Burger Flipping or Brain Surgery? Using Technology to Help Students Make a Good Choice of a Major and Career

Faculty attending this session at the National Council on Student Development (NCSD) Conference in New Orleans on October 17, 2016, will be able to use their cell phones to access technology to experience a cutting edge career guidance program that can help students make an informed choice of a college major and career.

Why is making an informed choice of a college major and career important? Many students often arrive at community colleges with unclear goals and career plans. Research has shown that these students often become confused and less likely to achieve their career goals (Scott-Clayton, 2012.) These undecided students are at greater risk of losing motivation and dropping out of college without achieving success (Fralick, 1993.) Only 39% community college students will complete their degrees or certificates within six years. Research completed at Cuyamaca Community College in El Cajon, California showed and increased persistence rate of about 27% for students completing a college success course with an integrated career development component. Helping students make an informed choice of a college major based on their personal strengths and interests will help students to increase motivation as well as success.

How can we assist students in making an informed choice of a major and career? New technology including online career assessments can be used to assist students with career development.

* The online Do What You Are© Personality Assessment helps students identify their personality types and matching careers. It yields results comparable to Myers-Briggs, but is more user friendly. It is based on college scenarios that are easy for students to read and understand.
* The MI Advantage© helps student to understand and think positively about their personal strengths. It helps students identify their multiple intelligences and matching careers.
* Both assessments match students’ results to the O’Net database of careers from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics for career research.

Career assessment results and links to matching careers are in an online portfolio which students can use throughout their college careers and beyond. This portfolio includes links to Indeed.com which shows actual job openings in the students selected careers. Actual job openings help students gain a realistic understanding of potential earnings and can be used upon graduation to gain employment.

The online assessments are supplemented with career curriculum in the following areas:

Create Your Success

This section explores the career decision making process, presents statistics on earnings based on educational attainment, and encourages students to take a proactive approach to their career development.

Exploring Your Personality and Major

Through the use of online technology personalized results of the DWYA are integrated into this section that helps students understand their personal strengths and how they can be used in the job market and throughout their lives.

Exploring Interests and Values

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Interest Profiler (free resource) is used to help student understand their vocational interests and connect them to careers in the O\*Net database. This Interest Profiler is based on Holland’s Theory of Vocational Personality.

Exploring Multiple Intelligences

Online technology is used to display the students results from the MI Advantage assessment of multiple intelligences in a section that helps students to understand their results. This assessment is based on theory of Howard Gardner who looked at intelligence in a broader and more inclusive way that had been done in the past. He defined multiple intelligences as the human ability to solve problems or design or compose something valued in at least one culture. This theory helps students think more positively about their talents and connect them to careers in the O\*Net database.

Planning Your Career and Education

This section helps students connect their personal strengths to the world of work by presenting current employment trends and how to do career research including career outlook. Next students are provided guidance in connecting their career results with an educational plan. At this point students are encouraged to see their counselors or advisors to make an educational plan consistent with their career goals.

Updated Job Search Strategies

Technology is changing the way that people find employment and students need to understand these new opportunities. Strategies include online resumes, establishing a personal online brand, preparing for interviews, setting up a job search plan, and taking action.

New developments in technology enable faculty to interact and follow up on student progress online. Faculty can view the online portfolio and curriculum and comment on student work.

Technology provides the means for making the curriculum interactive. Each chapter contains interactive exercises, quizzes with immediate feedback and journal entries that provide the opportunity for students to think about the material and apply it to their own lives.

Faculty can view the results of the interactive activities, quizzes, and journal entries and provide personalized feedback to students. This enables early intervention to assure student engagement and has positive results in retention and success.

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References:

Fralick, M.A. (1993), College success: A study of positive and negative attrition. *Community College Review*, 20 (5), 29-36.

Scott-Clayton, J. (2012). The shapeless river: Does a lack of structure inhibit students’ progress at community colleges? (CCRC Working Paper No. 25). New York, NY: Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. Retrieved from <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/lack-of-structure-students-progress.html>