Academic Advising and Career Development for Undecided Transfer Students

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College students unready, unwilling, or unable to make educational and/or vocational choices have proven to be a challenge for academic advisors, career counselors, faculty, administrators, and researchers for more than 80 years. Research conducted in the last 20 years (e.g., Anderson, Creamer, & Cross, 1989; Gordon, 1984; Stark, 2002) has provided useful information regarding subgroups of undecided students who share common characteristics as well as the specific interventions that have been developed and implemented to best meet their needs. Undecided college transfer students are one such subgroup, and their situation poses a unique combination of individual and institutional concerns regarding enrollment, retention, and graduation.

Most of the research on undecided students has focused on academic and career indecision for first-year students. However, many college students are remaining, or becoming, undecided during their sophomore year and beyond (e.g., Titley & Titley, 1980). This indecision not only includes tenuousness about choosing a major or program of academic study but also incorporates uncertainty regarding careers. Major and career indecision is especially challenging for sophomore and junior transfer students who face increased pressure to make academic decisions in a timely fashion.

This chapter will discuss the unique academic and career development needs of upper-division transfer students. Pertinent research on undecided students and transfer students is presented followed by a discussion of the literature regarding career indecision in college students. Interventions that include effective programs, policies, and procedures for helping undecided upper-class students make satisfactory and satisfying academic and career decisions are addressed, along with recommendations for future practice.

Undecided College Students

The research on undecided students is voluminous and can be traced back to the 1920s. Even using the lowest estimates, undecided students comprise a substantial population on any campus, and it has been repeatedly reported that at least half of all entering first-year college students are unable to declare a major. Titley and Titley (1980) found that three out of four students at Colorado State University were uncertain or tentative about their choice of major and/or career. Another early study found that only one out of three seniors were majoring in the same area they declared as first-year students (Willingham, 1985). There is little agreement, however, as to who the undecided students really are and whether they are less likely to complete a degree than their decided classmates. Some of the literature (e.g., Lucas & Epperson, 1990) has identified differences between decided and undecided students in regards to vocational identity, grades, and adjustment to college. Other studies (e.g., Ashby, Wall, & Osipow, 1966) have found no significant differences.
between undecided and decided students. Overall, the early research on undecided students can be characterized as conflicting, contradictory, and confusing; yet institutions continue to focus energy and resources on advising and counseling these students (Lewallen, 1995).

Many terms have been used to describe undecided college students: exploratory, open-major, undeclared, and undetermined. Gordon (1984) claims there are as many reasons for being undecided as there are students. She categorizes undecided students as either "unready, unable, or unwilling" to make educational and/or vocational choices (Gordon, 1995, p. vii). Further, students who are academically or vocationally undecided when they begin college have certain academic and career exploration needs that require specially designed interventions in order to help them make appropriate choices and decisions. In her review of the undecided student literature preceding 1994, Gordon (1995) found that most of the earlier studies examined the unique characteristics of undecided students prior to entering an institution (e.g., demographics and high school achievement) and measured college achievement (e.g., grade point average, credits earned, persistence) after they enrolled in college.

Later research on undecided students began shifting towards examining the possibility that there are different subtypes of undecided and decided students (Gordon, 1998; Newman, Fuqua, & Minger, 1990). An advantage of using this perspective is that it provides a unique way of grouping undecided students for specifically designed interventions based on their personality characteristics and decision-making abilities. Other researchers who have identified subtypes of undecided students include Wanberg and Muchinsky (1992), Savickas and Jarjoura (1991), and Lucas and Epperson (1990). For example, Wanberg and Muchinsky's four career indecision categories (i.e., confident decided, concerned decided, indifferent undecided, and anxious undecided) relate to levels of anxiety, locus of control, self-esteem, and self-consciousness. Savickas and Jarjoura used the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1994) to identify five subgroups, referred to as Type A, B, C, D, and E, based on the degree to which the students experienced difficulty implementing a choice, specifying a choice, crystallizing a preference, making realistic choices, or making any sort of decision. Gordon (1998) cautioned against stereotyping these subtypes of students, however, and also suggested that even students with declared majors may not actually be decided. She concluded that all subtypes of undecided students (and even some decided ones) can benefit from major and career interventions that enable them to fill the gaps concerning their levels of self, educational, and occupational knowledge—even if it is just to confirm their choices.

