, "any program developed by West Davis Active Adult Community would be required to comply with fair housing laws."

"The city has a long history of opposing discrimination in housing and the city believes the case is without merit," Lee said at the time.

The lawsuit, Boutin argues in papers filed in U.S. District Court on Tuesday, "was prematurely filed addressing issues that may or may not ever occur."

Specifically, he argued, "for a justiciable controversy to exist, five events must first come to pass."

Those events are:

1. Davis voters must approve Measure L.
2. The Davis City Clerk

must certify the election results.

3. The parties to the proposed development agreement — the city and the developers — must execute an agreement that includes the Davis-based buyers program.

4. Taormino must develop the local-connection requirements and verification procedures, subject to approval by the city, and implement them; and those procedures would have to be in violation of fair housing laws and exclude the plaintiff as a potential purchaser.

5. The city of Davis must issue a building permit.

"To reiterate, at the time of the filing, Sept. 24, not one of the five necessary conditions had occurred or been satisfied. At this time, conditions 2, 3, 4 and 5 have not been satisfied," Boutin argued. "Moreover, it remains unforeseeable whether conditions 2 through 5 will ever materialize or be satisfied."

"This case was at the time of filing premature, and remains premature."

Additionally, Boutin argues, the proposed development agreement enunciates that the local-connection requirements and verification procedures for the project, if any, must comply with all federal and state fair housing requirements.

Thus, he argues, even assuming that a Davis-based buyers program is included in the development agreement, that agreement already explicitly mandates strict compliance with all applicable fair housing laws.

A hearing on the matter is scheduled for Jan. 24 in U.S. District Court.

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## TAX: County could use extra space

From Page A1

General and Accumulated Capital Outlay funds will be allocated 50 percent to the county and 50 percent to the city.

■ Property tax revenue allocated to County Road Fund No. 2 will be allocated 100-percent to the city.

■ The county will receive 15 percent of the city's Bradley Burns Sales and Use Tax revenue from sales made inside the annexed areas.

■ The city will receive all property tax currently allocated to the Springlake Fire Protection District from the annexed area.

■ For the West Davis Active Adult Community only, the city will provide a \$12,000 annual contribution to the county for use in emergency-services planning and operations, adjusted annually up or down by changes in consumer price index, not to exceed 5 percent.

■ The developments will pay the county's facilities impact fee.

■ The city and county will partner and cooperate on the following issues: Improving drainage at the access to the water tank at John Jones Road and a traffic-calming analysis to determine the need for and deliver traffic calming

for John Jones Road/County Road 99 from Covell Boulevard to County Road 29.

■ Additionally, the city and county will collaboratively address shared interests including agriculture/urban interface, public health, infrastructure and public services. These discussions will include land use planning issues, such as future city or county General Plan updates for areas on the periphery of the city, particularly regarding the northwest quadrant.

### Moving in?

When they consider approving the agreement next Tuesday, county supervisors also will consider a separate agreement negotiated by the county with developer David Taormino in connection with the West Davis Active Adult Community. That agreement includes a contribution of \$1.25 million toward development of a new or expanded Adult Day Health Center to enhance services for the aging population in Yolo County.

For several years, the county has been grappling with the need for more space for the Adult Day Health Center, which provides a range of services

for individuals and families facing challenges related to dementia, chronic medical diagnoses, mental illness and brain injury. The current center, located in Woodland, is not large enough to serve all the adults seeking services there.

Carson said Tuesday the county is pursuing the idea of establishing a new adult day health center on the grounds of the West Davis Active Adult Community.

"It's by no means certain," Carson said, "but the county is very mindful that wherever this ends up, they will ensure there is good and even better access to Davis residents to obtain those services."

The separate agreement between Taormino and the county also includes funding for construction and dedication of a 10-foot-wide bike path connecting the Binning Tract to the West Davis Active Adult Community.

"These agreements are the result of careful collaborations between the city of Davis, Yolo County and the project applicants," Saylor said.

"All parties worked in good faith driven by the broader interests of our shared community. I am pleased with the tax sharing framework, commitments to local bike

projects and future traffic mitigations, and housing and services for our growing senior population. Like our recent agreements between the city and UC Davis, this agreement shows what we can do when we work together."

Provenza, meanwhile, said the agreements "balance the needs of both the city and the county to ensure adequate funding for critical services."

"We appreciate the developer's commitment to provide funding for a new or expanded adult day health care center," Provenza said. "The current facility is inadequate to serve the growing number of seniors and dependent adults who can remain in their homes with the assistance of a facility for medically needy adults. A new or expanded facility will double the number of persons we are able to serve."

"This commitment is consistent with the mutual goal of the county, the city of Davis and the developer to provide improved services to our aging population," Provenza said.

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