

# UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION PLANNING

California State University, Chico offers a wonderful array of courses and academic programs—including majors, minors, options, credentials, and certificates—in an enriching residential environment. The quality and character of your undergraduate experience is determined by the choices you make in developing your program. Your program represents a considerable commitment of your time, money, resources, and effort. The decisions you make are closely linked to the satisfaction and growth you will experience. These will influence your attainment of academic, personal and career goals, and the contributions you will make to society. The earlier you assume responsibility for the direction of your education and begin to discover its rewards, the more you will gain.

It is a goal of the University to offer you the best education possible within its resources and to help you develop and achieve academic goals consistent with your interests and abilities. It is likewise a goal of the University to help you do so as efficiently as possible through timely provision of courses, advising, and support services. Any baccalaureate program offered by the University can be completed within four years by students just beginning their college career if they follow the guidelines outlined later in this section.

If you are a transfer student, you will have less flexibility than freshmen, depending on choices you have already made. Nonetheless, you too can develop an efficient program plan that will result in an outstanding academic experience.

## Degree Program Components

You will plan your program most effectively by understanding the three basic course components of the baccalaureate and the relationship of these to each other:

1. The major;
2. Additional Graduation Requirements; and
3. Elective courses

These three are structured around a framework of nine graduation requirements, described in the Bachelor's Degree Requirements (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/undergraduate-requirements/bachelors-degree-requirements/>) section, which are the building blocks of your degree program. If you have already completed some college coursework, you need to determine as early as possible how that credit applies to these requirements.

### 1. The Major

The most easily identifiable portion of your academic program is your major. A major is defined as a program of related courses, and all University-level prerequisites to those courses, which focus on a field of study. These include majors in broad areas of accumulated knowledge in what are often referred to as "the liberal arts" such as English, history, psychology, mathematics, and chemistry. Other majors are "professionally" or "technically" oriented. These draw heavily on the liberal arts in applied settings such as business administration, computer science, recreation administration, and engineering. Successful completion of a major, along with other requirements, is recognized by award of the appropriate degree.

You may declare your major on your application for admission to the University. If you are a freshman or sophomore and, like many, still deciding on your academic or career goals, you may elect to remain undeclared until you determine the direction you plan to take. As an undeclared student—still deciding your major—your "home" for advising purposes is Academic Advising Programs (<https://www.csuchico.edu/aap/>), located in SSC 220, whose staff will assist you with your program planning and academic career decisions.

### Options

Many of the majors offered by the University have options. For example, within the business administration major, you may choose the accounting or finance option, among several other choices. An option is an officially recognized program of specialization within a major. It includes requirements specific to the option plus a core of courses taken by all students in the major regardless of option selected. Successful completion of an option is noted on your transcript.

### Credentials

For those considering a career in education, Chico State offers several programs leading to various teaching credentials. Programs include those which lead to the multiple subject (elementary) credential, to a single subject (secondary) credential in many academic areas, or to any of a variety of specialist credentials. Completion of the subject matter requirements for many of these include all requirements for the corresponding major, and most are identified as a specific option within the major. See the Education (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/colleges-departments/college-communication-education/education/>) section for more information on credentials.

### Pre-Professional Programs

If you are considering continuing on in a professional training program at another university, you may need to enroll in specialized courses of study within, or in addition to, your major, which are called pre-professional programs. Pre-professional programs and advising are designed to provide a solid background for further study in dentistry, law, library science, medicine, optometry, physical therapy, veterinary medicine, and other professions requiring advanced study. The academic departments which provide pre-professional advising are committed to their students. They have spent many years building relationships with professional schools so that their students receive the best possible information and assistance in their efforts to be admitted to and succeed in professional programs.

## 2. Additional Graduation Requirements

### General Education

While your major provides an in-depth study of your discipline, GE is designed to acquaint you with a variety of academic disciplines and to provide a broad understanding of the scientific, cultural, social, intellectual, and artistic heritage of the world. GE helps you discover the connections among various fields of knowledge and prepares you for success as a lifelong learner and civically engaged individual in democratic societies.