Retention research indicates that commitment to educational and career goals is perhaps the strongest factor associated with persistence to degree completion (Wyckoff, 1999). Astin, Parrott, Korn, and Sax (1997) addressed the increasing number of students reporting that their main goal for attending college was to obtain preparation for an occupation and concluded that if students developed realistic career plans compatible with their interests, abilities, and values, then their overall satisfaction with college should increase. In turn, this satisfaction with the institution should translate into increased retention, as there is a well-established empirical relationship between students' level of satisfaction with the institution and their rate of retention (Noel, Levitz, & Saluri, 1985).

A commonly held assumption in higher education is that students who are undecided about a college major are at a greater risk for attrition than students with a declared major. Lewallen (1993) gathered data from more than 18,000 students from over 400 colleges and universities and discovered that levels of decidedness had no significant effect on predicting or explaining their retention. He also found that the undecided students actually displayed higher levels of academic achievement (i.e., average GPA) and were more likely to persist to graduation than decided students. He concluded that being undecided was not the exception but the norm and that the time had come for institutions to formally recognize in their policies and practices that the majority of entering students are in an undecided mode.
This mistaken belief that undecided students are at risk may have evolved from a misinterpretation of early research indicating students who lack educational and/or career goals are more likely to drop out of college (Noel et al., 1985). Over time, however, these results may have been misconstrued to imply that undecided students are uncommitted students who lack long-term academic plans, career goals, or a sense of direction—and thus are at a greater risk for attrition. Students are undecided for numerous reasons, many of which are healthy and justified and are not associated with a lack of direction, problems with procrastination, or chronic indecisiveness. Their indecision may simply reflect a high level of motivation for learning and active involvement in the productive process of critically evaluating and prioritizing their varied academic interests (Cuseo, 2001). Further, undecided students are just as committed to their education as are decided students and should be viewed as exploratory or undeclared rather than as at risk and indecisive (Cuseo).

Whether students are decided or undecided about a major may actually be less important than when and how students decide. In fact, some decided students might be at a greater risk for attrition than undecided students, especially if they have made decisions that are premature, unrealistic, or uninformed (Cuseo, 2001). Early decisions may be driven by extrinsic factors, such as family pressure or prospective high salaries, rather than by careful introspection about abilities, interests, and values, or thorough research on majors and careers. Other students may make premature choices in an effort to reduce their anxiety, or feelings of isolation, shame, frustration, hopelessness, and concern about the perceptions of others (Hagstrom, Skovholt, & Rivers, 1997). Unfortunately, by electing not to declare a major, undecided students at many institutions may be left without an academic department or administrative division that they can call their own. Such institutional practices may indirectly put pressure on the undecided students to make decisions that they may not be ready for.

**Career Indecision**

The value of providing differentiated interventions for students at various points in the career decision-making process has been suggested by many authors (e.g., Holland & Holland, 1977). Gordon's (1998) review of the literature on undecided students also revealed multiple subtypes of career decidedness. Focusing on 15 studies in particular, Gordon uncovered seven general categories of career indecision in college students: (a) three levels of decidedness (i.e., very decided, somewhat decided, and unstable decided); (b) three subtypes of indecision representing decreasing levels of self-esteem and vocational identity (i.e., tentatively undecided, developmentally undecided, and seriously undecided); and (c) a final chronically indecisive category. The tentatively undecided students are closer to a career decision than the other two groups, and they tend to feel comfortable with themselves and are more vocationally mature. Developmentally undecideds typically experience knowledge deficits regarding career information and poor decision-making skills, and can benefit from self-assessments and additional occupational facts. Seriously undecided students have low levels of vocational identity and self-esteem and need a more personalized and intrusive counseling approach, while the chronically indecisive population requires long-term counseling to reduce their high levels of anxiety.

Additionally, Osipow (1994) asserted that difficulties with career decisions arise from either lack of information or readiness and suggested four reasons for career indecision: (a) vocational choices that are inconsistent with an individual's information about the self, (b) developmental issues, (c) emotional instability, and (d) two equally desirable career options. He thus developed the Career Decision Scale (CDS)—a widely-used instrument for identifying levels and types of
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career indecision that has proven reliability and validity. The CDS is also effective pre- and post-
treatment to show how individuals have changed as a result of a specific action.

