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A photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, a large, dark bronze statue of a panther is shown in a pouncing pose. Behind it is a large, mature tree with a thick trunk. In the background, a multi-story brick building with many windows is visible. A clock tower stands near the building. The scene is set on a green lawn under a clear blue sky.

Career Exploration and Orientation: Helping First Year Students Discover Their Passion

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Today's Presentation

- **Why we focus on career exploration in the first year**
- **Effective programs and strategies**
- **Discover Pitt, DiscoverU**
- **Outcomes & assessment**
- **Challenges and areas for growth**
- **Discussion**

University of Pittsburgh Student Profile Information

- **Undergraduate Population: 17,500**
- **AY 13-14 first-year class: 3,800**
- **Approximately 97% of FY students live on campus**
- **Current FY-Sophomore retention rate: 91%**
- **Current Post-Grad placement rate: 94%**

Why First Year Students?

Career Development is a transitional challenge for FY students and has an impact on retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1987).

Career Counseling plays a significant role in the successful transition, retention and persistence of students (Barefoot et al., 2005; Kuh et.al., 2005).

FY students represent the largest group of students who are undecided about their major (Gordon, 2005).

Of declared majors, at least half will change their minds (Cuseo, 2005).

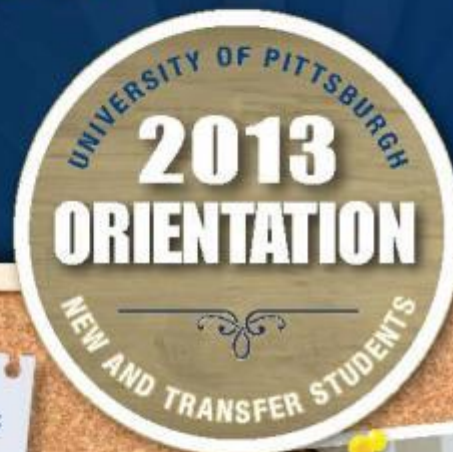
To be more effective, career development and work with students should extend beyond career counseling and placement (Gore, 2005).

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Discover PITT Discover U

New and Transfer
Student Schedule



What happens during orientation?

- **Career Consultants have campus-wide visibility through:**
 - Building-wide residence hall meetings
 - Orientation programming
 - Informal residence hall/arrival interactions
- **Optional programming related to career exploration:**
 - Power of Personality: Play to your Strengths
 - Finding Your Career Match & Staying on Track
- **Intentional exploratory programming**
 - The Outside the Classroom Curriculum
 - Study Abroad Fair
 - Emerging Leaders
 - Museum exploration
- **DiscoverU Day**

DiscoverU : Experiential Learning

- **Outreach to local employers and community partners occurs throughout spring & summer to secure sites**
- **Pre-Registration for sites occurs prior to arrival and during Orientation**
- **Day of event:**
 - **Students bussed to most sites**
 - **Chaperoned by Student Affairs staff**
 - **2 hour on-site experience included combination of activities, observation, dialogue, & information sharing**

Why Orientation?

- Many students enter with one or several career paths in mind, & first semester tests this commitment
- Encourage early exploration of career options
- Increases familiarity with Career Consultants & CDPA
- Grabs their attention before they are too focused on classes
- The Retention Factor
 - Uncertainty about a major or career is a significant contributor to freshman attrition
 - Students have anxiety associated with a lack of career decision.

More Than Just a Job Shadow

- **Focus on exploration of majors, minors, & certificates**
- **Introduction to an industry or field of potential interest**
- **For many, first opportunity for experiential learning**
- **Exploration of personal interests**
- **Become familiar with services & staff members**
- **Knowing that they are not alone & recognizing resources available to assist them**

Discover PITT
Discover U

Example DiscoverU Sites

- August Wilson Center
- BNY Mellon
- CBS Radio
- School of Dental Medicine
- Eaton Corporation
- St. Paul's Cathedral and Rodef Shalom
- Human Engineering Research Lab
- Maya Design
- Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
- Thomas Merton Center
- UMPC Children's Hospital

Example Itinerary

- 2-hour experience
- Welcome & Overview
- Tour of facility
- Panels
- Guided Activities
- Lab simulations
- Meeting with professionals / administrators
- Industry Q & A



DiscoverU – By The Numbers

- **650 students participated in a site requiring pre-registration**
 - **84% participation rate among registered students**
- **75% reported that they learned something about a possible major, graduate school or career choice**
- **95% reported being more aware of opportunities for involvement at Pitt or around Pittsburgh**

Student Feedback – General

- **“This was my favorite part of the week as I learned about my future and what I could do.”**
- **“I met a lot of people with similar interests to me at the DiscoverU Day.”**
- **“It was nice to be able to go to downtown Pittsburgh and get a look at the possibilities outside of Oakland.”**
- **“I LOVED my program, I was so excited afterwards! I want to go work there right now...”**

Student Feedback - Decided

- **“I thoroughly enjoyed this visit. I feel better about my major and the path that I am headed because of it.”**
- **“I really enjoyed my presentation and it affirmed my choice in the direction I think I'm going for choice of major.”**
- **“The speakers were very engaging and fun, the facility was incredible. After attending, I've started considering electrical engineering.”** (student already declared Engineering)

Student Feedback - Undecided

- **“The DiscoverU Day was informative and opened my eyes to the options I have.”**
- **“DiscoverU has provided me with more knowledge about my possible major and future career.”**
- **“It showed me a possible career choice that I am very interested in.”**
- **“I was on the fence about a double major with business and this experience made me want to actually do it because of the great opportunities in the business world.”**

Challenges & Opportunities

- **Marketing: Helping students understand the program**
- **Large numbers of students interested in pre-health**
- **Encouraging students to think beyond their major**
- **Realistic expectations from employers/organizations**
- **Gaining support from partners, particularly in areas of greatest student interest**
- **Funding to expand/enhance program**

What Happens after Orientation?

- **Continued Career Consultant interaction**
 - Residence Hall presence
 - Classroom/student org presentations
- **First-year student career programming**
 - Majors & Minors Expo
 - Fall Career Fair & “Freshman Friendly” employers
- **Continuation of DiscoverU**
 - Mini-Retreats focused on niche populations

Questions & Discussion

- **How could these programs be modified to fit during other times of the first year?**
- **Who are your key partners and stakeholders?**
- **What is the benefit to the partner for participating?**

Contact Us

**We welcome your questions, ideas, and opportunities
for benchmarking!**

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