Your major is likely to overlap with GE requirements. In fact, one or more specific GE courses are required or are elective credits for almost all of the majors offered by the University. As you plan your program consider those GE courses which are required for majors of interest.

Chico State's GE program also includes the opportunity for you to pursue Honors in General Education (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/colleges-departments/undergraduate-education/honors-program/>). Honors students satisfy nearly half of their (GE) requirements by taking

distinctive Honors courses that provide interdisciplinary approaches to big questions.

### Diversity Requirement

You must complete a minimum of two courses that focus primarily on cultural diversity. At least one course must be in U.S. Diversity (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/undergraduate-requirements/diversity-requirements/#USDV>) and at least one in Global Cultures (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/undergraduate-requirements/diversity-requirements/#GBCL>).

### Writing Across the Curriculum

To satisfy the University's Writing Across the Curriculum (EM 17-009 (<http://www.csuchico.edu/prs/EMs/2017/17-009.shtml/>)) requirement, you must complete a GE Written Communication (A2) course with a grade of C- or higher, and a Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GW) course in your major with a grade of C- or higher. You also must complete two additional Writing (W) courses.

## 3. Elective Courses

The remaining component of your study at Chico State, and the part most easily personalized, is the elective courses portion. Except in a few high-unit majors, considerable freedom remains for you to take courses that satisfy your individual interests or needs. Such courses might include an activity in music or physical education, an opportunity for service through Community Action Volunteers in Education (CAVE), or additional courses in an academic area that complements your major.

You may direct available elective credit towards the completion of a minor or certificate, an additional major, or a self-designed block of courses concentrating in a single field of study.

## Minors

A minor (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/academic-programs-resources/academic-programs/#minorstext>) is an approved group of related courses, successful completion of which is recognized by certification on the transcript by the Registrar. Minors may consist only of those courses stipulated by the departments, schools, or academic units having administrative control of the program and, in addition, shall include all college-level prerequisites to the courses so stipulated. "A minor shall include not fewer than 18 nor more than 30 semester units. Each minor shall include a minimum of 6 upper-division units" (EM 86-001 (<https://www.csuchico.edu/pres/em/1986/86-001.shtml/>)).

## Certificate Programs

The University offers certificate programs (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/academic-programs-resources/academic-programs/#certificatetext>), a group of university-level courses or related experiences certified by academic units as equivalent to university coursework on this campus. Successful completion of a program shall be recognized with a certificate of completion awarded by the University.

Students completing certificate programs are not obligated to meet other University graduation requirements. Coursework completed to satisfy certificate programs might be applied to related majors.

Students will qualify for admission to certificate programs only if they are admissible by University and departmental standards, policies, and procedures. Students qualifying for admission may be completing or have completed a bachelor's degree and may wish to receive additional

certification in a professionally oriented field of study, or may choose not to go beyond the program of courses required for the certificate.

The undergraduate certificate program "shall include no fewer than 21 units, at least 15 of which must be in upper-division or graduate work. Lower-division prerequisites may be included in the program as necessary. A maximum of 9 units of transfer credit may be allowed in a certification program" (EM 02-010 (<https://www.csuchico.edu/pres/em/2002/02-010.shtml/>)). Students may apply up to 24 units of Open University enrollment towards the certificate program. A grade point average of 2.5 must be earned for courses required for the certificate program with at least a C or better earned in each course.

## Completing the Degree in Four Years or Less

Getting to graduation in four years or less requires careful planning and sustained effort, and the University is here to support you at every step. Advisors in Academic Advising Program and in your major are available to help you navigate requirements and explore options. The need to work or the pursuit of additional educational opportunities may make a four-year plan more challenging, but with careful planning and sound advising, a student can graduate in four years and include important educational activities such as internships and study abroad. It is possible to complete any bachelor's degree program offered by the University in four years or less. In fact, many students do it even in our most demanding majors.

