Parents & Families: 10 Tips for Talking with Your Student about Major Change

- **Be open.** There may be very good reasons for your student to change majors.
- **Listen.** Good communication, including good listening, is usually the best way to begin.
- **Know that staying in the wrong major can cause stress.** Consider the alternatives to making a change – your student may do poorly, leave school dissatisfied with their major and experiences, or be unprepared for the career they actually want.
- **Know that doubts are natural.** These may arise because of a “sophomore slump”, an encounter with a particular professor, or some thinking about potential jobs. Encourage them to think about whether changing their major is really warranted.
- **Ask your student why they chose the major in the first place.** Did the reasons make sense then? What has changed?
- **Help your student identify their concerns with their current major.** Are their issues with academic performance? Interpersonal difficulties? Have their interests changed? A mismatch with career goals?
- **Remind your student that choosing a major is not necessarily choosing a career.** Most careers have multiple points of entry and your student’s major may lead to multiple jobs. Help your student consider whether the current major might still lead to a career of interest.
- **Consider the realities of making a change of major.** This is more important if the change is happening later in college. Some majors are more easily changed than others. Will a change of major add an additional semester or year? Will it require some summer school classes? Can they afford the extra time or classes?
- **Explore other alternatives to changing majors.** Could your student consider a double major? A minor in another area? Might it make sense to consider graduate school to focus on the new interest? Or could they seek skills and knowledge in their new interest area through experiential learning opportunities such as internships, volunteering, service-learning, etc.? Help them consider all of the options.
- **Encourage your student to seek support.** UVM has lots of resources to support your student! They can talk with their academic advisor, the Career Center, and faculty members.