Undecided Transfer Students

Much of the research on undecided students has focused on special populations or categories
of undecideds, such as major changers, undecided student athletes, undecided adult students, un-
decided high-ability students, and underprepared undecided students. Overwhelmingly, most of
the literature on undecided students has focused on first-year students, but Gordon (1995) briefly
described four profiles of upper-class undecided students: (a) multiplicitic—too many interests or
major alternatives; (b) indecisive—difficulty making decisions in all areas of their lives, possibly
needing in-depth counseling; (c) immature—developmentally unready to make a choice; and
(d) new undecideds—formerly decided but have not met the minimum admission requirements
for their program of choice.

Gordon (1995) was also one of the first scholars to address, albeit very briefly, undecided
community college students. Although these students share many of the same characteristics as
undecided students at four-year institutions, such as being an adult student or being underprepared,
they do possess some unique characteristics. Because many of these students plan on transferring,
transfer courses are a critical issue in the decision to enter college undecided since baccalaureate
programs vary in the flexibility of required coursework. As a result, undecided students need care-
ful scheduling and an awareness of the transfer criteria they face (Gordon, 1995). Handel (2007)
emphasized that "getting students focused on a major early buys them curricular coherence and
continuity, and focuses their interest and commitment" (p. 41). This may be especially important
for the large numbers of commuter, minority, low-income, and first-generation students that
community colleges enroll, since their academic and career decisions are frequently influenced by
family issues, financial concerns, multiple responsibilities, or workforce conditions.

Research findings strongly suggest that final decisions about majors and careers occur during
rather than before college. Approximately 75% of the students who declare majors upon admis-
sion are actually prematurely decided and will eventually change their minds (Foote, 1980), and
uncertainty increases during the first two years of college (Tinto, 1993). Thus, it is not accurate to
assume that students who enter college with declared majors are truly decided, and the number of
exploratory sophomores and juniors on most campuses should be anticipated to be significant—
especially at four-year institutions. Creating a successful and satisfying transfer experience requires
a strong partnership between students and the institutions involved. Gernand (1993) addressed
the academic and career decision-making needs of students before and after transfer. During the
pretransfer phase, undecided students need to begin assessing and improving their academic skills
as they relate to possible programs of study at the transfer institution. It is also important for them
to master time management and study skills in addition to exploring the personal, social, and
financial costs of transferring. During the transfer process itself, it is imperative that the student
collect accurate information to make appropriate connections. Posttransfer issues are those spe-
cial needs that undecided transfer students have as they matriculate at their new institution. The
new institution should be aware of these needs and provide services and programs to meet them,
including specialized orientations and advising; academic support services (e.g., peer advising,
mentoring); social networking opportunities, especially during the first three-weeks of the term;
and student success courses. Core helping skills, accurate information about academic majors and
institutional policies and procedures, and flexibility are essential in helping the students realize
their educational and occupational goals.
Interventions for Undecided Transfer Students

Academic Advising

Gordon and Steele (1992) proposed that the central advising task in working with undecided students is helping them with the major and career exploration process and developed a four-part model to be used by academic advisors to guide undecided students. The model includes four knowledge areas: self, educational, occupational, and decision making. Self-knowledge involves understanding of the student’s personal interests, skills and abilities, personal and professional values, personality types, and goal setting. This can be accomplished in part through assessments, self-reflection, and discussions with key individuals, including family, friends, and counselors. Educational knowledge consists of understanding the requirements of academic majors and programs of study. Occupational knowledge includes gaining information about career opportunities, educational and skill requirements, projected outlook, and salary. It may also involve internships, job shadowing, and job-search skills, such as interviewing techniques. Decision-making knowledge can be achieved via the integration of self-knowledge with educational and occupational information, an understanding of decision-making styles, the acquisition of decision-making strategies, and approaches to goal implementation.

Schein and Laff (1997) developed a hands-on, student-centered advising program for undecided students that uses the students’ self-descriptions, rather than the institution’s structure, as the starting point for productive dialogue regarding choice of a major between advisor and student. The authors asserted that the constructs of a major prevent students from creatively designing an individual academic pathway and proposed that undecided students disregard those boundaries during the initial stages of decision making.

Gordon (1995) outlined six tasks for advisors to use with the undecided student: (a) help determine why he or she is undecided, (b) facilitate the organization of a plan for exploration, (c) assist with the integration of all the information that has been collected, (d) support decision making, (e) aid with the initiation of an action plan, and (f) encourage follow-up contact. This process, however, does not necessarily follow a linear path as it depends on the developmental needs of the student. It is important to note that the student must take responsibility for this process, with the advisor providing assistance and encouragement. The amount of structure provided by the advisor will vary from student to student, although assessments, activities, and lengthy discussions between student and advisor will comprise the majority of the components of this method.

