

# Creativity over Tradition

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Across hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States, thousands of collegiate majors are offered. Engineering, business, and education are among the most popular choices for college students, but one student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University chose to defy tradition and opted to pursue her passion in a more creative field.

Emily Baugher is a sophomore at Virginia Tech who is currently pursuing a degree in Interior Design. Visibly excited to dive into detail over her chosen career path, her infectious smile and passion radiated through the screen as she explained why she chose interior design over a virtual conversation.

Baugher explained that throughout high school she had always liked her art classes and had a passion for design. Baugher described that pursuing a career where creativity was a main focus was a contributing factor towards her decision. Although she was undecided on what to major in for the majority of her senior year, Baugher said, “I picked interior design because it’s not rigid like engineering and other traditional majors ... I felt like it would be a perfect fit for me.”

Baugher admitted that although interior design is an easier major than engineering or medicine, it is no walk in the park. Baugher mentioned that while engineering is based on a rigid structure of math and rules to follow, interior design is more subjective. With a slight chuckle and wipe to her brow, she shared that one of her biggest challenges is over criticizing her

own work. Comparing her work to the work of her peers can be overwhelming, she says, but it pushes her to expand her creativity.

Another challenge Baugher mentioned was how much work and planning actually goes into interior design. “It’s so much more than just decorating. There’s more to it than what you see on HGTV,” Baugher said.

Enthusiastically, Baugher dove into all of the nit-picky details that interior designers are responsible for, often using hand motions and facial expressions to truly personify the importance of building codes interior designers have to adhere to, specifications of light fixtures, and other interior furnishings.

When speaking about her future, Baugher beamed with joy describing her excitement to put her skills to use at a design firm, or in her own business. Baugher expressed her desire to work close to home and focus on residential interior design, but the commercial side of her career also entices her.

“I’m a homebody, so I don’t want to move that far away, which is scary to think about, but if I were to work in commercial interior design, such as working on hospitals and hotels, I could travel a lot which would be super cool,” Baugher said.

Baugher recognized that challenges are inevitable whether she chooses to pursue the residential or commercial side of her career, but that she is eager to face those challenges. In a world where traditional careers reign supreme due to their safety in regards to their return on investment, Baugher is ready to take on the risks of a more experimental career.



Emily Baugher  
Photo courtesy of Emily Baugher