

Undeclared Student Program

The Undeclared Student Program (USP) is an intrusive advising program based on student developmental theory through which each student is guided, encouraged, and supported to take responsibility for their education, and become proactive in creating a successful and rewarding college experience.

The USP focuses on three major areas:

1. Students' significant exploration of self (interest, values, skills), majors, and careers.
2. Students' successful academic transition and development through their first year in college.
3. Students' development as responsible individuals and as part of a diverse and supportive community



Learning Objectives

This project addresses Undeclared students' major decision, in particular, what prevents them from selecting a major (concerns) and what helps them be more confident about making a decision. Our learning objectives are:

1. Students will clarify their top concerns for selecting a major and, through self, major, and career exploration activities, and developmental academic advising sessions, reduce their distress level for such concerns.
2. Students will learn more about personal interests, skills, and values, as well as more about majors and careers, through strategically planned activities, and will feel more confident about choosing a major

Methodology

1. Academic and Major/Career Advising sessions: students participated in three advising sessions during Fall '08 and Fall '09.
2. Major/Career Exploration activities: students completed one or more activity during each quarter, such as, an interview with the Chair or faculty of a department, interview with alumni, the Major Card Sort Online activity, the Myers Briggs Personality Inventory, etc.

Major/Career Exploration Activities		
MAJOR/CAREER ACTIVITIES LIST	Rate Your Level of Confidence (1 = no confidence to 5 = very confident)	DUE DATE
Attend a departmental "Change of Major" meeting	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Complete the Career & Major Exploration Worksheet at the Career Center	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Attend a Major/ Career Exploration Workshop	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Make an appointment with a Career Counselor to complete a career interest inventory or complete on-line assessments and discuss results with academic advisor	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Complete the Major Card Sort Activity on-line	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Complete a Job Shadowing activity	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Complete an informational interview/interview with Alumni who graduated in the major you are interested in or a professional in the field	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Interview the Dept Chair (or another faculty member) of the major you are interested in	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Observe a course in the major interest area of your choice, with permission of instructor	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Volunteer to work in major interest area	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	
Personal action plan(s) - discuss with your academic advisor	Before activity: 1 2 3 4 5 After activity: 1 2 3 4 5	

IMPORTANT: KEEP THIS HANDOUT IN YOUR ADVISING PORTFOLIO.

Major Decision Self-Assessment I
Student Support and Equity Programs

Name: _____ Bronco Number: _____ Advisor: _____

If you have a major or majors in mind, please list them below with the highest interest first and the lowest interest last:
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____

For each section below, please read all statements and check those that most apply to you:

Skills and Abilities
1. I am not confident that I have the skills required for this major.
2. I am not confident that I have the opportunity to enter into this major.
3. I don't know what my abilities are.
4. I know I have the ability to do well in anything I choose but it's difficult to find just one thing I would live as a career.

Uncertain career pathways
19. I am discouraged to make a decision of a major because everything is uncertain about what career you will pursue in the future.
20. The economy is so bad that it makes me question my major interests (major: _____).
21. I know what I want to major in but it's unclear what careers would follow with that major.
22. I know what career I want but it's unclear what major is best to prepare for that career (career: _____).

Multiple Interests
5. I am interested in more than one major.
6. I am having a difficult time deciding between two or more majors of interest.
7. I am interested in various areas but none "pop out" at me as a high interest.
8. I have interest in some things but I'm not sure if they lead to careers.

Recent change in interest
23. I have experienced recent changes in what I like to do that have impacted my interest in major.
24. The field that I was interested in has gone through some significant changes that I'm not sure about following it.
25. I recently found out I cannot pursue my major of interest and need to begin exploring other majors.

Lack of Interests
9. I don't feel I have to go to work eventually but no majors or careers appeal to me.
10. I don't know what my interests are.

"The right one"
26. I believe there is only one "right" major for me and I want to find out what it is.
27. I want to be 100% sure about the major I choose.
28. I want to be 100% sure about the career I pursue.

