

Peer-to-peer, cross-disciplinary dialogues can help break down stereotypes about majors.

(Survey results complementing WE1S big-data research)

At the University of Miami, 45% of undergraduate and 52% of non-undergraduate respondents to our WE1S campus-wide survey during the academic year 2019-2020 said they define *others* based on their major. By contrast, 73% of undergraduate and 67% of non-undergraduate respondents thought others stereotype *them* based on their majors.¹ This asymmetrical response indicates that individuals assume there is an ambient prejudice in their social milieu about their personality, intelligence, and career prospects based on their scholastic identity. Such perceptions by others can constrain personal and academic/professional development. *“It’s...not like people [are] trying to be insulting,”* one participant said. *“It’s like they really don’t know the possibilities with [my] major.”*

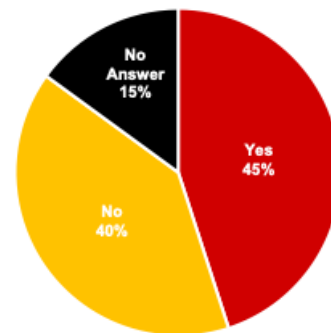
However, follow-up [focus group discussions](#) we ran suggest that positive peer-to-peer, cross-disciplinary dialogues might break down the barriers and empower generative, collaborative learning and growth. Conversations with peers outside one’s major, we learned from our focus groups, bring new perspectives and a more comprehensive understanding of different fields. *“When I tell [my friends in STEM] all the papers I have to write...like foreign policy in the Middle East and in China, they’re also like, wow, that’s hard.”*

It is telling that our finding at U. Miami, all the way across the country from our project partner campuses in California, echoes that

of UCSB’s [“What’s Your Major” panel](#) (see also [video](#) of panel) and Call-to-Action recommendation [A-8-1](#).

Our research prompts the question: how can we integrate accessible, collaborative, peer-to-peer, and cross-disciplinary dialogues and engagements in higher-ed learning?

Do you define others based on their major?



Do you think that others have/ will have preconceived ideas about you based on your major?



Population Studied: see [C-HS-2](#), [C-HS-4](#) (U. Miami undergrads & non-undergrads)

Evidentiary Documentation: [MR-9-3](#), [MR-9-4](#), [MR-9-5](#)

Related Materials: [KF-8-2](#), [A-8-1](#)

¹ For a similar finding at UCSB, see [KF-8-2](#).