Understanding Your Indecisive Advisee: A Review of Student Development Theory

Students that declare a major as new freshman often change majors at least once prior to graduation. In a study by Micceri (2001), the data indicate that students who change majors actually increase their chance of attaining a degree (pg.9). Student Development Theory can help advisors understand and assist the indecisive advisee. Before selecting an appropriate college major, undecided students and students considering changing their major may need to learn that their progression toward this decision involves a learning process, which can take time (Gordon, 1995). The learning process may begin informally with the elimination of certain majors and through an informal process of comparing and contrasting various majors and careers.

It is important to note that, according to Chickering (1993), making a major/career choice IS NOT always a priority for students; they may instead be focused on establishing independence and their personal and social growth (as cited in Gordon, 1995, p. 85). Although each student’s progression toward major/career choice is unique, Tiedman and O’Hara have identified 4 Stages of Career Development (as cited by Gordon, 1995).

1. **Exploration**: At this stage, students may feel anxious about their future career. They need to identify their interests and abilities and learn how these skills relate to various careers. The following may help students in the Exploration Stage:
   - Utilizing Career Services: to administer student assessments that match interests and abilities to majors/careers
   - Meeting with faculty and other career professionals
   - Meeting with an academic advisor

2. **Crystallization**: At this stage of development, students have identified viable alternatives and have made tentative choices. They begin to recognize their early, possibly inappropriate, choices. Students still feel undecided; therefore, support and information while they test their alternatives is valuable during this stage.

3. **Choice**: At this stage, students have made a firm commitment to a particular major/career. Relief and satisfaction characterize this stage in the student’s development. However, if a student in this stage realizes their choice is inappropriate, they may return to the Exploration Stage, particularly if the earlier stages were not completed successfully.

4. **Clarification**: In the final stage, the consequences of the student’s choices are internalized. An action plan is initiated for completing their chosen degree. Again, support for students as they integrate their chosen plan into their lives is important.

Welcome!
New CLA Faculty Advisors

The following CLA faculty members recently completed or will be completing Advising Training and will be assigned new advisees prior to the Fall 2009 Semester:

*Beth Austin, Communication  
*Chris Julin, Writing Studies  
*Jennifer Reierson, Communication  
*Kate Carlson, Geography  
*Mark Jennings, Political Science  
*Jake Caceres-Garcia, Spanish  
*Jill Doerfler, American Indian Studies  
*Ed Downs, Communication  
*Bulent Anil, Economics

*Qiang Fang, History  
*Hilary Kowino, English  
*Tristram McPherson, Political Science  
*Kathryn Milun, Anthropology  
*Amy Shuster, Political Science  
*Joseph Staats, Political Science  
*Jeremy Youde, Political Science  
*Rochelle Zuck, English

CLA Student Affairs would like to thank the following faculty members for advising new students during A & R, your participation is greatly appreciated.

*Avesa Rockwell  
*John Hansen  
*Milan Kovacovic  
*Jen Jones  
*Tineke Ritmeester  
*Eileen Zeitz  
*Susan Peralta Dewey  
*Barb Titus  
*Hairong Feng  
*Mike Mullins  
*Jason Ford  
*Mike Lynch  
*Bruce Mork  
*Deb Petersen-Perlman  
*Emily Gaarder  
*David Beard  
*John Schwetman

*Mike Mageau  
*Janelle Wilson  
*Melissa Walls  
*Kristen Hylenski  
*Tongzin Zhu  
*Steve Matthews  
*Deborah Plechner  
*Nkasa Yelengi  
*Linda Grover  
*Rob Weidner  
*Aaron Boyson  
*Hilary Kowino  
*Amy Shuster  
*Jeremy Youde  
*Beth Austin  
*Brandy Hoffman

Academic Probation-Midterm Progress Reports

- Midterm Progress Report: As a condition of their Probation Status, students are required to complete and submit a Midterm Progress Report to CLA SAAC before they register for next semester. Students are reminded of this requirement and will be scheduling appointments with you to review their progress.