

Tetyana Mochenyova

### **Electives as an important opportunity for students of Southeastern Community College to make the right choice**

At 17 or eighteen students graduate from secondary school and have to make a choice in life. As with the development of technology most jobs require highly qualified workers, it is important to young people to continue their education. In-born and developed talents tell a number of people where to study. However not all people have them and know about a particular job they want to do. They are also full of energy and ready to try everything to find themselves. However the school and parents and all the educational system tells them: 'you have to make a choice. Chose the major and you will study this and that and get training and such and such skills. The school will tell you what courses you will study and what kind of job you will get.' It happens though that a person has chosen the major which is not for him/her and this is not clear at 18. A person starts it and then realizes s/he does not like it at all. Then s/he faces a lot of problems trying with transferring credits, loosing a year and maybe even changing the university. All these problems can be omitted if the university has a choice of a number of classes anyone can take regardless the major.

That was one the most interesting things to us in the American Educational system on the example of Southeastern Community College that we visited. The huge number of elective courses that anyone can take and certain flexibility among the core courses. The students have to take certain number of credit hours but in many cases they are free to chose what classes they want to fill up the credit hours. That gives them the chance to try different courses and see what exactly they are interested in. On the other hand they can take more courses that they like, thus they learn more about things they prefer and try better in class as they are highly motivated. A few examples will prove the point.

For example, each student has to fill the requirement in a number of credit hours in Fine Arts. One student has no talent in Fine Arts, in other words, s/he cannot draw or sing. But the student's academic performance is excellent and GPA is high. s/he does not want to decrease it just because s/he cannot get a good grade in a class that require good natural skills. The opportunity for such student is the option to take a theoretical course in music or art instead of a practical course. In

other words instead of drawing s/he can learn about artists. For this class the student have enough intellectual skills. Vice versa, another student will prefer to sing instead of studying some musician's life and activity. One person will prefer music, another will study art, and the third one will try writing scripts or acting. In any way they all receive some knowledge in Fine Arts, fulfill the curriculum requirement and are interested in what they learn.

Of course there is a number of core courses everyone should take. They are some English, Math, Sciences and Social Sciences. However in fulfilling the credits in other areas students are pretty free to chose the courses. Also they are free to take any course at college extra-curriculum. Even though you do not need Drama or Physical Training as a part of the Degree Program, you can still take them if you want to work out or to learn to act better in public.

We have experienced this system and were very glad with the results. The opportunity to take some courses each quarter just for pleasure motivated the studying process. There was no need to go to a special school (or courses) to play piano. One could sing without being afraid that the conductor throws him/her out because of a bad ear. One can try to make ceramics or play different sports. And what is important and convenient, all that is possible right at the college, without going anywhere else. All that is a part of classes anyone can take as a full-time student without any extra-charge.

At one college there is an opportunity for each student to find out what they are really interested in. It is easy then to change majors and to get the exact education they want. Changing majors might mean more years of study and more money, but no other routine is connected with it.

Having a great variety of majors and courses the college is destined to have a large diversity of students as well. Different major students (people with different interests and attitudes, often with different age and social background) sometimes visit the same classes, having the great opportunity to meet. This becomes both useful and exciting experience.

These examples prove that electives help students not only decide what they want to do and give them an opportunity to try themselves out, but also make the studying process more fun. Together with the serious core courses that a person may not like, there are always some electives that he/she will enjoy, thus making the school time exciting.