It is important to distinguish between (1) the number of units you complete in any given year at the University, and (2) the number of courses and units which you include in your degree program.

### 1. The Number of Units Completed per Year

To graduate in four years, plan to enroll in and complete 15 units per semester. If you work or for other reasons carry less than a full load (15 to 16 units per semester) or "stop-out" one or more semesters, it may take you longer than four years to graduate. Winter and summer session courses provide opportunities to earn additional credit during the year and stay on track for graduation.

### 2. The Number of Courses Included in Your Program

If you enroll in courses not needed for your major or other graduation requirements that are in excess of the number of elective units you need to graduate, you may delay your graduation. Following are four specific circumstances which may result in excess units:

1. Many students change majors one or more times or do not decide on their majors until well into their college careers. This is often inevitable, even desirable as you mature and expand your interests, self-awareness, and understanding of the complexities of the world of work. But changing your major or too great a delay in declaring your major may cause you to extend the time to complete your degree beyond four years.
2. Students enroll intentionally or otherwise in courses that do not apply to either their majors or General Education and are in excess of the number of available elective units. This may happen by choice because of your interest in an area, or as a consequence of misunderstanding requirements or failure to seek adequate advising. You may elect to study a second major, minor, foreign language, performing art, or other skill which may extend your time to graduate. You may decide to participate in an internship or study abroad (<http://www.csuchico.edu/studyabroad/>). It is not uncommon for these choices to prove most beneficial to your career development

and employability. With careful planning, though, these choices are compatible with graduation in four years.

3. Students may need preparatory coursework for specific programs which they might have had the opportunity to take in high school but did not, such as trigonometry prior to taking calculus.
4. There are students who fail or drop courses required for their programs which they must then repeat in a subsequent term.

## Planning Your Course of Study

By understanding how your major requirements, General Education, and elective units work together, you can create an academic program that is interesting and satisfying to you, and you can minimize problems that may delay your graduation. Here are some strategies to help you plan your coursework at Chico State.

During your years in college your interests, skills, and understandings will change. This fact affects how you plan your program. For example:

- Most students change their major. Be open to the possibilities. This University offers over 200 different majors, options, minors, credentials, and certificates. Begin your exploration early.
- Conserve your elective credit. In your first year or so concentrate primarily on GE and courses which introduce you to, or are required for, majors of interest. Explore, but keep in mind that if you use up elective credit too soon, you may have little or none left later when you have decided on a major. And note that some high-unit majors like computer science have very few elective units.
- Recognize that most majors and minors include courses that meet both GE and program requirements. By taking advantage of these you may explore programs of interest, conserve elective credit, and reduce the time required to graduate.
- Keep things in perspective. Many graduates find that other interests and skills cultivated during their college years become more important than the major in the long run.
- There are many opportunities from which to choose: internships, cooperative education, exchange and travel-study abroad programs, student government, clubs and organizations, fine arts, and athletics, to name a few. If you are interested in these activities, then more careful planning is needed to graduate in four years.
- Develop relationships with faculty. They can offer insight and perspective on careers, educational opportunities, values, and issues.
- Invest time exploring educational and career options. Seek help from several sources: family, people working in careers in which you are interested, faculty whose courses you particularly enjoy, University career and academic counselors, and academic advisors.
- Immerse yourself in the academic, cultural, and intellectual life of the University. You may develop lifelong commitments and interests that make you and the world better.

Plan your program in consultation with academic and graduation advisors. Review your plan frequently and meet with your advisors every semester.

- When you have decided on a major, make a plan for the balance of your program. Monitor your progress to graduation with your Degree Progress Report (DPR) in your Student Center. Meet with major department advisor for major coursework, and meet with an academic advisor (SSC 220) to review General Education and other graduation requirements.