There are many resources focused on the development and implementation of advising interventions for undecided students (e.g., Schein & Laff, 1997; Stark, 2002; Steele & McDonald, 2000). As the previously described interventions demonstrate, nearly all of the successful advising programs include the components of self-assessments followed by academic and career information gathering and integration. Many also favor a developmental advising approach that focuses on the process as much as the actual decision and avoids being overly prescriptive in the administration of services. O’Banion’s (1972) developmental advising model recommends that initial discussion between advisor or counselor and student begins with an examination of the student’s life goals, followed by clarification of career and then educational goals, and finally, course selection and scheduling. Gordon (1995) acknowledged the different characteristics, needs, and rate of maturation unique to each undecided student and emphasized the creation of appropriate developmental tasks for each stage of the exploration process. Other effective developmental advising programs for undecided transfer students have taken a similar holistic approach by acknowledging growth and progress and helping students establish a sense of identity, take risks, make good decisions, and increase self-esteem.
Raushi (1993) suggested an advising approach that takes into account each student's individual needs and reasons for being undecided and challenges them to move to the next level of vocational maturity. He asserted that choosing to be undecided may be difficult for some two-year students, but spending time exploring might save them from making hasty, narrow decisions that will need to be changed later. Developmental approaches help community college students make effective decisions because they take into consideration their unique personal qualities and the priorities they have established in other areas of their lives.

Although individual advising and career counseling is generally acknowledged to be the ideal, there are situations when one-on-one sessions are not needed or feasible. At times, group advising may not only be necessary but also quite effective in enhancing and supplementing more traditional advising services. When viewed as a student-centered process with mutual responsibility among the students and advisor, group advising of undecided students may become an innovative retention tool. Group settings work quite well for administering assessments that focus on interests, values, and motivation and also reassure undecided students that they are not alone in their confusion. Following group sessions, online chat rooms also can work well to facilitate discussion—especially for those hesitant to speak up in meetings. These virtual groups provide a way for students to keep in touch with each other and their advisor in between sessions and to pose questions and replies as they occur.

Mottarella, Fritzche, and Cerabino (2004) evaluated students' satisfaction with different advising approaches and found that the most important factor was the depth and emotional nature of the advising relationship. Having a warm and supportive advising relationship with a professional advisor, regardless of the advising objectives or approaches, was the overriding key to students' satisfaction with the advising process. Huebner (2009) described an approach to help students transition to a new major based on the six-phase appreciative advising model (i.e., disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don’t settle). Students whose academic shortcomings prevented them from meeting the admission requirements for a prenursing program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro participated in involved in-depth advising sessions with specially trained counselors who encouraged them to dream and discover in an effort to design and deliver a new educational plan. Of the students who met with an appreciative advisor, nearly one third successfully changed majors.

Career Development

Successful career development efforts have proven to be goal oriented and outcome driven and include a strong alliance among career counselors and academic advisors. Services offered through partnerships between academic advising and career counseling centers include workshops, seminars, and programs designed to help students obtain additional information about careers (e.g., career days, career prep month). Online career assessments, such as DISCOVER, Self-Directed Search, EUREKA, CHOICES, and SIGI-PLUS, are standard and effective, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) and Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) provide valuable occupational information, as well. Comprehensive career development classes with a focus on creating clear and timely action-oriented career plans have proven promising in improving persistence toward graduation (Gordon, 1995). Increased opportunities for participation in internships, co-ops, and volunteer experiences have further shown to help clarify students' career goals (Gordon, 2006).

Jurgens (2000) studied the effects of a four-phase and a two-phase intervention using DISCOVER online assessment modules with undecided students and found that the four-phase model was significantly more effective in increasing career certainty. Both models included a one-hour individual career counseling session and participation in a two-hour computerized assessment
using DISCOVER. The four-phase model added a two-hour decision-making workshop as well as a two-hour professional forum of open discussions with successful professionals. Participant evaluations revealed that students in both groups were most satisfied with the individual career counseling component of the program. Jurgens concluded that "comprehensive programs and short-term interventions can be effective for reducing career indecision and increasing career certainty" (p. 247).

