

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



## MLK Newsletter

Volume 2

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Martin Luther King Jr.  
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### A Message from the Associate Director, José Beruvides

Welcome to the Fall 2002 MLK Newsletter. In this issue, the MLK advisers and peer adviser provide you with their unique insights into the college experience. Whether discussing the benefits of an internship or exposing the myths of major selection, these articles are meant to help you reflect on the choices you will make in your academic career. Have a productive and enjoyable semester!

### Inside this issue:

Majorly Undecided	2
Maria's Summer Internship	3
Yes, You can Use Your Brain in College for other things than classes...	4
Study Abroad, Is it for Me?	5
MLK Photos	6

### Important Dates

<b>December 13</b> .....Last day of instruction
<b>December 16 -21</b> .....Final exams
<b>January 21</b> .....Spring semester classes begin
<b>February 3</b> .....Application deadline for Spring 2003 graduation

### A Mismatch Between Degree and Career: But that's OK!

By Michelle Steiner, Senior Advisor

I finished my undergraduate career with a double major in psychology and sociology, with a minor in women's studies. But at the end of the day, I couldn't tell you what I really wanted to do with my life.

However, since I took all that time to complete those particular majors and that particular minor, and hey, I liked to help people, I decided that the most logical thing to do was to go out into the working world, and apply for positions that seemed to focus on psychology- and sociology-related "stuff." That is, I applied to work with "troubled" populations of people at different kinds of institutions: children with emotional and psychological disorders, adolescents at a home for deviant youth, adults at a mental care facility, etc. Many potential employers wouldn't hire me because I didn't have an advanced degree. Others hired me, and I found quite quickly that I would rather beat my head against a wall than spend my time doing what they required of me. I felt lost. I felt frightened. My degree had centered around helping people,

and I really enjoyed my undergraduate courses, but all signs from the working world suggested that I was in the wrong career. Was I going to have to go BACK to get another undergraduate degree, so I would be competitive for other job prospects?

I started looking outside my major focus, hoping that someone would take pity on me and allow me into their world, even if it didn't necessarily coincide with my world. I applied for a coaching position at a local high school. I figured that it was a far shot – I had never coached. I had never taught. The one thing I thought I had going for me was that I had played sports beginning in elementary school, and continuing all the way through college. I got the job.

OK. Good. I now had a coaching position. But I also needed another source of income. So I decided to risk the business world, to see how I liked it and how it liked me – to see if it would

*(Continued on page 3)*

## "Majorly" Undecided? : Major Myths

By Jeannie Stumne, Academic Advisor

Are you having difficulties deciding on a major? Do family and friends ask you what you're going to school for and you don't know yet? If so, you are not alone. Statistics have shown that, nationally, 20%- 60% of entering college students are undecided regarding their major and 50%-70% will change their major/career goals at least once during their academic career. This means that most college students experience indecision at some point. With over 150 majors at the U of M and the fast-paced, competitive and constantly changing job market, it is no wonder that students have difficulties deciding on a major.

There are many myths associated with majors and careers that cause college students to become confused and nervous to make a "major" decision...

### Major Myths

● ***There is a corresponding academic major for each specific career field and it's impossible to enter most career fields unless you chose that matching major.*** Most career fields don't require a specific major, and you can use a major in new and innovative ways. Most college majors don't offer specific preparation for a single type of work. Choice of major is only one factor in determining your future employment and career direction. The skills you acquire through your coursework, personal traits, your experiences (internships, jobs, extracurricular activities, volunteer opportunities) and your knowledge of the field play a large role in future employer's decision-making.

● ***Choosing a major means giving up all the others.*** There are many ways to combine your interests in more than one area. It is possible to complete a double major, have a minor (or two), design your own degree program or go on to graduate or professional school. You may also want to consider taking elective courses, joining a student organization, studying abroad or volunteering to integrate all of your interests into your college career. Take advantage of the resources on campus while you're here!

● ***The major I pick now will determine my lifelong career.*** Studies have shown that people will have anywhere from 3 to 5 different careers in their lifetimes (careers, not jobs!). People change, careers change. Many jobs that exist today will be performed differently in the future and new types of jobs are emerging. The emphasis in career planning should be on transferable skills that employers want graduates to have in order to adjust to the changing and new careers.

If you're having difficulties making decisions regarding your major use the resources that are available to you at the U of M. Here are some suggestions:

- Meet with your MLK advisor to discuss possible majors and their requirements.
  - Talk with a departmental advisor in the major(s) you're interested in to learn more about the major.
  - Use the resources in the Career & Community Learning Center located in 135 Johnston Hall. They have workshops and career assessments.
  - Research majors on the web.
  - Make an appointment to see a career counselor in the UCCS.
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## My Summer Internship

By Maria Lee, Peer Advisor

This summer, I was able to get an internship with Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC). I found out about the internship from the Career and Community Learning Resource Center's newsletter (CCLC). My internship was in downtown, St. Paul. I worked in the company's finance department. It was a great experience!

I learned so much from this experience! I learned about the field. I learned about the company. I learned about the software and programs they used. I got to work with some great people who were there to help me out whenever I had a question. I also got to talk to people in the department I worked in and found out how they started with their careers and if they liked their jobs. I even got to talk to people outside the department and learned what they did. While on the internship, I had a chance to have breakfast with the CEO. That was exciting and interesting! Also, I got to take American Sign Language classes for two hours every week during work. The classes were great! Not only that, but I was paid well!

