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RU-FIT Course

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(From) Exploring Your Major (To Exploring Yourself)

“I’m a Physics major,” I said. “What course are you taking?” Honors Physics I. “Oh! So, an intended physics major?” “No! I am a physics major,” I insisted. At that moment, I didn’t quite understand why Professor Gawiser chuckled in disbelief. I had come thousands of miles from home, planning well in advance what I would do—I had to. My plan was straightforward: Physics major, CS for a double major, Math minor, Computational Physics, Quantum Computing, internships, labs, publications, hackathons, collaborations, research, and clubs. I knew exactly what I wanted to do! Or so I thought. I was confident I didn’t need help planning what to major in because I had it all figured out.

It wasn’t until recently (12:00 am in the Physics lounge) that someone asked me, “What do you dream of waking up for each morning?” I turned to Ahmadh (a triple major in EE, Math, and Physics!), who replied, “I don’t know,” with a calm, proud smile. For the first time, I had to admit aloud to myself and the two others in the room, “Actually, I don’t know either.” This moment, and many conversations I’ve had since, have helped me realize that maybe we’re too young to know exactly what we want to do with our lives. While planning is important, it’s also important to stay open to new opportunities and perspectives.

Physics and Computer Science (CS) are still the ideal fields for me. I’ve always loved problem-solving, have a natural curiosity, and enjoy using programming to play around with my understanding of concepts. The overlap between Physics and CS has a lot of potential, especially in areas like Quantum Computing and Machine Learning. It is a very powerful combination of Majors and open doors to diverse paths ranging anywhere from quantitative trading to even semiconductor chip design – Physicists are very diverse! I still believe that my problem-solving skills, love of learning, and programming expertise make these majors a perfect fit.

I’m exploring university events, clubs, and research opportunities. Joining clubs like the Space Technology Association at Rutgers (STAR), Society of Physics Students (SPS), Rutgers Astronomical Society (RAS), and Rutgers Rocket Propulsion Lab (RRPL) helps to connect with like-minded people and give me hands-on experiences—whether in astrophotography or rocket-building—that put my skills to practical use. I’ve also sought out advice from multiple advisors and often book appointments through Handshake or email our program director. University resources like these and my involvement in clubs provide insight into the practical applications of my studies and allow me to explore career paths I hadn’t initially considered.

One semester in, I’m more aware of the importance of moving forward with an open mind, constantly learning and introspecting. I’ve learned that it’s okay not to have everything mapped out. I continue to pursue my plans, but I’ve come to realize that many people along the way—advisors, peers, and faculty—can guide, inspire, and help shape my path. This journey has taught me that, beyond just achieving academic goals, I should keep asking questions and be open to unexpected opportunities. It has been a wonderful semester.