**Integrated Interventions**

Many students, especially the undecided, do not make the distinction between academics and career, but rather see it as a single choice. A unified academic and career advising approach may be more beneficial to this group of students (Steele & McDonald, 2000). Academic advising consists of a series of tasks, including devising programs of study, monitoring advisee's progress, and reinforcing advisee's choices (Byrd, 1994), while career advising has been described as a dynamic, interactive process that helps students understand how their personal interests, abilities, and values might predict success in the academic fields they are considering and how to form their academic and career goals accordingly (Gordon, 1998). The overall challenge for the advisor is to meet the students’ developmental needs whether they are emotional, academic, or career oriented. Gordon (1998) emphasized that all students need career advising, and career and academic advising should be integrated in an effort to provide the best support for students as they make decisions that will impact the rest of their lives.

Both academic and career advising are grounded in student development and student learning theories with career advising also having roots in career development theory. One approach to achieving career and academic advising integration is expanding the role of the academic advisor to include career counseling. McCollum (1998) developed a five-stage, four-year developmental model of career advising based on Super’s (1990) life-span approach to career development. The third stage, which occurs in the second year, has direct implications for the undecided community college student planning to transfer as it involves self-examination and decision-making activities. During this critical stage, advisees are guided in devising a four-year plan of study that includes extracurricular experiences, such as hobbies and volunteer projects, that help the students clarify their career interests. Once a student has transferred to a new institution, stage-four advising techniques focus on providing support for the advisee in narrowing his or her career choices through experiential applications, such as cooperative education opportunities and internships.

A second approach encourages academic advisors and career counselors to work collaboratively assisting undecided transfer students. McCalla-Wriggins (2000) asserts that while academic advisors possess knowledge regarding academic policies and procedures, they may not have the specific information on occupational trends or requirements that career advisors do. When career center and academic advising staff work together, information can be shared, students can be appropriately referred, and support can be provided collaboratively—for students and staff.

Planning is critical in this integration process to ensure staff receive suitable training and that students are asked pertinent career-oriented questions (e.g., What would you do if you knew you would not fail? What do you like to do in your free time? When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?). In addition, integration requires a shift of focus from simply providing information to a more student-centered style. As Glennen and Vowell (1995) stressed, it is far more important that the student evolve his or her own plan of action than it is to adopt a plan imposed by an advisor or career counselor. Resources such as The Handbook of Career Advising (Hughey, Damminger, Nelson, & McCalla-Wriggins, 2009), Career Advising: An Academic
Advisor's Guide (Gordon, 2006), and material available through the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) website, can further assist with integrating interventions.

Cueso (2001) has outlined six strategies for enhancing the quality of first-year students' decision making regarding majors and careers. This model can easily and quickly be modified to serve the needs of undecided transfer students during the first year at their new institution. These strategies include:

- Providing strong incentives for students to meet regularly with their advisors (e.g., priority or early registration)
- Identifying highly effective advisors and assigning them to work with this population
- Promoting early academic and career planning by infusing it into the curriculum via a specialized academic and career planning course specifically designed for undecided transfer students
- Creating one-stop success centers housing the offices of academic advising and career counseling where students can receive integrated assistance
- Establishing an office, center, or organizational unit for advisement of undecided or exploratory students
- Creating experiential learning opportunities, such as job shadowing, informational interviews, volunteering, and service-learning

Cueso (2001) argued that one of the keys to successful joint interventions is that they are intentionally designed to improve the effectiveness of students' academic decision making and career planning. It is also critical that the institution reach out and initiate the contact with the students, rather than "passively offering programs and hoping that students will come to take advantage of them on their own accord," (Cueso, p. 13). Further, these programs need to be delivered early and proactively—before the students' problems require reactive interventions. These types of programs may be expected to produce benefits for the institution as well, by promoting student retention and satisfaction with the college.

Examples of Academic and Career Planning Interventions

Advising Centers for Undecided Students

Ohio's Kent State University Undergraduate Studies unit includes the Exploratory Advising Center (EAC, formerly the Students' Advising Center), which was created for undecided (i.e., exploratory) majors. The EAC houses a computer lab equipped with interest assessments and inventories as well as a team of eight full-time advisors specifically trained to guide these exploratory students (Kuhn, Howard, & Matyas, 1996). In an effort to improve retention rates, Northern Illinois University (NIU) began a shared advising system for undecided students in the fall of 2005 that specifically targets undeclared, first-year and transfer students. The program includes student advisement from both a shared advising office and the Counseling and Student Development Center. Having a specialized advising system devoted to this population sends a strong institutional message that being undecided is a common part of the college experience shared by many and that NIU is committed to supporting and reassuring undecided students along their exploratory path ("Shared-Advising System," 2004).
Transfer Advising

