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A NEW PAGE



NAVIGATING A MAJOR CHANGE



Starting college is often perceived as a new chapter, a new era or a new adventure. It's a fresh page that is sometimes fraught with doubt. Among novel experiences, interests and friendships, the question "What is your major?" is the defining icebreaker for college students.

Answering it, however, is not always straightforward. For many students, choosing a major is more of an evolving process than a definitive decision. In fact, nearly 75% of all students change their major at least once during their studies. At Southern Utah University, on average, students change their majors three times.

Alexa Merrell, a sophomore at SUU, began with a double major in biology and geology before switching to English education and then, in fall of 2025, to outdoor recreation.

"I took lots of elective classes and explored my interests on a deeper level, which helped me find outdoor rec in the end," said Merrell.

With more than 160 undergraduate programs, 60 graduate and certificate programs and the only Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical Psychology in Utah, SUU offers a wide range of possibilities to its students.

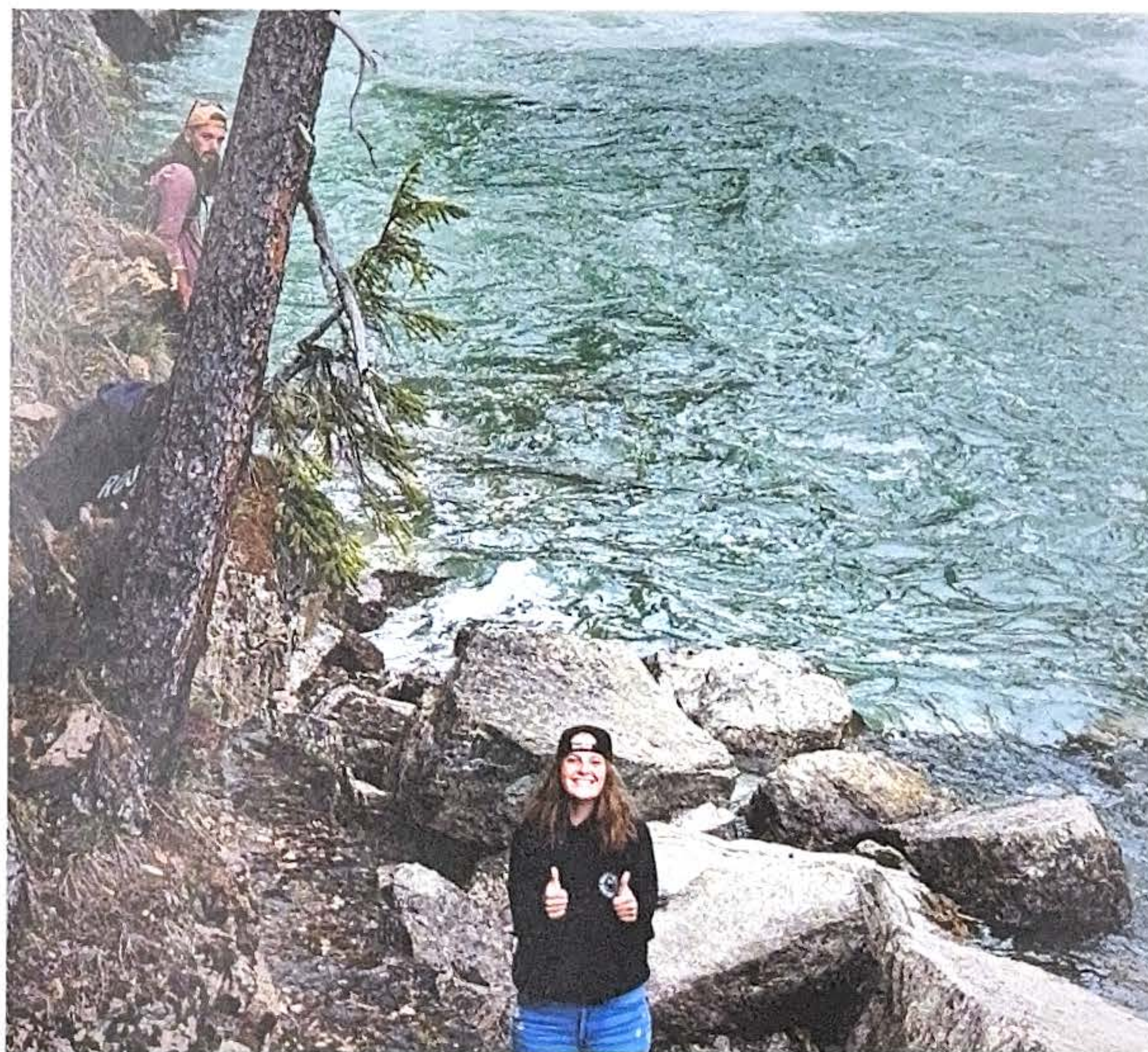
Taylor Hilton, a sophomore at SUU, considered three options before finally choosing her major. Initially undecided, she considered criminal justice or social work, but after research and conversations with family and friends, she declared marketing as her major in spring 2024.

