Description

The Major Declaration Series is a compilation of three programs intended to help sophomores with their major exploration and decision making process. The first program was the Major Declaration Seminar which took place on September 18th in which Dr. Tynes and representatives from Career Services discussed to 55 sophomore students the steps for declaring a major and how to determine personal interests and values. The second program, Major Meals, happened over the course of October 21-23. At this event, faculty representatives from a variety of academic departments and alumni sat down to dinner with sophomore students to discuss the details of a particular discipline and answer any questions students had. 121 sophomore students attended Major Meals over the course of three nights. Finally, the third program, Major Declaration and Beyond, took place on January 22nd. At this program, representatives from Career Services and the Office of the Registrar spoke to 27 sophomore students about specific steps and requirements for declaring a major as well as ways to utilize and leverage your major in the future.

Assessment Method

An online questionnaire was sent to all sophomore students at the end of the school year. Of the 513 sophomore students, 96 completed the assessment questionnaire for a response rate of 19%.

Results

Among the 96 respondents, 49% attended at least one Major Declaration Series program and 51% did not attend any program. Of the respondents who attended at least one program, 57% attended only one program, 34% attended two programs, and 9% attended all three programs.

The program was designed to promote three CAS Learning & Development Outcomes and did so with mixed results:

After attending a Major Declaration Series program, sophomore students will

- Apply learned knowledge to their major declaration decision making process (CAS Outcome Domain A4: Relating knowledge to daily life). There was evidence that this learning outcome was attained:
  - 83% of students who attended the Major Declaration Seminar found the program to be beneficial to their major declaration decision making process.
  - 88% of students who attended Major Meals found the program to be beneficial to their major declaration decision making process.
  - 92% of students who attended Major Declaration & Beyond found the program to be beneficial to their major declaration decision making process.

- Students were asked to further elaborate. Some of their responses were:
  - “Major meals was probably the turning point in my major declaration process. I was on the fence about what steps to take for my spring semester and having the opportunity to talk with Alumni from different departments immediately helped me gain a new perspective.”
“Major meals is an awesome chance to meet professors and others interested in the major. Speaking directly with faculty really gave a lot of insight into what it means to be a "English, urban studies, etc."

major, and even beyond that."

“The [Major Declaration & Beyond] program helped me, because it gave me the information for how to declare my major.”

“The seminar in January helped a lot and answered many of my questions and concerns.”

- Identify experiences that are most helpful to their major declaration decision making process (CAS Outcome Domain B3: Effective Reasoning). There was evidence that this learning outcome was attained:
  - All respondents reported at least one experience that was most beneficial to their major declaration decision making process.
  - 21% of students who attended at least one program reported that speaking to alumni was beneficial to their major declaration decision making process.
  - 68% of students who attended at least one program reported that speaking with current students was beneficial to their major declaration decision making process.
  - 83% of students who attended at least one program reported that speaking to faculty was beneficial to their major declaration decision making process.
  - Students were asked to further elaborate. Some of their responses were:
    - “Speaking with alumni gave me confidence in future opportunities that my major would provide.”
    - “Talking to both faculty and students who are in my intended major really helped me decide on whether or not I wanted to go into that major.”
    - “I already knew my major coming in but speaking with older students and developing good relationships with the faculty cemented my decision.”

- Assess personal interests, skills, and values during their major declaration decision making process (CAS Outcome Domain C1: Realistic self-appraisal, self-understanding, and self-respect). There was evidence that this learning outcome was attained:
  - Of students who attended at least one program, 96% said they gave significant consideration to their personal interests during their major declaration decision making process compared to 92% of those who did not attend a program.
  - Of students who attended at least one program, 94% said they gave significant consideration to their personal skills during their major declaration decision making process compared to 84% of those who did not attend a program.
  - Of students who attended at least one program, 87% said they gave significant consideration to their personal values during their major declaration decision making process compared to 80% of those who did not attend a program.

  - D
    - “My personal interest played a huge role. And my skills definitely had the biggest impact. Values come into play when you consider what you'll do after Trinity.”
    - “Personal values played a MAJOR role in my decision making process.”
    - “I chose my major based on what I was most interested in-- not what I was best at. I'm not the strongest writer, but I chose English because I love analyzing literature (and hopefully I'll grow as a writer).”

To request a copy of the assessment instrument, email DAT@trinity.edu.

Discussion

The Major Declaration Series proved successful in helping guide students through their major declaration process. Major Meals continues to be the most popular and successful program of the series most likely because it provides students a casual and direct opportunity to meet with faculty in their potential majors.

The total cost of the Major Declaration Series was $3,444.65. $89.97 was spent on light refreshments for the Major Declaration Seminar and $59.98 was spent on refreshments for Major Declaration & Beyond.
The bulk of the costs ($3,294.70) were related to the three night event, Major Meals. Expenses went towards providing plated meals for 121 sophomore students as well as 35 faculty and 13 alumni.

The Major Declaration Seminar and Major Declaration & Beyond required an average amount of time and work. The majority of my efforts were spent creating and distributing advertisements for the events as well as finding and coordinating with guest speakers. Major Meals required significantly more work. In addition to being present at all three nights of the event, I spent several months reaching out to and coordinating with faculty and alumni. Additional time was spent planning food orders, arranging the physical space, creating and distributing advertisements, and corresponding with interested students. Ultimately, based on attendance and the outcomes stated above, the cost and effort for the Major Declaration Series was absolutely justified.

The Major Declaration Series should continue for the 2014-2015 year, as there is a clear interest by sophomore students in the information that is being provided. Based on feedback, considerations that should be made include:

- Further incorporating upper-class students who have already declared a major into our programs.
- Possibly placing less emphasis on or reimagining how we incorporate alumni in our programs.