

# ADVISING UNDECIDED COLLEGE STUDENTS AND CAREER LIFE PLANNING

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## SESSION OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- Discuss integration of advising/career offices as a shared model
- Identify current mechanisms being used to improve completion
- Review the benefits of technological advances



## WE KNOW THAT...

- A major helps students be academically successful with personal and vocational goals.
- There are resources, and some say that ALL students are likely underprepared when choosing a major.

How do we help?



## QUESTION

What does your institution do to help still-deciding students achieve a degree?



## WHO ARE THEY?

- “Students unwilling, unable, or unready to make educational and/or vocational choices.”
- Students who enter college with a tentative decision that later changes
- Students rejected from a selective or oversubscribed program
- Major changers in transition

• Gordon, V.N. & Steele, G.E., (2015) p. vii

## UNDECIDED STUDENTS MAY BE...

- High ability
- Student athletes
- Adult learners
- Underprepared
- Community college transfer students
- Upper division students



*In short, any student can be undecided!*

## WHY ARE THEY UNDECIDED?

### **Informational**

- Lack of self-information
- Lack information about majors and programs
- Lack information about careers

### **Developmental**

- Lack of knowledge regarding decision-making processes
- Inability to make a decision
- Lack of vocational maturity
- Lack of vocational identity

### **Personal-Social**

- Concern about values-goal conflict
- Interest/ability conflict
- Conflict with opinions of others
  - Families
  - Teachers
  - Counselors
  - Mentors/Peers

### **Other**

- Afraid to commit
- “no rush...”
- Apathetic
- Original choice no longer available



## UNDECIDED?

*Help your students...*

- Determine their level of indecision
- Determine their level of commitment to exploring
- Help identify their decision-making styles

## IMPACT OF INDECISION

“...students deemed *undecided* or *undeclared*, those who have yet to choose a major when they enter college, show less propensity to persist to their second semester (St. John, Hu Simmons, Carter, & Weber, 2004) or second year (Leppel, 2001) than students who have decided on a program of study.”

Leach and Patall, Need-Supportive Advising for Undecided Students, NACADA Journal (2016) p. 20

## INTEGRATION OF ACADEMIC ADVISING AND CAREER ADVISING

“Many advisors have long recognized how students consciously or unconsciously equate their academic major decisions with future career possibilities. The need to integrate academic and career information is critical in helping students with the curricular and extracurricular choices they are continually making.”

Gordon, *Career Advising: An Academic Advisor's guide*, p.5

## GORDON'S CURRICULUM: WORKING WITH UNDECIDED STUDENTS

Self-assessment

Educational planning

Career planning

Decision-making

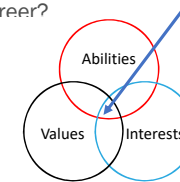


## GORDON'S ADVISING PROCESS

- Help student determine why she is undecided
- Help student develop a plan for exploration
- Help student integrate all the information she collected
- Support student while she makes decisions
- Help student initiate an action plan
- Encourage follow-up contact

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Interests
  - What activities do you enjoy?
  - What do you do in your leisure time?
- Abilities/Aptitudes
  - What are your personal/academic strengths?
  - What skills do you have?
- Values
  - What is important to you in a career?
  - What do you believe in?
- Goal Setting
  - Where are you going?
  - How will you get there?
  - What are your aspirations?



## EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

- What educational programs will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need?
- What college majors interest you? What vocational programs interest you?
- What courses will you need to complete?
- What degrees or credentials do you need?



## WHAT IS CAREER PLANNING?

Career planning and development is a lifelong process that includes all psychological, sociological, educational, economic, cultural and physical factors, as well as chance factors that interact to influence the career of the individual.



(Sears, 1982, adapted by Brown, 2003)

## CAREER CONSTRUCTION

- Life stories reveal patterns



- Patterns reveal themes



- Themes reveal purpose

Mark Savickas as cited by Steven Antalvari (2016)

## CAREER ADVISING?

- The understanding of interrelatedness of academic decisions and future life and career goals.
- Helping students increase awareness of who they are, where they want to go, and how to make decisions to get there.