- Complete your Smart Planner. If possible, plan the entire balance of your program semester-by-semester and review your Smart Planner with your advisor.
- Double-count classes whenever possible. Double-count Global Cultures and US Diversity with GE requirements, preferably in the GE breadth section.
- If you are enrolling in a high-unit major, determine whether there are modifications to GE (<https://catalog.csuchico.edu/colleges-departments/undergraduate-education/general-education/#majorswithmodificationstext>) and other graduation requirements. Take advantage of these to avoid adding more semesters to your program.
- Pay careful attention to course prerequisites. Make certain that you take courses in the proper sequence.
- Complete satisfactorily a minimum of 30 non-remedial units per year. A BA, BFA, or BS requires a total of 120 units; however, a BS in some engineering programs may require up to 128 units. Winter and summer sessions are available as a means of earning additional credit during the year. A minimum grade point average of 2.0 is needed for graduation.
- If you are considering a teaching credential, be sure you have a clear understanding of the special requirements you must meet in order to be admitted to the teacher credential program. Contact School of Education for information.

Determine in consultation with your academic and graduation advisors how much, if any, elective credit you will have available to you in addition to your major, GE, and other requirements.

- Discuss with advisors effective uses of available elective credit. Are you going to graduate school? Do you have room for a second major, minor, or certificate program? Are there courses that count for both the minor and GE?
- Consider using elective credit to develop a specific competency such as a foreign language or computer skills, to enrich your life through literature or the arts, or to expand your understanding of a social or other concern.

Following are samples of the distribution of units in three of the more than 60 majors from which you may choose. Units required to complete majors vary from 30 to over 100. The examples suggest how the above strategies apply in programs of various sizes. (Note: If you have already accumulated college credit, these models may not accurately reflect your circumstances. See your advisor.)

**Psychology—a low unit major.** Psychology majors frequently complete combinations of second majors, one or more minors, internships, and additional psychology credit in preparation for careers or graduate work. Though the total units of the major are few, careful attention to the four semester sequence of required courses is important.

- 42 units required for the major
- up to 9 units in major count for GE
- 39 additional GE units. The Global Cultures and U.S. Diversity requirement may be double counted in General Education or the major
- 39 elective units
  - 120 total units for the BA degree
  - 15 average number of units per semester in order to complete a carefully planned program in 8 semesters.

**Business Administration (Marketing Option)—a medium sized major.** Business administration majors who complete minors must plan carefully and take advantage of courses that count for both GE and the major or minor. Many complete a cooperative education program and are actively involved in various professional student groups sponsored by the College of Business.

- 72 units required for the major
- 9 units in major count for GE
- 39 additional GE units. The Global Cultures and U.S. Diversity requirement may be double counted in General Education or the major
- 9 elective units
  - 120 total units for the BS degree.
  - 15.0 average number of units per semester in order to complete a carefully planned program in 8 semesters.

**Mechanical Engineering—a high unit major.** Mechanical and other engineering majors must plan their programs carefully and take full advantage of GE modifications, and the overlap between GE and the major. Sequencing of courses is very important, especially with regard to mathematics. Inadequate preparation in math and science may extend the time required to complete the program. Some majors complete math minors, much of the credit for which counts for both programs.

- 100 units required for the major
- 21 units in major count for GE
- 27 additional GE units. The Global Cultures and U.S. Diversity requirement should be double counted in General Education.
- 0 available elective units
  - 127 total units for the BS degree
  - 15.9 average number of units per semester in order to complete a carefully planned program in 8 semesters.

## How to Graduate Within Your Planned Timeframe

Time is important; quality is paramount. We will strive to provide you with an enriched educational experience within a residential community of faculty and students for however long you choose to study at Chico State. Be sure you read and understand the rights, responsibilities, and rules found in this *University Catalog*. Ask an academic advisor for clarification if you do not understand any part of the catalog.

For additional tips on how to graduate within your planned time frame, contact Academic Advising Programs (<https://www.csuchico.edu/aap/>) in SSC 220, 530-898-5712, [chicoadvisor@csuchico.edu](mailto:chicoadvisor@csuchico.edu).

Academic rigor means the consistent expectation of excellence and the aspiration to significant achievement. It should pervade the entire atmosphere of the University—teaching and learning, curriculum, evaluation of students and faculty, outreach, admissions, advising, and student life.

