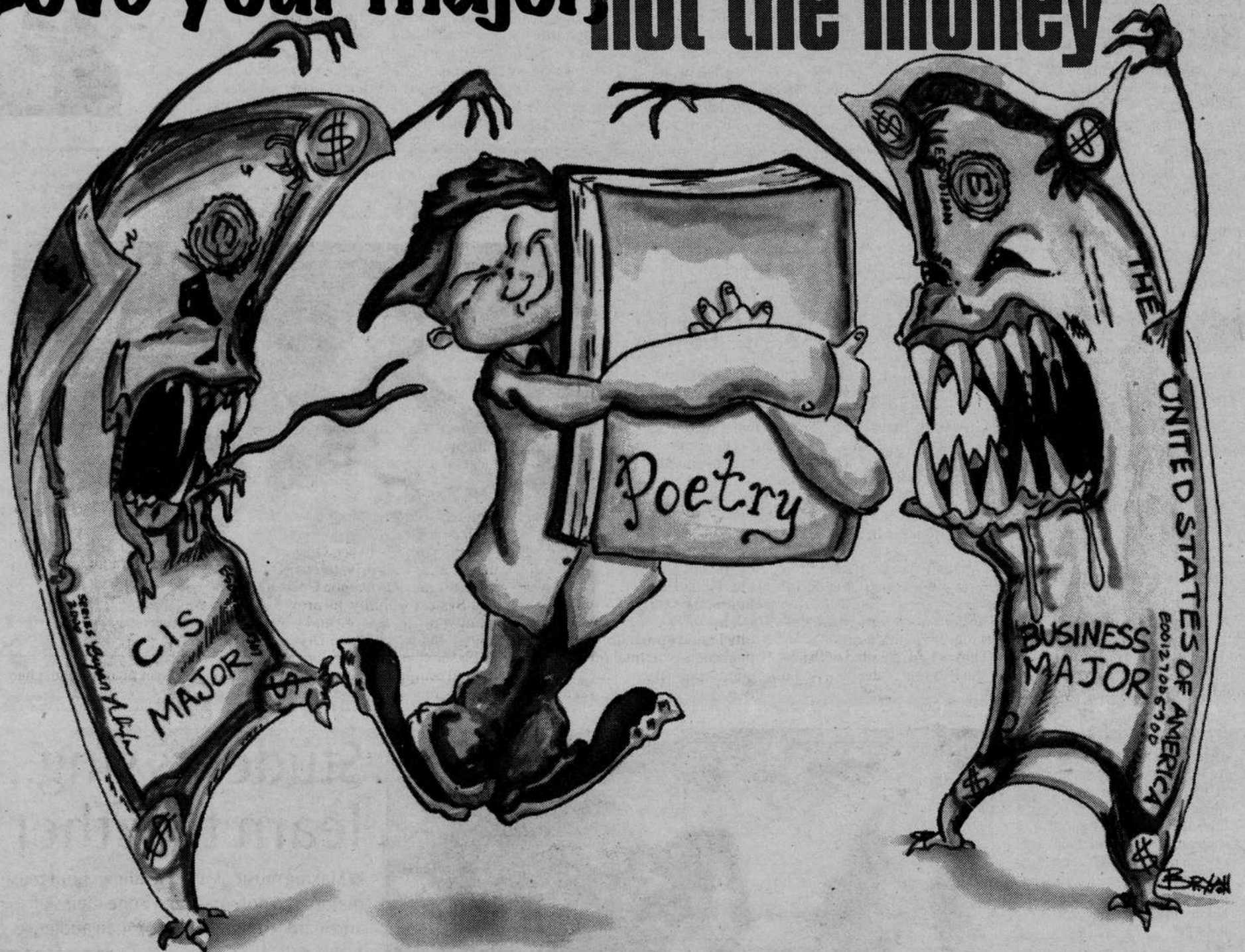


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# Perspectives

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## Love your major, not the money



Deciding what major to declare should involve more than just weighing future incomes; students should take the time in college to find out what they enjoy doing

It's probably the second most popular question asked at IntroDUCKtion, just after "What's your name?" Whether it's asked out of sincere interest, as a conversation starter or just as a pick-up line, no one leaves campus the first day without hearing the all-too-familiar inquisition: "What's your major?"