## CAREER ADVISING SESSION

The 3-1 Process

### Inquire

- Ask probing questions so advisor and student as partners can address the situation correctly.

### Inform

- Advisors must connect advisees with reliable resources for career information, especially related to their particular interests and goals.

### Integrate

- Connect self-assessment with major, major with occupation information, and all exploration to the career planning process for effective decision-making.

## WEAVING CAREER ADVISING INTO ACADEMIC ADVISING

- Brush up on career development knowledge
- Know all of the career resources available on campus
- Weave career advising into preferred academic advising approaches

Donna J. Menke in NACADA Academic Advising Today

## DEGREE COMPLETION

### *Complete College America—NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising*

- Far too few full-time students graduate on time
- Graduating late or “taking an extra year” comes at great cost for students and their families
- Advisors play a critical role in boosting student success
- Many more students can take 15 credits per semester or term, greatly increasing their likelihood of on-time completion
- #15toFinish is an effective campaign for states and institutions to begin the important conversation of how to inform students of their choices and ensure they know what it takes to graduate on time

Complete College America and NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising Launch Effort to Boost on-time completion rates, reduce student debt. January 10, 2017  
<http://completecollege.org/complete-college-america-and-nacada-the-global-community-for-academic-advising-launch-effort-to-boost-on-time-completion-rates-reduce-student-debt/>



## COLLEGE COMPLETION STRATEGIES

- 15 to Finish
- PLA: CLEP, Dantes, AP, IB, CCP, Portfolios, ACE Military, etc.
- Year-round curriculum plans for working students
- Review and streamline curriculum
- Outreach to stop-out students
- Early alerts-absenteeism
- Mid-term and end of semester communication
- Financial support to allow persistence and prevent drop-out
- Campus food banks and professional dress for students in need
- Any other practices on your campus?



What is your best  
career advising  
tip?



## PLAN FOR EXPLORATION

### *Have your students...*

- Prepare an overview of campus majors
- Develop a summary of basic requirements for each major
- Identify possible career paths related to potential majors
- Generate a list of questions to ask
- Share and reflect on information with you
- Go to the campus career office as an additional source of information
- Interview professionals in the field—job shadow



## INTEGRATE INFORMATION

*Help your students by...*

- Understanding their developmental levels
- Ask probing, high cognitive level, value-clarifying questions
- Being familiar with web resources

## TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Early alert systems
- Advising software and reporting systems
- Degree completion software
- Career weblinks
- Inventories—interests, work values, abilities

What other resources does your campus provide for academic and career advising?



## SUPPORT STUDENTS

*Help your students...*

- Accept that this decision is theirs to make
- Understand why their decision-making style is important
- Recognize the reassuring support of a caring, knowledgeable advisor

## INITIATE THE ACTION PLAN

*Help your students by...*

- Supporting an action plan that specifies activities and a time-line for completion
- Acknowledging short- and long-term goals
- Reinforcing the need to evaluate and re-evaluate plans

## ENCOURAGE FOLLOW-UP

*Help your students...*

- Understand they can reach out to you
- Understand that the path is not linear and steps may need to be re-traced.
- Understand that these steps apply to life after graduation.



## RE-CAP

- Characteristics of still-deciding students
- Effective advising strategies
- Academic and vocational plan development
- Collaboration with campus career professionals
- Integration into career life-planning
- Impact of completion strategies
- Technology resources





## SELF-ASSESSMENT INVENTORIES

O\*Net online

- **Interests**  
• <https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Interests/>
- **Abilities**  
• <https://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Abilities/>
- **Work Values**  
• [http://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Work\\_Values/](http://www.onetonline.org/find/descriptor/browse/Work_Values/)



## RESOURCES FOR CAREER EXPLORATION

- Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH)  
[www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh)
- O\*NET online.onetcenter.org or  
[www.onetcenter.org](http://www.onetcenter.org)
- America's Career Kit  
<http://americascareerkit.com/>
- Occupational Outlook Quarterly  
<http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/home.htm>
- Occupational Outlook Statistics [www.bls.gov/oes](http://www.bls.gov/oes)
- Riley Guide Career Research Center  
<http://www.rileyguide.com/careers/index.shtml>

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