A comprehensive transfer center, staffed by academic advisors, career counselors, and articulation specialists, can provide a central point of contact both for students and faculty and staff. Transfer centers should be housed on both sides of the transition, ideally allowing a student to work with the sending institution's transfer center to prepare to transfer, and then transition directly to the receiving institution's center (Pope, 2004). All of California's community colleges have initiated transfer centers where information and services relating to student transfer are located. The resource has proven enormously helpful to both entering and exiting students as well as to outreach representatives from the four-year institutions since it creates a place where a culture of transfer is supported (Handel, 2007).

Valencia Community College in Florida has developed a model of developmental advising that links all the components and resources at the institution (e.g., faculty, staff, courses, technology, programs, services) to help students create a personal itinerary for college success. The LifeMap program is comprised of five stages: (a) postsecondary transition, (b) introduction to college, (c) progression to degree, (d) graduation transition, and (e) lifelong learning. During the graduation stage, students are expected to make appropriate preparations to transition to the workplace or transfer to an upper-division school. Toward that end, special programs and interventions have been developed to assist the undecided transfer student, such as Grad Track, a uniquely designed annual co-advisement transfer workshop. At Grad Track, Valencia counselors provide students with graduation information, and articulation officers from the University of Central Florida (i.e., the College's primary transfer partner institution) assist with transfer questions and procedures. Students who have completed a minimum of 45 credits but have not graduated are invited to attend and speak with representatives from academic programs, admissions, financial aid, and housing, as well as register for classes (What is LifeMap, 2010).

Student Success Courses

A recent trend in higher education has been the promotion of courses that focus on the first-year college experience. According to Wilgoren (1999), these classes work to build self-esteem and motivate students for academic success. Several researchers have suggested offering such a course for undecided students wherein they could talk about their problems and form a community with their undecided peers. Ideally, the students' advisor would serve as the instructor (Stark, 2002). This variation of a group advising approach enables the advisor-instructor to assist many students in the areas of self-assessment, career and major exploration, and the decision-making process. Relationships established through such a course would provide valuable support and a sense of belonging and help the students realize that they are not alone in their indecision. This realization would be beneficial in creating more confident and committed students and would allow advisors to be flexible and cater to each individual's unique set of needs. Ultimately, these positive relationships would foster effective self-exploration—an essential starting point for undecided students.

Marymount College in California, a two-year institution devoted exclusively to preparing students for successful transfer to baccalaureate-degree granting colleges and universities, requires a first-year seminar for all of its incoming students. The director of Advising and Transfer Services visits each class and outlines the course requirements of different majors at four-year institutions. Following this visit, students are given an assignment requiring them to meet with their academic advisor to develop a two- to three-year educational plan to include the courses they are planning to take and a written timeline for completing them. Students who remain undecided are advised to identify elective courses in academic fields they might like to consider as a possible major to test their interest and aptitude for that academic field (National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience, 2002).
Conclusion

It can reasonably be concluded that, at any given time, many students on college campuses are experiencing at least some doubt regarding their future educational and career plans. Institutions must commit valuable resources toward developing and implementing intentional and proactive interventions that help all students gain the knowledge and skills they need to make satisfactory and satisfying academic and career decisions.

Both two- and four-year institutions need to obtain a profile of the numbers and types of undecided transfer students on their campuses to identify appropriate services and programs. Further, academic advisors and career counselors must work collaboratively to help the undecided transfer students develop and implement carefully organized plans for decision making and transfer. Interventions such as integrated advising and career counseling, specialized success courses, and transfer workshops have proven successful with both undecided students and transfer students.

Clearly, additional research is needed in addressing the needs of undecided transfer students—both prior to and after transferring from a two-year higher education institution. Many studies have been conducted on undecided students (e.g., Schein & Laff, 1997; Titley & Titley, 1980) and transfer students (e.g., King, 1994; Pope, 2004) as separate populations, but very little has been done to address the needs of the students who fall under both categories. Undecided students enrolled in community colleges face numerous challenges as they journey through the transition process of deciding on a major, career, and transfer institution. Core helping skills, accurate information, flexibility, and a united effort on the part of academic advisors, career counselors, and administrators are essential in helping these students reach their academic and career goals.

References


