

**University Options:
Welcoming the 'uncertain' student
and supporting the
change-of-major student**

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AGENDA

- Uncertain students: key findings
- RIT and uncertain students
- What are other institutions doing?
- Proposed: University Options

Uncertain Students

Uncertain Students: Key Findings

Cuseo (2005) summarized the following research findings:

1. Three of every four students are uncertain or tentative about their career choice at college entry (Frost, 1991; Titley & Titely, 1980).
2. Among first-year students who enter college with a major in mind, less than 10% feel they 'know a great deal about their intended major' (Lemoine, cited in Erickson & Strommer, 1991).

Uncertain Students: Key Findings

3. Uncertainty among new students frequently increases rather than decreases during their first two years of college (Tinto, 1993).
4. Over two thirds of entering students change their major during their first year (Kramer, Higley & Olson, 1993).
5. Between 50% and 70% of all students who enter college with a declared major change their mind at least once before they graduate (Foote, 1980; Gordon 1984; Noel 1985).
6. Only one senior out of three will major in the same field they preferred as a freshman (Willingham, 1985).

Uncertain Students Are Successful

A national study of over 20,000 decided and undecided students at different types of postsecondary institutions found that undecided students achieved higher levels of academic achievement, and were more likely to graduate than students who were decided. (Lewallen, 1995).

‘Major Changers’

- Studies have shown major-changers have higher graduation rates than students who have not changed majors. (Cuseo, 2005).
- Students who change majors may take more time towards graduation if they change after they have earned a large number of credits in a major. (Cuseo, 2005).

Decided Students Still Need Attention

Decided students may be at risk for attrition if their decision is:

- *Premature* - lacking planning, careful thought and consideration
- *Unrealistic*- lacking self-knowledge and awareness
- *Uninformed*- lacking sufficient knowledge about program and/or career paths

(Cuseo, 2005).

Uncertain students and RIT

RIT and Uncertain students

- Majority of students enter matriculated into an RIT degree program.
- Some of RIT's colleges offer students an undeclared option within the college:
 - CLA-RIT Exploration
 - CIAS-Undeclared Art & Design; Undeclared Crafts
 - SCOB-Undeclared Business
 - KGCOE-Engineering Exploration
 - CAST-Undeclared Engineering Technology
 - COS-Science Exploration

Changes of Program 2006-1 to 2007-1

- 1732 total changes of program
- 1123 students changed major within college
- 609 students changed major **and** college
- Changes between every college except:
 - KGCOE to NTID
 - CIAS to KGCOE

2006-1 to 2007-1 Changes of Program: Within Colleges

SCOB	80 (52 male 28 female)
KGCOE	297 (254 male 43 female)
COLA	22 (11 male 11 female)
CAST	149 (102 male 47 female)
NTID	188 (87 male 101 female)
CIAS	127 (49 male 78 female)
COS	102 (52 male 50 female)
GCCIS	158 (151 male 7 female)

1123 students changed programs within colleges

758 male

365 female

Other institutions

What are others doing?

- **Iowa State:**
 - Undecided about your major?
Iowa State is the place for you! ...
- **Valley City State**
 - WELCOME! Being Undecided is more Usual than Unusual for college freshmen. Relax! Don't worry. ...
- **Purdue:** In April 1995, the Purdue University Senate approved a three-year pilot program for beginning, exploratory, undecided freshmen students. This pilot, called the Undergraduate Studies Program (USP), was modeled after a program at The Pennsylvania State University. In August 1996, 212 students started with USP...

Mission and Vision at Purdue

Our Vision

To serve as a gateway into the University through which undeclared incoming freshmen and continuing upper-class students are provided the guidance and have the freedom to explore and identify their academic and career opportunities.

Our Mission

- To provide a smooth and academically sound transition from the Undergraduate Studies Program to the student's chosen degree-granting program;
- To help students develop information-seeking and decision-making skills with regard to academic and career opportunities;
- To increase student retention at Purdue University; and
- To reduce current Change of Degree Objective (CODO) activity at Purdue University

Why should RIT react?

- Need to pull in more applications from top quality students
- Strategic plan supports this notion (Goal B5)
- Competition from other schools
- New interdisciplinary connections
- Support persistence and graduation rate goals
- Serves students better!

University Options

University Options Objectives

- **Objective #1: *Welcome the uncertain student***: Provide a structure or program for those *potential* RIT students (preferably those who would not otherwise come to RIT) who are uncertain about which major to choose.
- **Objective #2: *Embrace the ‘major changer’***: Provide a (more robust and ‘safe’) structure for those students admitted to RIT who may want or need to change majors.

University Options Concept

- New uncertain students will be admitted into the University Options program at RIT
- Freshmen in the University Options will take the 1st year to explore and then declare a major in the spring of 1st year
- New students who identify with a major or college can still matriculate directly into the specific degree program or an exploration program
- Current students who are uncertain or who might fit a particular degree program can be admitted into the University Options program until they identify the right major

University Options Characteristics

- Program sits outside any college but connects via articulation agreements to existing majors
- Robust central university-wide advising and support is critical
- Students will have opportunity to explore disciplines
 - Critical to ensure how explorations will lead to a degree
- Special curriculum and programming will be needed for undecided students
- Coordination and staffing will be critical

Next Step

- Pilot 2009 program for 200 students
- Form University Options Planning Team
- Colleges, Internal Transfer, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management
- Tasks:
 - Determine the staffing and organization needs
 - Determine the participating programs
 - Craft the articulation agreements
 - Recommend curriculum development

R·I·T

she can have a dramatic impact on people's lives

realizes that through innovation and her academic interest in biology, ...

Michele is admitted into the University Options program at RIT as an honors student

UO students come to RIT for an 'early start' program

In the early start program, Michele meets new friends ..

In her 1st year, Michele, begins to focus her interest in the bio area

Michele declares a double major in biomedical engineering AND ethics

Michele discovers the **Center for Student Innovation** and...

Michele successfully graduates and has a successful career thanks to an intentional general education program that provides the foundation for her engineering major

And falls in love with RIT (She's smart, remember?)

Is exposed to undergraduate research ...

Explores majors, is challenged with academic rigor through a theme-based general education ...



Discussion?