## Rigorous Teaching

Rigorous faculty are role models for the behaviors and accomplishments the University seeks to promote. They demonstrate a high level of professionalism and commitment to the University and to their discipline and inspire in students excitement about learning. Guiding students towards excellence, they:

- Communicate high expectations and demonstrate them through a demanding syllabus and well-prepared classes.

- Encourage student-faculty contact in and out of class and offer conscientious advising and consistent availability.
- Encourage collaboration and active learning, fully involving students in the learning experience.
- Provide students early, prompt, and frequent feedback and develop appropriate assessment strategies.
- Emphasize time on task, clearly communicate time required for learning, make it clear that full-time study is full-time work, and design learning experiences so that homework matters.
- Develop approaches and strategies geared to diverse talents and ways of learning, while maintaining high standards of accountability.
- Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty, and challenge its occurrence.

## Rigorous Learning

Rigorous students are part of the equation of rigorous teaching and learning. A rigorous education is vigorous, difficult, deeply satisfying work, and it requires a lifestyle conducive to achieving excellence. College is not a temporary diversion or a period of entertainment, but a fundamental piece of student character, citizenship, and employment future. A diploma and good grades from a demanding institution count for something. Rigorous students:

- Set high personal standards, develop a strong sense of purpose, come to class well prepared, and complete assignments on time.
- Develop an effective relationship with the instructor, in and outside of class, and make the most of University advising and other services.
- Treat fellow students and the classroom environment with complete respect. Give each class full attention and participation. Do not miss class, arrive late, or leave early.
- Accept continuing responsibility for learning and for grades earned.
- Approach each class in a professional manner. Treat a full-course load as full-time work and spend no less time on it. Determine exactly what is expected.
- Experiment with all teaching and learning strategies used in classes, and also determine which work best for them.
- Demonstrate complete honesty and integrity.

## Honors in the Major

Honors in the Major is a program of independent work in your major. It requires 6 units of honors course work completed over two semesters.

The Honors in the Major program allows you to work closely with a faculty mentor in your area of interest on an original performance or research project. This year-long collaboration allows you to work in your field at a professional level and culminates in a public presentation of your work. Students sometimes take their projects beyond the University for submission in professional journals, presentation at conferences, or academic competition. Such experience is valuable for graduate school and professional life. Your honors work will be recognized at your graduation, on your permanent transcripts, and on your diploma. It is often accompanied by letters of commendation from your mentor in the department or the department chair.

Some common features of Honors in the Major program are:

- You must take 6 units of Honors in the Major course work. All 6 units are honors classes (marked by a suffix of H), and at least 3 of these units are independent study (399H, 499H, 599H) as specified by your

department. You must complete each class with a minimum grade of B.

- You must have completed 9 units of upper-division course work or 21 overall units in your major before you can be admitted to Honors in the Major. Check the requirements for your major carefully, as there may be specific courses that must be included in these units.
- Your cumulative GPA should be at least 3.5 or within the top 5% of majors in your department.
- Your GPA in your major should be at least 3.5 or within the top 5% of majors in your department.
- Most students apply for or are invited to participate in Honors in the Major during the second semester of their junior year. Then they complete the 6 units of course work over the two semesters of their senior year.
- Your honors work culminates with a public presentation of your honors project.

While Honors in the Major is part of the Honors Program, each department administers its own program. Please contact your major department or major advisor to apply.

## Dean's List

Each semester the college deans recognize superior scholarship by including on their Dean's List those students who earn a 3.5 GPA or better on 12 or more graded units the preceding semester.

## Honors at Graduation

The University recognizes superior academic performance at graduation and on students' diplomas and transcripts. Each college of the University may award honors to up to 5 percent of its undergraduates each year.

Honors designations are distributed as follows:

- Summa cum laude may be given to no more than the top 1 percent of the graduating class.
- Magna cum laude may be given to no more than the top 3 percent of the graduating class.
- Cum laude may be given to no more than the top 5 percent of the graduating class.