In a 3:30 PM evolutionary biology class, I started scrolling through the science majors my mountain town school offered so I could get out of the biology track. I thought I loved biology, but there was no passion coming from the professors teaching anymore. This Tuesday afternoon class just felt like a time filler where I would just doodle on my notebook and write notes to my roommate while passively listening to topics I had been taught in high school.

I had always been a type A, by the book person. I would do research for days before deciding what planner I wanted to buy the new school year. So, when I applied to college, I researched for weeks about what major I wanted to do. Now I know it is perfectly normal to go into college undecided, but I refused to be that person. I picked biology. I had just finished taking AP biology and thought it was interesting, and I was good at it; so that’s what I picked as my major. I thought maybe I could research trees or fulfill my middle school dream of being a marine biologist.

As I was scrolling, there it was – geology. I knew a little bit about geology from topics taught in earth science, and the classes were still very much geared around the Earth. I sent in the major change request and almost immediately got an email from the chair of the department. It was nerve wrecking to hit that button. Everything was running through my mind, “would I like geology?”, “Am I going to have to change majors again?”, “Will this be the best or worst decision of my life?” I texted my Mom later that day: “I switched majors to geology, and I am studying abroad in Costa Rica.” I never really discussed many decisions with my parents before so why start now?

I met later that week with the department head, and we discussed the different tracks of geology my school offered, which was 5. I chose environmental geology because it would only mean an extra semester added to my time in college.

Fast forward a year because I decided to study abroad the next semester and I was taking intro geology with a bunch of non-geology majors in a summer class. I was immediately hooked by all the content. It validated my out of the decision to get out biology. My fall semester started and my geology class that semester gave me one of my core friends that I would trudge through the geological trenches with the rest of my time in undergrad, my “geology bro”.

Then COVID-19 hit. My classes went online. We did virtual field trips and virtual mapping for our finals. I was so distraught that I couldn’t finish the semester out in person and have that overnight field lab that everyone talks about. Even through all of the online classes, I met with field geology professor to talk about switching my major again to just a general geology degree so I could potentially go to grad school and field camp. I thought that by the time I was going to be ready for field camp, we could go in person. What made it even more enticing is that my school’s field camp went to Italy. A chance to go to Italy for 6 weeks felt like an opportunity to not pass up.

Now changing my major again added another semester to my time in undergrad. I would be graduating a whole year later than I originally planned to. Since I was going to have two more full years in school, I thought why not get into research. I reached out to a professor asking if she had any openings, and to my delight she took me on. I later on found out that she almost did not take me on as a research student because of the pandemic and the fact that she had a toddler (and later that school year, another baby) that would be at home with her during online teaching/research.

Over the next two years I learned how to code so I could do remote research. I never thought I would like to work with computers and be a part of groundbreaking research techniques. I also was gifted with probably the most close-knit department on my colleges’ campus, making some lifelong friendships and professional connections.

Switching to geology has so far been the best decision I ever made. I have already travelled to a conference to present my research, wrote an undergraduate thesis, travelled to Italy, and have become a huge rock nerd. My second half of undergrad really showed me how much I need to be okay with my plans not going the way I want them too. You have to be able to roll with the punches and adapt to any situation.