Advising Undecided/Undeclared Students for Success

Webinar Handout

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Advising First Center for Exploratory Students  
www.advisingfirst.fsu.edu/ExploratoryCenter

Choosing A Major or Occupation: A Guide for College Students  
http://www.career.fsu.edu/education/majors/choosing-a-major-guide.html

Center for Strategic Advising  
http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csa

Suggested Activities/Strategies for Your Campus to Utilize this Webinar to Its Full Potential

Pre-Webinar:

1. If you will be viewing the Webinar with a group, plan time for a discussion or take a poll of your viewers prior to the start of the broadcast to find out how your institution defines “undecided”. Here are some possibilities:
   • students who have not chosen a major field of study
   • students who had difficulty in identifying a program at the time of entry to the institution
   • students who are not prepared to make educational and/or vocational choices
   • students who elect to start without a major, hoping to use their initial time to explore options

2. Discuss what you think some of the reasons are that students at your institution change majors. We will be talking about this during the broadcast and asking for your ideas.

3. Discuss what you think makes undecided students different from their undecided peers. Here are some possibilities to consider:
   • undecided students are at greater risk of dropping out of college
   • decided students are better able to make good decisions
   • undecided students earn lower grades than decided students
   • undecided students are more aware they need to take time to explore
   • undecided students are not really any different than decided students
Gordon’s Exploration Process Model

- Also described by Steele & McDonald in Advising Students in Transition. (2000). In V.N. Gordon & W.R. Habley (Eds.), *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (pp. 144-161). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Comprehensive process involving the exploration of self, majors, careers, and an analysis of their own decision-making. Each phase is separate yet woven together by the students’ commitment to learn more about themselves, and find an academic major that fits in with the vision they hold for their future.

1. **Self-Knowledge** – includes an understanding of one’s values, interests, abilities and personality characteristics.
2. **Educational Knowledge** – connect self knowledge to institutional offerings; includes information about majors, minors, certificate programs, etc.
3. **Occupational Knowledge** – investigate how fields of study and marketability factors lead to engaging employment opportunities; includes information about resume writing, informational interviewing, job shadowing, etc, as well as career information.
4. **Decision-Making Knowledge** – includes an understanding of previous history and experience with decision-making as well as integrating the information collected about self, educational options, and occupational information.

Exemplary Practices Highlighted

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<th>Advisor</th>
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Highly Recommended Resources for Exploratory Advisors

Commission for Undecided and Exploratory Students Resource List

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

1) Recommend a free on-line assessment to help your students better understand their values, interests, skills and personality traits. Here are a few of our favorites:

- [www.bridges.com/cpflorida](http://www.bridges.com/cpflorida) Choices Planner is a career planning program that offers questionnaires to connect personal interests to possible careers.

- [www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp](http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp) The Myers-Briggs personality inventory helps to identify preferences and generates a four-letter personality profile. There are additional websites that provide detailed information and suggest careers for each personality type. Have students visit these sites to gather more information.


2) Reflective Questions reveal critical information regarding students’ values, interests and skills. Administer these as exploration assignments. Examples include:
   a. Would you rather have more free time and earn less money or earn more money and have less free time?
   b. What activities leave you energized?
   c. What topics of conversation grab your attention?
   d. Where have you received awards or recognitions?
   e. What comes naturally to you but is difficult for others?

3) Mirroring Exercise: Some of the best advice regarding majors and careers is given by students’ friends, mentors and former teachers. Encourage your advisees to seek out feedback from important people in their lives. This exercise can be completed on-line or face-to-face, and works best when students develop questions prior to the interview.

4) Ask students to describe in a journal, or illustrate a vision, of who they are, what they hope to accomplish, their ideal work environment or their “dream job.” Occupational daydreaming utilizes right brain activity and can be a powerful tool in harnessing students’ goals.

EDUCATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

1) Practice intentional advising. Beginning with their very first course schedule, encourage students to identify exploration areas and begin ‘testing the waters’ in courses of interest. Discourage students from using their general education curriculum to “get classes out of the way.”

2) Provide a centralized website where students can research academic information, including up-to-date lists of majors, degree requirements, access information and course descriptions. Students have told us that they judge the quality of an advising program based on the quality of the program’s web resources.