"One of the reasons why I chose to come to SUU was because it seemed to be a community that I felt comfortable trying to find myself in, along with my major," said Hilton. I knew the school offered so many different majors and was focused on helping their students figure out a path that is right for them."

To support students from enrollment to graduation, SUU faculty and staff emphasize providing an education worthy of their investment. To that end, each student is assigned a Student Success Advisor upon enrollment.

Located in Suite 204 of the Sharwan Smith Student Center, these advisors help students define their educational goals, create academic plans, choose courses and more. Students can meet with them through Zoom, walk-ins or schedule a 15 or 30 minute appointment.

"SUU definitely helped me go through the process of switching majors," expressed Hilton. "Between my awesome academic advisors, people I've met and talked to on campus and the classes I took, I was able to figure out what pathway I want to go down."



Alexa Merrell on an outdoor adventure at Moraine Lake in Banff, Canada.



Taylor and Aurianne studying at the business building

Though the idea of switching majors seems intimidating, it is common for many college students to go through this process. They choose their initial major based on personal interests, but as they complete required courses, they realize the subject does not match their expectations or desired career path.

Aurianne Poirot, a senior and French international student at SUU, shared how it is normal to be lost during the first years of college.

“Of course you’re hesitating over what you want to do in your life. You’re still barely 18 when you enter college, so you don’t know exactly what you wanna do,” said Poirot. “My advice is to actually take classes that you like and try a little bit of everything. See what you really love and then change your major, because four years is a long time.”

Poirot switched her major during her freshman year. She went from elementary education to business management and has been loving it since.

“I really love my major right now. I’m really excited to do more international business and international management,” said Poirot. “(Switching majors) was beneficial for me because I feel like my degree is more useful for what I want to do.”

To help students understand what their interests are and what careers they might want to pursue, the SUU Career and Development Center offers career assessment appointments. During the 60-minute meeting, students take a Strong Interest Inventory test, then discuss their results with an advisor. They identify the student’s preferences and match them with potential careers and educational paths through online or campus resources.

“When you decide to go down a certain path, that decision changes everything. Not only about the experience you have in school, but also how you start thinking about your future,” said Hilton. “SUU gave me space to grow as an individual and helped me figure out that the business world is where I am supposed to be.”

Although changing majors may feel daunting, it can help students stay in college rather than dropping out. In the end, it's all about graduating with a degree they're interested in and starting a career that fits their goals.

"Changing my major the last time gave me more of a place at SUU and a sense of belonging," said Merrell. "I felt like I found my people and friends with very similar interests, it helped me stay very engaged in class and excited to learn."

Hilton added, "It is such a drastic change to go from having no clue what you want to do with your life to having a goal and a more guided path- but it is a change that changed my life and college experience for the better."

It's never too late to take risks, turn the page and start a new chapter.

-Written by Fanny Felixine

