

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Audrey M. Riesen for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate of Science in General Science presented on March 3, 2011. Title: The Choice: Art or Science.

Abstract approved:

Philip McFadden

Many students at the undergraduate level struggle with finding a niche that satisfies their various interests, specifically those in the arts and sciences. This study examined via interviews with fourteen current or recently graduated Oregon State Students, along with my own experience at the University, how students define art and science, where they place themselves on the continuum between the two disciplines, and how they have pursued their interests in the University and in their lives as a whole. Topics explored in the educational realm included course options and accessibility, appreciation for other disciplines, and the question of breadth versus depth and specialization. Though various opinions were expressed by the students, the main issue that kept rising up throughout the project was a need to revise the baccalaureate core system. At the conclusion, I propose further study on the subject of baccalaureate core specifically and tentatively offer the suggestion that issues that need to be addressed include the timeline of the program over a student's undergraduate career, strength of academic advising, and lack of interesting course options.

Key Words: Art, Science, Accessibility, Appreciation, Baccalaureate Core
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The Choice: Art or Science

by

Audrey M. Riesen

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APPROVED:

Mentor, representing Biochemistry and Biophysics

Committee Member, representing History

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I understand that my project will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon state University, University Honors College. My signature below authorizes release of my project to any reader upon request.

Audrey M. Riesen, Author

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to my mentor Dr. Phil McFadden – you saw in my dreaming something worth seizing and making reality. This project owes its solid form to the hours of discussion and refining and encouragement that took place in your office.

To my friends I give a big thank you for sharing your wonderful selves with me and allowing others to peek into yours passions and hopes and dreams as well. You are all beautiful people with amazing stories to tell.

And as for my family – I would not be here without you. Thank you for always nurturing my love for both art and science, so I could grow up to decide I don't actually need to make “the choice” and can pursue a career that instead blends the two.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
in the order of their interviews

Matt - Biology

Adam – Mechanical Engineering, French, International Studies

James – Fine Arts, Photography

Katy – New Media Communications, Photography

Wil – Fine Arts

Lauren – Food Science

Michelle – Exercise Sports Science, Physical Therapy

Kyle – Biochemistry and Biophysics

Stephen – Marine Biology

Jessica – Fine Arts

Brent – Chemistry

Leah – Fine Arts, Merchandising Management

Caeli – Exercise Sports Science, Occupational Therapy

Colby - Communications

The Choice: Science or Art

“Once Upon the Time” : In the Beginning

I wanted to start this with “Once upon a time,” but then you wouldn't take me seriously. This is a thesis, but though the topic is of great importance and quite complex, my goal is more storytelling than analysis, and I hope you will let it slide. Everybody has a life story formed over time by choices made along the way. The choice between following artistic and scientific pursuits is one that many have to struggle with at some point in their lives, and each person navigates this conundrum in their own unique way, somehow finding focus and balance at the same time. It starts for each individual during their time as a young child, with the question “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Often there is some sort of evolution that includes sports star or superhero along the way. My own “once upon a time” included a succession of dreams about becoming the prima ballerina, treating sick puppies as a veterinarian, creating marvelous fashions as a clothing designer, and performing delicate, precise, life-saving brain surgery.

As I grew into young adulthood my tastes, interests, and personality began to take on more solidity, and someone (I don't recall who, but thank you!) during my sophomore year of high school saw the person I was developing into and suggested I look into dentistry as a career choice. Sitting there in Dr. Veley's office going over full-mouth reconstruction cases after a full day observing was when it clicked that this was a field I could really get into: the years of nimble handiwork that I had enjoyed via hobbies such as knitting, jewelry-making, and sewing translated perfectly to the fine-tuned precision needed to utilize the dental instruments, my eye for design gained from art classes would