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What Shall My Major Be?

By Rita Compton Reed

DECIDING on their specialized field is a problem which 60 percent of home economics students meet during their first quarter at Iowa State. By the end of the third quarter 20 percent still have not chosen their major. The Iowa State Testing Bureau, directed by John L. Holmes, assistant director of personnel, is a service which advises many of these women.

Every student who enters Iowa State is given placement tests in college aptitude, in scientific and literary fields, and on previous knowledge of mathematics, history and English. The scores are given to counselors who may recommend other tests if students have difficulty with courses they have chosen.

LET'S look at the record of one home economics freshman who came to the testing bureau for advice. Ann had an outstanding high school record with a point average of 3.5. Her entrance examinations also showed her to be on a high intelligence level.

Ann had decided that she wanted to do research in foods and that her major would be either in related science or experimental cookery. In terms of ability her high test scores indicated that academically she could take any course she wanted.

However, Ann found after one quarter that she didn't like her science courses. She knew that she didn't want to concentrate her studies in the fields of physics, chemistry or mathematics even though they could be applied to home economics. Ann was sure that she should change her major, but she didn't know which to choose. Her counselor suggested that she take the series of interest and aptitude tests at the testing bureau.

Ann was tested primarily for her vocational interests and preferences, classified according to mechanical, computational, scientific, persuasive, artistic, literary, musical, social service and clerical positions. She answered questions concerning various activities and she checked the one in each group which she liked most and the one she liked least.

"Would you rather manage the lighting of an amateur play, be the business manager of the play or act in the play?"

"Would you prefer experimenting with making some candy for which you don't know the recipe, tell stories to children, or paint water colors?"

There are no right and wrong answers, but the answers are grouped to the type of interest indicated by each preference.

Ann's score showed that she was below average in

scientific and computational interests, but she showed high preference for persuasive, literary and social service types of work. This indicated that she would enjoy a position which would allow her to work with people such as personnel work, teaching or adjusting insurance claims.

All home economics majors should have high interest in and aptitude for science. However, an art major also should have artistic preferences; a child development major should indicate persuasive and social service preferences; a foods major, computational preferences, and an education major, social service preferences. Those who major in institution management should have computational, persuasive, social service and clerical preferences. If a student majors in household equipment, she should have mechanical and computational preferences; if she majors in textiles and clothing, artistic and persuasive preferences. A major in technical journalism should have literary and persuasive preferences.

When Ann first saw the results of her tests she began to wonder if perhaps she should be taking a liberal arts course. Yet she knew she wanted to do something based upon home economics training. She knew, too, that some day she expected to be married and make homemaking her occupation.

Since the average woman who graduates from college works only 3 to 4 years in a professional or business career, Ann was a typical student in that respect. She wanted to be prepared both for a career and for homemaking.

In the conference after Ann's tests were scored, Mr. Holmes suggested that her best field might be in teaching home economics or in extension work. These are professions which fit her aptitudes and interests and would be valuable if she should need to resume her career again in later life.