

Liberal Arts Students in Transition: An Advising Guide

Today's Denison Student--Denison Facts:

Class of 2008 Graduates employed within 6 months of graduation: 65%

Class of 2008 Graduates enrolled in a graduate school 6 months after graduation: 23%

Graduates enrolled in graduate school after 5 years: 40%

Graduates enrolled in graduate school after 10 years: 53%

What Matters?

First and second year students need encouragement to explore academic courses/programs but being "indecisive" or "undecided" between choices beyond the sophomore year puts them "at risk" for not performing well academically, leaving, or stopping out (Crites, J.). This is especially true if the indecision causes stress and uneasiness with not being able to make academic choices (i.e. taking a variety of classes, but not able to focus on interests). Understanding the connection between the liberal arts and future goals can help improve retention of "at risk" students. By assessing interests, values, and attributes early, in conjunction with exploratory classes and experiential learning, students learn what areas of study may appeal to them most and demonstrate confidence in that decision.

Step by Step Plan: Helping students with academic planning and goal setting

Step I:

Encourage students to explore interests, values, and abilities through questioning, taking a variety of general education courses, reviewing course catalog descriptions, reviewing textbook material in the bookstore, talking with faculty, etc.

Refer students to Career Services for the *Campbell Interest & Skill Survey*. Students will receive their assessment results after it is discussed with a Career Services staff member. Students can share results with their faculty advisor.

Refer students to Alumni/Career Panels sponsored through-out the year. Encourage students to explore interests through the Denison Internship Program or summer internship experience.

Step II:

Help students identify interests in academic programs, learning outcomes, enjoyment in class activities, out of class activities, and assessment of strengths.

Encourage students to reflect upon the "Myths About Choosing a Major". Encourage students to explore and solidify interests through the Denison Internship Program, study abroad, academic research, or related on-campus activities.

Refer students to Career Services Library, 306 Burton D. Morgan Center for additional resources that describe academic interests with career aspirations.

Step III:

Help students identify transitional competencies which provide enjoyment and those that can be enhanced. (See Transferable Competencies List in this guide).

Encourage students to identify and list competencies, and activities which bring them the most satisfaction. (i.e. conducting research, tutoring and helping others, writing, public speaking) Refer students to summer research, study abroad or other types of experiential learning.

Refer students to Career Services for information on the Career/Graduate & Professional School Day, and Non-Profit/Government Career Fair.

LIBERAL ARTS TRANSFERABLE COMPETENCIES

Planning and Organizational: Follow up with others to evaluate progress of tasks; conduct meetings; give praise/credit to others for work well done; motivate others on group projects; facilitate brainstorming activities; develop goals for an organization; work effectively with organization members; prioritize tasks; facilitate discussions on program planning processes; give feedback.

Oral and Written Communication: Organize and present ideas effectively for formal and spontaneous speeches; effectively participate in group discussions; prepare concise and logically written materials; listen carefully and respond to verbal and nonverbal messages; respond appropriately to positive and negative feedback; debate issues without being abrasive to others.

Decision Making/Supervisory & Management/Leadership: Understand the steps involved with effective decision-making; facilitate groups in the decision-making process; take responsibility for decisions; evaluate the effectiveness of a decision; make decisions without feeling pressured; remain flexible with decisions; explain to others unpopular decisions. Motivate others toward common goals; use effective coaching skills with peers or subordinates.

Financial Management: Develop a budget accurately estimating expenses and income; justify the organizations' budget to others; work within a budget; keep accurate and complete financial records; develop and implement a fund-raising event.

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution: Anticipate problems before they occur; define the problem and identify possible/apparent causes; identify possible alternative solutions and select the most appropriate ones; facilitate group members in identifying and evaluating possible solutions; develop plans to implement solutions; understand the steps involved with critical thinking.

Teamwork/Teambuilding: Motivate team members to work toward common goals; understand strengths and weaknesses of members and use strengths and weaknesses of members to build team development; collaborate on projects; support and praise one another for reaching goals and accomplishments.

Ethics and Tolerance: Define and explain ethical behavior; practice ethical behavior in difficult situations; accept others' opinions and actions in a non-judgmental way; understand non-sexist, non-racist; non-ageist, and non-homophobic behavior; interact with and appreciate people from diverse cultural, social and religious backgrounds; interact with and appreciate physically or mentally challenged individuals.

Personal/Professional Management: Work effectively under pressure; manage time and stress effectively; evaluate personal and professional strengths and weaknesses; take initiative in job-related duties; discern appropriate behaviors for the workplace.

TOP TEN DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES

Key attributes are sought by graduate and professional schools as well as employers. A liberal arts education provides students an opportunity to develop most of these valuable abilities. Students will probably find that these liberal arts attributes will "transfer" and apply to a wide variety of life situations and career options.

Internships, summer jobs, campus activities, and volunteer work can provide additional scenarios in which to test and strengthen transferable competencies during college. As a result, people who have developed solid competencies in the areas listed below are more likely to BECOME LEADERS in their employing organizations, will probably ENJOY MORE JOB SATISFACTION, and may be more LIKELY TO BE PROMOTED or to perhaps develop their own successful business opportunities.

THE "TOP TEN DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES" ARE:

Communications - The expression, transmission and interpretation of knowledge and ideas. Speaking effectively, writing concisely, listening attentively, etc.

Human Relations - The use of interpersonal communication for resolving conflict, relating to and helping people. Developing rapport, supporting & motivating others, teamwork, etc.

Research & Planning - The search for specific knowledge and the ability to conceptualize future needs and solutions for meeting those needs. Creating ideas, identifying problems, identifying resources, gathering information, solving problems, setting goals, etc.

Technological Savvy - Ability to confidently navigate the net, create your own presentations and effectively use e-mail.

Embracing Diversity - Ability to work effectively with people representing all levels of experience, education, power, different cultures, etc.

Self-Development - Accurately assessing your own strengths and weaknesses, and taking steps in order to improve or compensate.

Comfortableness with Ambiguity - Ability to learn while doing and change courses rapidly when business dictates.

Initiative/Self-Motivation - Ability to take independent action to increase profits, streamline processes, and bring in new business. Demonstrate drive, energy, and enthusiasm.

Organizing - Ability to bring some order out of chaos; be it of knowledge, resources, tasks, problems, information, or timetables.

Quantitative Reasoning - This is otherwise known as not being afraid of numbers. Understand mathematical concepts and statistical data without flinching and apply them in problem solving.

Information adapted from "Career Waves," Howard Figler, Vol. 3
and "Ten Key Transferable Skills," Camille Primm, Kforce.com
and "Career Handbook: Transferrable Skills," UMD Career Ser