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More than 1 major could benefit students in work field

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Nearly one in 10 K-State students pursues two or more majors, which could be beneficial to them in the work field, professionals say.

A 1999 K-State alumna, Laura Henrichs, who now works as a corporate recruiter for PriceWaterhouseCoopers, LLP, in Salt Lake City, said having two majors -- nutrition and kinesiology -- benefited her greatly during the interview process.

"They mentioned in the interview that it wasn't necessarily what they were in, but that they had them," she said, "even though they're not related to my job."

Henrichs said that now, working in Human Resources, she looks at resumes of prospective employees. She said it was not easy to find a job in her major, so it was profitable to have two degrees.

"It's a very positive aspect to have on your resume," she said. "I look at resumes all day. If they have two majors, that's a definite positive."

K-State offers 140 different undergraduate majors, and of the 22,396 students enrolled, 2,071 have two or more academic tracks.

Although Henrichs said having two or more majors definitely is worthwhile, Tracey Fraser, director of Career and Employment Services, said the advantages of a double major depend upon students' career interests.

That includes whether they want to go to graduate school and what their long-term goals are after finishing their undergraduate degree.

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"I can't say it's better. I don't think you can say it's one over the other. It really has to be individualized per person," she said. "If you want to be a graphic artist, you need to have skills associated with that particular field. Mechanical engineering clearly is different.

"Everybody has the potential of taking skills and knowledge that can be applied in different arenas."

In addition to the typical majors, K-State offers seven secondary majors -- women's studies, Latin American studies, natural resources and environmental sciences, international studies, industrial and labor relations, American ethnic studies and gerontology.

Secondary majors can be taken only in addition to the primary majors. Secondary majors or minors provide individuals with a whole new skill set area and enhances a new marketability, Fraser said.

"For example, a modern language, looking at Spanish -- Spanish is a very marketable language," she said. "That could complement someone's marketability whatever the case may be -- education, the medical field.

"Those in public relations and business curriculum -- it affords them to develop some technical skills in a variety of areas."

Henrichs said taking Spanish would have helped her out, working in Salt Lake City.

"I wish I would have taken Spanish. It would have been very helpful," she said.

Jackie Spears, director of women's studies, said that to qualify for a secondary major, students must complete 24 hours.

She said it varies from discipline to discipline whether a second major truly is valuable. For example, in women's studies, students can develop some expertise in women's issues that can be useful in several areas such as family services, social work and sociology.

"It's valuable increasingly in the business world in marketing products to women and what issues are offensive," she said. "The most valuable part is things you've just grown up taking for granted that that's the way it is, you see very differently."

She said the 40-50 secondary majors and 60 minors in women's studies each year benefit especially in the helping professions.

Jeremy May, senior in anthropology and philosophy, said he wants to add women's studies and rhetoric communications to his list of majors.

"I like a diverse background," he said. "I don't like to pigeon-hole myself in one area."

May, who plans to stay for a fifth year, said he probably won't find a job with his anthropology and philosophy majors.

"But, you can sell yourself with that communication," he said. "With anthropology, you can sell yourself saying you understand other cultures to help your business."

He said he plans to attend graduate school or law school, and he thinks his array of majors will look impressive on those applications. He said he also is considering going into culinary school following his undergraduate studies.

"And, that doesn't tie into anything I'm taking right now. I have lots of interests," he said. "It's not that hard to get a dual major. People think it is. The majors I'm in aren't so bad.

"Some majors -- you know how they give you a new perspective -- I think it's good to have different perspectives. I'll have two perspectives instead of just one."

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