Not all internships offer a lot of benefits but having an internship is worth it. Like most jobs, the internship might start out slow and sometimes there isn't much for you to do. But look on the bright side: You get to learn about the field, which can definitely help you determine if it would be the right thing for you. Another great thing about having an internship is that the company might ask you to work for them. Having an internship will also look good on your resume. The best thing about an internship is the hands-on experience. You learn so much from it! So if you are thinking about getting an internship, go for it!

If you would like more information on internships, go to the Career and Community Learning Center, which is located at 135 Johnston hall. You can also find internships through their website: <http://www.cclc.umn.edu>. Other places you can find internships are: the MLK weekly emails, the MLK website: [www.class.umn.edu/mlk](http://www.class.umn.edu/mlk), and the Learning Resource Centers.

### A Mismatch between Degree and Career...

*(Continued from page 1)*

give me a chance. I applied to work in a banking environment. I had no business background. I had no banking experience. The only thing I thought I had going for me was that I had a decent GPA in college. I got the job.

As I worked as a coach, and at the bank, I realized something very important – I was marketable. I had talents that employers were looking for, like communication skills, people skills, creative and analytical thinking skills. The actual coaching/banking information was something that my employers could teach me on site. What employers were searching for was someone that possessed qualities, skills, and talents that I learned in undergrad, as I was completing a degree in psychology, sociology, and women's studies.

I eventually decided to go back to school and get a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology. I knew from my previous experience that psychology in the pure sense of

the word was not really for me. But I also knew that an advanced degree would allow me access to the upper echelons of either the academic or the business world. Throughout my graduate career, I've learned that I can teach, mentor, advise, help a friend start a business, conduct research, and make a difference in people's lives. Employers recognize my skills and talents for what they are – general-purpose skills that are easily transferred from one sector to another.

The moral to this story? Your Liberal Arts education equips you with tools to succeed in a variety of positions, whether the positions coincide with your major focus, or they don't. Next time when you're researching that computer job you think you want, and you're certain that you need a computer science undergrad degree to get there, ask people who hold that kind of position what degree they have under their belt. Chances are good that he'll be a History major (like the CEO of Imaginet, a leader in e-Business development and consulting for Fortune 1000 companies). Or she'll be an English major (like the Sr. Creative Associate/IT Specialist at High Point Creative).

## Yes, you can use your brain in college for things other than classes...

By Ellen Sunshine, Academic Advisor

While you're running around from class to class, East bank to West bank, studying hour upon hour, it's easy to forget some very basic things that will help keep you going here at the U. We like to call it 'common sense.'

- 1. ALWAYS carry an umbrella with you.** This one is my favorite. We live in Minnesota, famous for its unpredictable weather—it could be 80 and sunny out one minute and pouring rain the next. Be prepared...throw an umbrella in your bag and keep it in there year round. Don't be caught unprepared on your way to class and have to sit for an hour soaking wet. It's not fun.
- 2. Turn your cell phones OFF.** (Or at least put it on vibrate.) When you walk into class, into an appointment, and into a study area, **TURN YOUR CELL PHONES OFF.** This is out of respect for your instructors, fellow classmates, and advisors. If you do 'forget' to turn your phone off and it rings in the middle of class, don't answer it—turn it off. If it was really important, whoever it was will call you back.
- 3. Your friends and family are NOT academic advisors.** People around you might mean well when they tell you what classes you should or shouldn't take, what the requirements are for certain programs, or what U of M policies & procedures do or do not exist. There is a very strong chance that those people are wrong. You should always double check with your advisor before making any decisions based on what you heard from someone else.
- 4. Get some sleep!** In order for you to function in the classroom, while studying, and on exams, your body needs sleep. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, if your body's eating and sleeping needs aren't met, other needs such as focusing and learning, self-esteem, belonging, etc. cannot begin to be fulfilled. Don't pull all-nighters—they only throw off your body's natural cycle and lower the resistance of your body's immune system.



## Study Abroad, is it for me?

By Keli Lerdal, Academic Advisor

Four years ago when I began life at the University of Minnesota this question was one that I asked myself. It did not take me long to answer with an enthusiastic “YES,” so in the Fall of 2000 I spent my days studying at the University of Habana in Habana, Cuba. The four months that I studied there proved to be one of the best experiences of my life thus far. I met many wonderful people from across the United States, and the World. Also, academically I received a full semester’s worth of credit toward my undergraduate major. In the end the experience actually increased the rate in which I was able to finish my degree.

So now the question is, what can study abroad do for you? If you answer yes to one of more of the following questions, studying abroad may be right for you.

- Do you want to have the experience of living in another country?
- Do you need to take care of the language requirement and think living in a country where that language is spoken would help you?
- Do you desire to meet people from other parts of the world?
- Does living next to the ocean, or in the mountains sound fun to you?
- How about standing ten feet from animals like zebras and elephants that you can only see in zoos in the United States?
- Do you want to live in a castle in England?

These are just a few of the benefits of studying abroad. The Global Campus office provides in-depth information on programs all around the world. They also have advisors who are willing to sit down and explore with you the many options that you have at your fingertips. Just think, with some careful planning you could be exploring the Amazon rainforest at this time next fall. The Global Campus office is located in 230 Heller Hall — or visit them on the web at <http://www.UMabroad.umn.edu/>



## MLK Students and Staff



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We're on the Web!  
[www.class.umn.edu/mlk](http://www.class.umn.edu/mlk)