The answer to such an inquiry automatically identifies a student and is supposed to expose a person's interests, but more and more this isn't the case. Most students feel much better about themselves if they know they have a solid path to follow, one that will eventually lead them to a secure job even if it's not what they enjoy.

Unfortunately, this way of thinking causes many to choose their majors for the wrong reasons. And these hopeful souls could end up very disappointed later in their lives, because instead of experiencing the college life, they concentrated only on where it would take them. So many students focus on the destination that they forget they're here to actually learn and to find their passions.

No one wants to hear, "What can you do with that major in the real world?" And this fear and pressure pushes some students to desperately grab onto any career path that is remotely close to what they want to do and has potential to one day bring in the cashola. You can spot these gold diggers by the bright green dollar signs that flash in their eyes when they learn of the salaries their major

could someday bring them. And while such a motive works great when one has true interest and devotion, others are stuck in a miserable rut. Nelly Ganesan, who recently changed majors from computer information science to math, knows how it feels to be in a major for reasons aside from personal satisfaction.

"I picked computer science because of pressure from my parents and also because it's security based," Ganesan said. "You know that if you graduate with a degree in CIS, you don't really have to worry about getting a job. But I didn't like it."

Sarah Bartlett, sophomore journalism major, also admits that if it weren't for financial factors, her career path would be different. "I'd have a major in English with a creative writing focus and get a masters in fine arts. Poetry is what I love. But there's the pressure from my parents and my own mindset that I need to be able to get a job. For poets there doesn't seem to be many opportunities besides teaching or living on the streets."

But having a major that sounds promising is not a guaranteed ticket into a secure job. We have alumni that have graduated with business degrees and ended up being lead cashiers at Gap. But then we have English majors that went on to become account executives or graphic designers.

Also, there's no assurance that jobs will be closely related to the students

major. According to the 1997 Career Survey at the University on baccalaureate graduates, 32 percent of respondents had jobs highly related to their major while 28 percent said that their jobs had no relation. You never know where your major will take you, even if it's known to bring others

success. So you may as well study something you like.

Even if lost souls who declare a major for monetary reasons find the successful job that their major promised, eventually the glory and happiness will fade. They will



**Beata Mostafavi**

spend time they could have spared searching for something that does please their heart.

Lynn Antis, now assistant director at the Eugene Mission, graduated from San Diego State with a bachelor of science in business. But he then went on to obtain a masters of art in religion at the Northwest Christian College when he saw that his major didn't bring him satisfaction in the workplace.

"I went to work for Graybar Electric, a very large electrical sales company," Antis said. "Financially, it went very well, and I bought a new

home and new car and that was great, but I didn't feel fulfilled. The business world has good lucrative, but it was too shallow and empty for me. When I started at the Eugene Mission, I was making one-fourth of what I was making in sales. But I can still say that I have no regrets."

The truth is that many of us will be forever undeclared. What sparks your interest today may turn to smoke tomorrow. Just do and learn about what makes you happy today. If you're always thinking about the end of the road, you'll never enjoy getting there. I'm not trying to be an idealist, and I'm definitely not giving you the good old kindergarten philosophy of "You can be whatever you want to be." Just don't set limits for yourself for the wrong reasons; do what excites you. Otherwise you could spend the rest of your life in "what if" mode if you end up unhappy.

But don't let skewed expectations lead you to your destiny. Study what interests you because there's plenty of time to decide what you want to do with the rest of your life. This may mean hearing the dreaded, "Why would you want to study that? That major won't take you anywhere."

But that's when you can't be afraid to say "yeah, but I love it."

Beata Mostafavi is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. She can be reached via e-mail at bmostafa@gladstone.uoregon.edu.