Purpose:
This Action Guide was created to help students who were originally planning for competitive pre-health majors but who are now exploring alternative majors/academic programs.

Description:
Students who are exploring competitive health programs (i.e. nursing, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary medicine, etc.) may feel pressured or discouraged about their chances for successful admission. Some students will eventually decide to pursue other undergraduate majors or career paths, either outside of health care or in less competitive health care fields. Making the change can be stressful, especially if you have been planning over a period of time for a specific health career. However, you may also find greater success if you find a major/academic program that is a better fit with your academic preparation, interests, and strengths.

Below are stories of two students who were initially interested in competitive health majors/academic programs. These students took the time to explore their options and are now thriving:

“Coming into college I thought I was sure I wanted to become a doctor. I was pretty aware of my interests and values, but I soon came to question if being a doctor was right for me. My interests included helping my community on a larger scale and travel. I had also become very interested in the Public Health field after attending a School of Public Health Preview Day and talking with a public health professional who works at a local clinic. Right now, my plan is to graduate with a major in Family Social Science and eventually to apply for grad school in either Public Health or Social Work. In between, I am preparing to apply to the Peace Corps!”

“I was originally interested in a nursing career but have changed my mind...I really want a regular work schedule with time to spend with my family and friends. I do not think that being a nurse would offer the flexibility I am seeking. I also struggle with my science courses...Writing is a passion of mine. I have met with my advisor and am now planning for a major in Scientific and Technical Communication with a minor in Spanish Studies.”
Directions:

Reflect on the questions below as it relates to three areas: academics, interests, and values. By exploring these areas, you may find a different major that shares many common elements you find rewarding. For some of you, it may be an opportunity to explore completely new interests or passions.

Academic Performance

- How strong is your overall record? In your science courses?
- What courses do you most enjoy? What courses are you the most successful in? Do you see any trends in your overall course selection and grades?
- As you consider other majors to explore, how competitive are the programs? Can you meet the minimum transfer GPA requirements?
- Do you need to complete any remaining science prerequisites? How are you doing with your liberal education requirements?

Action Items:

- Review your APAS Report. As you consider other majors, use the “Generate a What If APAS Report (major shopping)” feature. This will help you see what progress you have made towards alternative majors.
- You can also review course requirements for individual majors through the U of M catalog: http://www.catalogs.umn.edu/index.html

Interests and Values

- What activities do you enjoy? When are you at your best?
- What values are important in your life? Does your family have expectations for you regarding career options?
- What causes or issues do you support?
- How important is it to you to remain in a helping or science-oriented career path?

Action Items:

- Complete a career assessment such as the Strong Interest Inventory, which can help you identify additional majors and careers that match your interests. CAPE and the college career services offices administer this inventory along with other assessments such as StrengthsQuest.
- If you have been strongly influenced by family or friends to pursue the health professions, you may need to think about how you can discuss your decision with them from a strengths-based perspective. Check out the Family, Culture and Identity Influences Action Guide as a starting point and also consult with a CAPE coach, career counselor, personal counselor, or trusted mentor for additional feedback.
- Try the Identifying Values activity in the CAPE Action Plan.
**Transferable Skills**

Transferable skills are the competencies you have gained from your work, classwork, and extracurricular activities that can be applied or “transferred” to other settings. These skills can be “soft” – think communication, interpersonal skills, leadership, critical thinking – or “hard” – technical skills such as knowing first aid or medical terminology. The transferable skills you have developed as a pre-health student can be used in other degree programs or career fields.

- What key experiences or skills did you acquire during your time as a pre-health student? Consider knowledge of critical decision making, interpersonal skills, and communication skills.
- How can you market your health-related volunteer or internship experiences on your resume so that they are applicable to new fields?

**Action Items:**

- Complete the inventory at [http://www.d.umn.edu/careers/inventories/skills_test_intro.html](http://www.d.umn.edu/careers/inventories/skills_test_intro.html)
  - For those skills that you rated as Some Ability or Strong Ability, think about how you could incorporate them into your resume or when you are exploring career fields.
- If you are just starting to develop a resume or want to revise one, ask your career services office for help. [http://career.umn.edu/](http://career.umn.edu/)

**Additional Resources:**

- The Health Careers Center’s Plan B guide offers additional tips and examples of students who have chosen other majors/academic programs. [http://www.healthcareers.umn.edu/build-your-student-portfolio/back-up-plan/](http://www.healthcareers.umn.edu/build-your-student-portfolio/back-up-plan/)
- Center for Academic Planning & Exploration: [www.cape.umn.edu](http://www.cape.umn.edu)
- Your college career services office: [www.career.umn.edu](http://www.career.umn.edu)

If you decide to pursue another major, the list below can be a helpful starting point to identify U of M majors that can be good alternatives. Be sure to think about your answers to the questions above, and take into consideration your interests, values, skills, and overall academic performance. (Note that some of these majors may also be competitive or have specific prerequisites to declare the major).
## Selected Undergraduate Majors by Theme at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Communication Studies, Scientific and Technical Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Agricultural Education, Music Education, Elementary Education Foundations, Early Childhood Education Foundations, Kinesiology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration and Business</strong></td>
<td>Bioproducts Marketing and Management, Human Resource Development, Business, Marketing, and Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical and Scientific</strong></td>
<td>Animal Science (Industry and Production tracks), Applied Plant Science, Biology, Society, and Environment, Environmental Sciences Policy and Management, Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Sciences</strong></td>
<td>Food Science, Nutrition, Information Technology Infrastructure, Physiology</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Human Relations and Social Services</strong></td>
<td>Public Health minor, Psychology, Urban Studies, Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Music Therapy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individualized Programs</strong></td>
<td>Inter-College Program (Health and Wellness Track), Bachelor of Individualized Studies, Inter-Departmental Individualized Major</td>
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You may also want to consider graduate/professional programs in areas such as: genetic counseling; biological science; J.D. with concentration in law and bioethics; public policy; health informatics; public health; healthcare administration; health journalism and communication science; and science, technology, and environmental policy. Consult with a CAPE coach, your college Career Services, or your academic adviser for resources to help you explore graduate and professional programs.