

## Building a Successful INQ Course

### Advising as an Opportunity for Inquiry and Problem-Solving

Sometime before it's time to begin meeting with students for advising appointments, you may want to ask your students to do some reading about the rationale behind a liberal education. The main purpose for this is to provide students with a deeper understanding of the basis for SCSU's All-University Requirements. The distribution system that we currently have is not self-evidently rational or meaningful for our students. When asked why they think they are being required to take all those courses outside their majors, most students say they have no idea; the more "professor-friendly" students say something about the courses making them "well-rounded"; when asked what "well-rounded" means, they tend to say it refers to someone who has taken a lot of classes in courses outside a major...

Here is a very small sample of short readings about liberal education:

- "Liberal Education" from SCSU Undergraduate Catalogue;
- SCSU Gen Ed Task Force, "General Education Revision Proposal" [http://www.southernct.edu/UCF/uploads/textWidget/wysiwyg/documents/Revised\\_Liberal\\_Education\\_Program\\_2-18-09.pdf](http://www.southernct.edu/UCF/uploads/textWidget/wysiwyg/documents/Revised_Liberal_Education_Program_2-18-09.pdf)
- AACU "Statement on Liberal Learning" [http://www.aacu.org/about/statements/liberal\\_learning.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/about/statements/liberal_learning.cfm);
- AACU "How Should Colleges Prepare Students to Succeed in Today's Global Economy?" <http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/Re8097abcombined.pdf>;
- Gregory, Marshall, "A Liberal Education is Not a Luxury" <http://www.sfu.ca/arts/articles/libedu.pdf>;
- Murray, Charles, "Down with the Four-Year College Degree!" <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2008/10/06/charles-murray/down-with-the-four-year-college-degree/>)

### Career Services

The following are a few services offered by the Career Services Office that are of interest to FYS (from their webpage):

**Four Year Career Planning Guide and Steps to Choosing a Major** - The Career Center's guide highlighting important actions you should take beginning in your first year and moving throughout your college career.

**Discover** - A web based assessment tool that can help you find out in-depth information about careers and majors that suit your interests, abilities, and skills. Contact the Career Center to receive a password.

**Choosing a Major Video Vignette** - This short video offers a humorous introduction to choosing a major. After watching the video, we encourage you to make an appointment to meet with a member of the Center's professional staff to discuss your individual needs.

**What Can I Do With My Major?** - An extensive listing that connects majors to careers, including an outline of common career areas, typical employers, and strategies

designed to maximize career options.

**Planning Your Career Now** with the Freshmen & Sophomore Career Planning Guide by jobpostingsMagazine.

### **Registration: Which courses? What's at stake?**

First-Year Students don't necessarily know how to use the Undergraduate Catalogue—especially if they haven't already declared a major. Any exercises/activities you devise that encourage students to triangulate between the Catalogue, the degree evaluation, and the Schedule of Classes is likely to be very useful to them.

### **Reading the Catalogue: e.g. Nursing**

#### **NURSING**

Upon completion of the program graduates are prepared to: 1) use theoretical bases to guide nursing practice, 2) evaluate qualitative and quantitative research as a foundation for evidence based nursing practice, 3) provide culturally sensitive nursing care that reflects the worth, dignity, and uniqueness of individuals and groups, 4) use interpersonal and technological communication effectively, 5) apply leadership and management principles to facilitate change in health care practice, 6) provide nursing care that reflects analysis of diverse environmental factors that influence local, national, and global health care, 7) demonstrate behaviors that incorporate clients' rights, legal and ethical accountability, and professional codes and standards, 8) collaborate in providing care to clients, families, and groups in a variety of health care environments, and 9) use self-evaluation to promote professional growth and lifelong learning.

### **Reading the degree evaluation**

Students will have been introduced to the degree evaluation during New Student Orientation. However, anyone who has worked at NSO knows that the students are both so excited and so overwhelmed that day that they retain very little about the actual nuts and bolts of the process of finding and using their own evaluation. Showing students how to use the "What if" option is also very helpful, especially for undeclared students and those who may want to "keep a door or two open" as they move through their first two years.

### **Majors Expo: Wednesday, October 29**

#### **"The Too-True Story of My Registration Experience"**

Have students reflect in some meaningful way on the process of registering for courses. Keep in mind that for most of them, this will be the first time they have been completely independent as students. Some find it traumatic, some exhilarating, some don't think about it nearly as much as

we wish that they did. If you have them reflect on the process *as a problem-solving exercise*—explain the constraints that they faced and justify the choices they made (perhaps in relation to the readings/Discover results/etc.)—they may begin to see themselves as purposeful agents in their own educations.

### **Group mini-project: Registration cases**

Before or during the time that you are meeting with students for individual advising, you could reinforce the idea of problem-solving by asking them to work in small groups on case studies involving registration. The cases below address some very common issues students face when they are trying to choose courses. They don't take up the issue of sections being closed or not meeting at convenient times; but those elements could easily be added into the mix.

Each group is assigned a case. Groups craft advice for the “students” below; at the least, that advice should include a list of people the “student” should talk to, where to find those people, what the student needs to read in order to make a rational schedule, and two possible slates of courses for the spring semester. Ideally, the group would prepare a rationale for the choices they made.

- 1) Becky has not declared a major. She is currently enrolled in MAT 095, ENG 111, INQ 101, PSY 100, and HIS 100. She has a B average in math and is doing pretty well in her other courses. She is pretty sure she doesn't want to major in the sciences, but she thinks that she might be interested in majoring in business—maybe to do advertising or marketing. She's really enjoying her psychology course and wouldn't mind exploring that field a little further.
- 2) Gordon declared a History major with certification to teach high school when he turned in his orientation paperwork. This semester he has MAT 100, ENG 111, INQ 101, HIS 110, and GEO 100. He is pretty sure he wants to continue with the history degree, but he's not sure he wants to teach. His parents think that you can't do anything with a history major except teach.
- 3) Dmitri wants to go to medical school. He declared a Biology major in his orientation paperwork, but one of his classmates mentioned something about a biochemistry major. He needs to check that out. He is currently enrolled in MAT 122, ENG 111, INQ 101, BIO 102, and PCH 201. Dmitri's biggest issue is that his work schedule means that he has to be finished with classes by noon.
- 4) Shannon wants to open her own day-care business someday. She loves little kids and has worked with them since she started babysitting at 13. She has not declared a major yet because she's not sure whether she should major in Elementary Ed or in Business. She heard that elementary ed majors have to double-major. She is currently enrolled in MAT 100, ENG 111, INQ 101, BIO 100, and ECO 100. Economics is not going so well, but she thinks that she can pull a C in the course with some tutoring.
- 5) Dan has no idea what he wants to do with his life. If he had had his way, he wouldn't be in college yet—he'd be in Florida with his cousin working odd jobs and golfing. He has only had one job that he liked—working as a caddy at a country club in the next town. Dan likes most sports, likes to be active, outside if possible. He knows that sitting behind a desk would kill him. He's in school because the economy is terrible and his parents were willing to pay his tuition, but not his rent in Florida. He is currently enrolled in MAT 095, INQ 101, ENG 112, PSY 100, HIS 100.