Moving to Plan B: When the First Major Doesn’t Work Out

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UCSC Winter Advising Forum, 2011

- UCSC Majors and Major Migration
- Relationship between Majors and Careers
- Brainstorm Session: How can we provide advice that will help students successfully qualify for a major and earn a degree?
“While difficult to capture, it has been estimated that the number of students who go through a process of re-deciding during their college years is approximately 50 to 75 percent.”

Some Reasons for Changing Majors

- Lack of information
- No opportunity to have gone through a formal career-decision-making process
- Course work for initial major too challenging
- Pressure from family or friends to pursue a particular major
- Students denied access to first-choice major

Major Migration at UCSC: Example from 2001 Frosh Cohort:

- 118 listed literature major on application
- 45 of those 118 (38%) graduated in literature within 6 years
- 38 of those 118 (32%) graduated in a different major within 6 years
- 35 of those 118 (30%) did not graduate within 6 years
Major Migration at UCSC: Example from 2001 Frosh Cohort:

- 157 of them graduated in literature within 6 years
- 45 of those 157 (29%) listed literature on their UCSC application
- 74 of those 157 (47%) listed undeclared
- 26 of those 157 (17%) listed another major in arts, humanities, or social sciences
- 12 of those 157 (8%) listed a major in PBSci or Engineering
Major Migration at UCSC: Example from 2001 Frosh Cohort:

- 65 listed politics on application
- 17 of those 65 (26%) graduated in politics within 6 years
- 27 of those 65 (42%) graduated in a different major within 6 years
- 21 of those 65 (32%) did not graduate within 6 years
Major Migration at UCSC: Example from 2001 Frosh Cohort:

- 110 of this cohort graduated in politics within 6 years
- 17 of those 110 (15%) listed politics on their UCSC application
- 48 of those 110 (44%) listed undeclared
- 35 of those 110 (32%) listed another major in the arts, humanities, or social sciences
- 10 of those 110 (9%) listed a major in PBSci or Engineering
Complete Major Migration Reports were compiled by the office of Institutional Research and Policy Studies, and are available online at:

- http://planning.ucsc.edu/irps/retengrad.asp
UCSC students who are not declared in a major at the beginning of the junior year are less likely to graduate than those students who are declared in a major.
## Majors at UCSC, 2001–2011

(Does not include combined majors)

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Majors</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Majors with prerequisites or admission reqts</td>
<td>17 (42%)</td>
<td>30 (60%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Majors with admission reqts based on work better than 2.0 (passing) level</td>
<td>3 (7%)</td>
<td>18 (36%)</td>
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<td>Majors with no admission reqts, but disqualification policies at LD level</td>
<td>5 (12%)</td>
<td>13 (26%)</td>
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<td>Majors with some required performance at LD level</td>
<td>22 (55%)</td>
<td>43 (86%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Majors with disqualification policies</td>
<td>12 (30%)</td>
<td>26 (52%)</td>
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Possible Consequences

- At today’s rates, a UCSC student who attends for three years and leaves without a degree will have spent the following through the course of trying:
  - $38,575.23 in required fees alone
  - $92,485.23 including housing, food, and personal expenses
“I am going to be a doctor. So I can’t major in something outside the sciences.”

“I want a major that will help me get a job in business.”

“My parents won’t pay for me to major in something that won’t help me make money.”
What is the relationship between a person’s undergraduate major and his/her future career prospects?
Brainstorms:

- How can we prepare students at the lower-division level to navigate this landscape? What advice might individual advisers or the advising system give them that would help them to connect with a major in which they will succeed?
Brainstorms:

- How can we identify students who are likely to become ineligible for the major they hope to pursue? What kind of outreach can we do to reach this population?
Brainstorms:

- When a student becomes ineligible for their first-choice major at the upper-division level, how can we help them identify options for completing a degree?
Thank You

- For attending
- For contributing
- For your commitment to student success

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