3) Offer a Major’s Fair, a Workshop, or Special Event to deliver important educational information to students. These can take place in the residence halls, the dining halls, or even outside under a tent. Free refreshments help attract the crowds.

4) Refer students to the array of Web resources available to help them better understand academic and career information. Some favorites are:

- [http://mymajors.com/](http://mymajors.com/) is an on-line assessment that matches interests and strengths and suggests majors that may be a good fit.

- [http://MyRoad.com](http://MyRoad.com) is College Board’s college and career planning website.
http://www.Princetonreview.com/majors.aspx is The Princeton Review’s website and offers access to wide variety of educational information.

http://www.worldwidelearn.com/online-education-guide/index.html is a site that allows students to explore their college major, research areas of study that are of interest, and discover online degree programs and career paths.

5) Assist your students with liking majors to potential careers by visiting these websites:

http://www.career.fsu.edu/occupations/matchmajor/
http://www.udel.edu/CSC/mrk.html
http://www.wwcc.edu/student_services/online_adv/planning/what_can_i_do.cfm
http://www.k-state.edu/acic/majorin/
http://6steps.monster.com/step1/careerconverter/

6) Assign your students the responsibility of reviewing the list of majors offered at your school. Have them identify programs of interest, cross off the majors they know they do not want, and further explore new areas for consideration. This is simple, but very effective!

7) The University Bookstore can be a great way for students to explore what the coursework in a particular major is about without having to register for lots of courses. Consider suggesting that your students go and review the textbooks affiliated with a particular major.

8) Create a “Class Visit” program, where students can obtain a “pass” to sit in for a day on an upper-division course in a particular major, and then set-up a follow-up conversation with the instructor.

OCCUPATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

1) Partner with the Career Services office at your institution and directly connect students to all of the resources offered to help build their resumes and secure a professional position upon graduation.

2) Refer students to the Road Trip Nation website when they are searching for inspiration from others who have set out on a quest to find their passion and purpose at: www.roadtripnation.com.

3) Have students conduct their own informational interviews with alumni of the university or individuals who are working in a field of interest. Coach the student on developing interview questions, proper attire, and interview behavior.

4) Have students narrow options by viewing the 16 Career Clusters located at http://www.careerclusters.org/16clusters.cfm.

5) Encourage activities that help students “define their focus.” These include internships, part-time jobs in potential interest areas, and job shadowing experiences.

6) Review the Occupational Outlook Handbook website www.bls.gov/oco/ for the latest career information including: training and education requirements, earnings, working conditions and projected job openings for literally hundreds of occupations.

7) Visit http://online.onetcenter.org/. The O*NET system serves as the nation's primary source of occupational information, providing comprehensive information on key attributes and characteristics of workers and occupations.

8) Resume writing and interviewing skills are an important component of students’ occupational knowledge. Offer to review these and provide honest feedback.

9) Provide information on directed individual study or undergraduate research activities where students work side-by-side with faculty members.

10) Explore graduate and professional schools at www.petersons.com/gradchannel/ and start investigating future educational options. Offer to critique your students’ essays when applying for internships or graduate schools.
AWARD WINNING EXPLORATORY PROGRAMS

Kent State University, Student Advising Center
http://www.kent.edu/success/firstyearflashes/index.cfm

Indiana University, University Division
http://ud.iub.edu/index.php

Millersville University of Pennsylvania, Exploratory Program
http://www.millersville.edu/~undprgm/

Niagara University, Academic Exploration Program
http://www.niagara.edu/aep/

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Division of General Studies
http://ucommxsrv1.unl.edu/dgs/

The Ohio State Exploration Program
http://exploration.osu.edu/

Oregon State University, University Exploratory Studies Program
http://oregonstate.edu/uesp/

Washburn University, Center for Undergraduate Studies and Programs
http://www.washburn.edu/services/cusp/

Waynesburg University, Academic Advising
http://www.waynesburg.edu/index.php?q=node/360

University of Wisconsin/River Falls, Pre-Major Advising Center
http://www.uwrf.edu/academic-success/

Additional Resources and References