Concerns and opinions of others
11. I know what I want to major in (major: _____) but my:
- friends _____
- significant other _____
- other family members _____
12. I want to make sure that I do not pursue that interest who _____
13. I don't know what I want to major in but I need additional support from others in order to finalize my decision.

Need information
29. I know what I want to major in (and) just need to know what to do to declare.
30. I know what career I want and I just need to know what majors can prepare me for it.
31. I know what major I want but I still want to explore many majors and careers before I commit to one that I don't miss anything.
32. I want to fully explore majors and careers before deciding on one.

Indecision
14. Lately now, I haven't had to make important decisions for myself.
15. I'm used to making things for myself to do.
16. I am generally indecisive.
17. In regards to my major, I wish I could just take a test and know what to pursue.
18. It bothers me to have to make decisions.

Other
33. Write other statements that describe your level of decisiveness in addition to any selected from above: _____

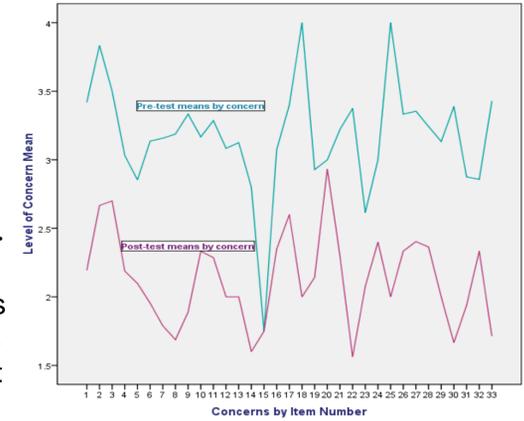
Of the statements you checked, please choose 3 that are of greatest concern to you, and rate the level of distress each is causing you:
#1 concern: _____ Level of distress: _____
#2 concern: _____ Level of distress: _____
#3 concern: _____ Level of distress: _____

Conducted a pre and post assessment using the Major Decision Self Assessment (MDSA). Students identified concerns for selecting a major, selected their top three concerns, and rated these on the level of distress that each produced.

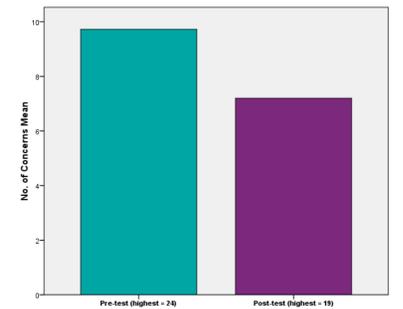
For Fall '09, we also implemented a pre and post assessment of students confidence in major before and after completing major/career exploration activities. We used the Major/Career Exploration Activities list for this assessment (see above).

Results

A t-test repeated measures analysis of variance to compare the level of distress experienced by students on their top three concerns (pre and post) yielded a statistically significant difference, $t(189) = 19.13, p > .00$, indicating that students experienced significantly less distress about their concerns at the completion of their first quarter in college.



A second t-test analysis of variance to compare the number of concerns students had before and at the completion of their first quarter resulted in a statistically significant reduction in number of concerns, $t(256) = 10.71, p > .00$.



Conclusion and Implications

Students' number of concerns and distress level for their top three concerns decreased significantly after Fall '08 quarter. Students shared with advisors that what they learned through their exploration activities and advising sessions helped them feel more comfortable with making a decision, and felt more confident. However, we learned that we needed more specific information on the effect of each major/career exploration activity on students' confidence in selecting a major.

For Fall '09, we implemented a pre and post assessment to address this (the Major/Career Exploration activities assessment). Our next steps are to analyze results for Fall '09 from the two assessments, compare MDSA results from Fall '08 to Fall '09 and determine trends, and identify the exploration activities that are most beneficial to students to develop programs around this information to assist more students in making informed decisions. We are currently collaborating with the Career Center in planning a half day program in Fall '10 (tentative), and the results from our Fall '09 data will help us design a better program.