Major Decisions: Facts & Figures about Students Changing Majors

As many as 50 to 75% of all undergraduate students change majors at least one time before earning a degree.[1] The average college graduate holds 11.8 jobs before retiring.[2] Tracking all of the changes students make can be extremely difficult, but here are some examples of the changes OSU students are making.

Before Orientation

Of the new first-year students admitted to Columbus for Autumn 2013, 5,943 had attended orientation by July 17th. 2,247 (38%) of these students changed their major sometime between applying and leaving orientation.[3] **38%**

After Beginning Classes

5% In Autumn 2009, 6,606 students entered the Columbus campus as new first-year freshmen. 980 of these students (15%) entered in University Exploration (EXP), while 5,626 (85%) enrolled directly as a pre-major or major in a degree-granting program. At some point during of after Autumn 2009, 301 of these "directly enrolled" students (5%) changed their program to UEXP.[3]

Outcomes: Four-Year Degrees

Students entering as freshmen in EXP have graduation rates consistent with the overall freshman classes. For new freshmen who began at the Columbus campus in Autumn 2009, the four year graduation rate for was 58.5%.[4] There is a clear difference in outcomes for students who changed majors and moved into UEXP at a later point; only about 33% of the 301 students who changed in UEXP after beginning classes earned a degree in four years.[3]

Four Year Graduation Rates, New First Year Freshmen Entering Columbus in AU09	
AU09 Class	58.5%
Students who changed into EXP after beginning classes	**33.2%**

Students can change directions successfully, but need intentional support and academic advising.

From the students who began at the Columbus campus as new first-year students in Autumn 2009, a number have earned degrees outside their initial program of enrollment within four years.[3]

More than **130** students who began in the College of Engineering earned different degrees including pharmaceutical science, city and regional planning, construction systems management, environment and natural resources, architecture, criminology, English, history, actuarial science, math, physics, and molecular genetics, among other programs.[3]

More than **150** students who entered the Fisher College of Business earned different degrees including hospitality management, education, nutrition, social work, city and regional planning, agriculture, journalism, communication, economics, political science, German, sociology, psychology, and computer information science, among other programs.[3]

More than **40** students who entered in the College of Nursing earned different degrees including business, hospitality management, agriculture, human ecology, allied health professions, animal science, family studies, speech and hearing science, Classics, and international studies, among other programs.[3]

More than **80** students who entered the School of Allied Medical Professions earned different degrees including business, agriculture, public affairs, sociology, Spanish, neuroscience, exercise science, sport industry, microbiology, and nutrition, among other programs.[3]

[1]Gordon, V. N., Habley, W.R. & Associates (2000). Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
[2]Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012.) Number of Jobs Held, Labor Market Activity, and Earnings Growth Among the Youngest Baby Boomers: Results from a Longitudinal Survey. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/nlsoy.pdf.
[3]Internal reports, University Exploration and Undergraduate Education
[4]Enrollment Services, The Ohio State University. (2013). Retention and Graduation Rates for New Freshmen. Retrieved from http://oesar.osu.edu/pdf/grad_rates/RETENTION_SUMMARY.pdf.

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