

Major Exploration Tactics

Chronically Indecisive

Professional counseling to:

- Locate an “internal locus of control”
- Help alleviate, or learn to cope with stress;
- Navigate the decision-making process;
- Manage indecisiveness;
- Work through difficulties with external constraints

Entering First Year Students

Adviser should assess specific need:

- Information: personal, academic, career
- Developmental stage with respect to decision-making skills
- Personal-social concerns
- Create open and supportive environment to alleviate anxieties.

Major Changers

- Normalize the experience, underscore that this is often the best decision.
- Help students:
 - Rethink their goals.
 - Generate alternatives: what other majors satisfy their interests and abilities?
 - See how credits will transfer to the other major.
 - Understand career opportunities
 - Create a plan of action
- Clarifying values is an important part of this process.

Undecided Upper-level Students

- Those with many areas of interest need coaching on which one to focus on right now, or how to combine multiple interest areas.
- Those who did not meet admission standards to their desired major, need help to reset goals or search out alternative pathways.
- Need advising on timing and institutional policies.

High Ability Students

- Often these students need more help letting go of areas of interest and ability, rather than generating engagement in multiple majors.
- More focused on a career (Gerrity, Lawrence, Sedlacek, 1993)
- Individual majors may be appealing.
- Suggest major towards a specific career path, set future goals
- Focus on personal exploration and vocational exploration
- Help them find Internships related to career choice

Student Athletes

- Important to understand the philosophical, political, and social context for athletes at UCSC.
- Knowledge of NCAA procedures on major declaration and academics: must be proposed as freshman.
- Help students focus on graduation and degree progression, rather than maintaining sports eligibility.

Older Students

- More aware of interests and abilities through life experiences, but need help discerning available opportunities
- Likely to possess confidence in their pursuit for a career
- Need help seeing relevance and application of learning
- Feeling like they need to overcome the obstacle of lost time, sense of belonging because of age
- Should also be encouraged to seek advice

Underprepared Students

- Assess academics and make a plan for developing specific areas.
- Assess for potential undiagnosed learning disabilities.
- Avoid discouraging.
- Focus on building foundational skills prior to major exploration.
- Upper-level students may need help identifying pathways to achieve their goals.

Transfer students from Community College

- Important to provide exploration services right at entry.
- Can't assume student had opportunity for major exploration at the community college.
- Comprehensive transfer center.
- Identify academic strengths from community college.
- Student success courses.

Summarized from: Gordon, V. (2007). *The undecided college student: An academic and career advising challenge*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.

Want to learn more?

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Need a bit more help exploring?
Be sure to check out:

The Career Center's
Choosing a Major
Workshop:

- Wednesday,
November 20th
5:00pm-6:30pm –
Bay Tree Building –
Cervantes and
Velasquez
Conference Room

Major
Exploration
for the
Truly Undecided



Guide Book