

Degree Search Advisors Survey

University of Arizona Degree Search Website Advisors Survey

Student Affairs Marketing | February 13, 2013

Executive Summary

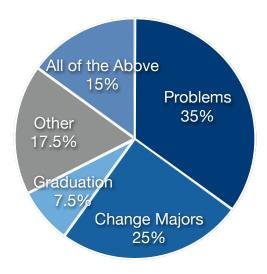
Online survey was built in Campus Labs and distributed to an email list of UA college advisors on Jan 14, 2013, and run until Feb 1, 2013, garnering a responding sample of **n=40**.

- Advisors were asked about the circumstances in which students and parents are most likely to contact them.
 - Students are most likely to contact advisors when problems arise (35%), followed by needing to change majors (25%) or handle graduation issues (7.5%).
 - 15% of respondents indicated that students approached them in all or most of these situations.
 - Parents are most likely to contact advisors about their student's grades and academic progress
 (27.3%), but will also contact for information regarding their child's graduation timeline, major choices,
 and subsequent career options (19.6%), as well as general administrative topics such as class availability
 and restrictions (16.1%).
 - Many advisors commented that parental contact in general was rare to nonexistent, and their work is
 primarily conducted directly with the adult students.
- Advisors were asked to rank a series of factors, from their professional perspective, based on their significance
 in the degree exploration process with students.
 - The most highly-ranked factor selected by respondents is the student's own personal interest in a major/topic (72.3%), followed by the time required to graduate (46.2%) and career opportunities (42.1%).
 Admissions requirements (33.8%), as well as other major program requirements, were also deemed important.
 - Advisors shared that the students they worked with generally chose a college because it offered their selected major or degree (72.2%), chose that major based on interests and talents (63.9%), and knew what major they wanted to study (56.9%).
 - Those advisors who worked with undecided students primarily utilized college websites (39.4%) and other websites (23.2%), including UA Degree Search, UA department websites, the Occupational Outlook Handbook, and Bureau of Labour Statistics.
- 83% of surveyed advisors had heard of the Degree Search website, 77% of those had used it, and 78% of those reviewed majors outside of their specialized college or department with students.
- Advisors were asked to rank the top 5 functions that they found **most useful** on the Degree Search website.
 - The most useful functions of the (current 2012) Degree Search website to UA advisors are the Four Year
 Plans tool (77.3%), the descriptions and details of majors, (67.3%), and the ability to search for
 available majors and degrees (43.6%). The least useful tools on Degree Search for advisors were the
 college descriptions, second language requirements, and ability to search based on degree type.

Student Contact

UA college advisors were first asked about the circumstances in which a UA student is most likely to contact them: response options included: *Only when problems arise* (e.g. academic difficulties, need to drop a class), *when looking to change majors*, *near graduation*, and a free-response 'other' field.

Q1. In which of the following circumstances is a student most likely to contact you?



Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

About half of the respondents who replied with non-listed 'other' answers (15% of total respondents) indicated that students are mostly likely to contact them in all or most of the listed circumstances (graduation, major changes, and problems). Additional 'other' circumstances for student contact included course selection, academic standing, general need for advising, and specific audiences such as prospective and first-year students:

Other Circumstances for UA Student/Advisor Contact:

- "Academic standing, or if they cannot reach their regular advisor."
- "Course selection for an upcoming semester, and also when seeking to declare a major."
- "First year honors advising."
- "For current majors, talking about classes, research, med school and their stress; for non-majors, to talk about how they can get into our major."
- "I work with students mostly to plan their UA experiences, including multiple programs, study abroad, etc.
- "Need guidance towards graduation requirements."
- "Prospective students: interest in UA astronomy."

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

Parent/Guardian Contact

Advisors were also asked about the concerns that college students' parents or guardians most often approach them about - this question contained a free response field.

Q2: What concerns to parents or guardians most often approach you about?

Parent concerns about:	
Student grades, issues, and academic progress	27.3%
Graduation, career options, and major choices	19.6%
Class availability/delivery/restrictions and credits	16.1%
Information about departments/requirements	10.7%
None: parental contact is rare or nonexistent	8.9%
High school student prep or specific programs	7.2%
Academic rigor or program difficulty	5.3%
Financial or payment issues	3.6%

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

College advisors report the most parent contact (27.3%) about student grades and problems: when their students are struggling academically, failing, on academic probation, or experiencing other issues - as well as generally regarding their students' grades and academic progress.

Other leading topics of contact include concerns about their students' graduation time, major choices, and associated career options (19.6%), administrative issues such as class availability/restrictions and transferring credits (16.1%), and requests for additional information about departments and their course and major requirements (10.7%). Also of note is the fact that several respondents (8.9%) report very rare or nonexistent parent contact, as most business is conducted entirely with the college student.

Note: Q2 is a free-response question, coded above; review Appendix A or raw data for full list of 37 unique responses.

Student Degree Exploration

College advisors were asked to rank from a list the 5 most important factors, from their perspective, for a student considering changing his/her major or degree.

Q3-19: If a student is considering changing his/her major/degree, which of the following factors are most important from your perspective?

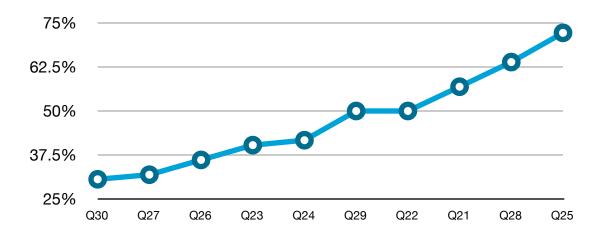
Personal Interest	72.3%
Time Required to Graduate	46.2%
Employment Opportunities	42.1%
Admission Requirements	33.8%
Math Requirements	25.6%
Pre-Major Requirement	17.4%
Credits Required	13.8%
Average Salary Range	8.2%
College (that offers degree)	6.7%
National Ranking of College/Dept	6.7%
Study Time Required	5.6%
Other	5.6%
Second Language Requirements	5.1%
Base Salary Range	4.6%
Degree Type (BA/BS/BFA)	3.6%
Additional Fees Required	1.0%
Trending Majors	1.0%

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

The most important factor in a student's decision to change majors, from the advisors' perspectives, is the student's personal interest (72.3%), followed closely by the time required to graduate (46.2%), employment opportunities (42.1%), and admissions requirements (33.8%). The least important factors included trends, additional fees, degree types, and base salary ranges (although *average* salary ranges were considered more relevant).

Advisors were next asked to share how closely the attitudes of students they advised aligned with a series of statements about major/degree selection - advisors were given options of 0%, 50%, and 100%.

Q21-30: Based on your experiences with advising students at the University of Arizona, please indicate approximately how many students' attitudes you feel tend to reflect the statements below:



Q25: "I am choosing a college because it offers my selected major/degree."	72.2%
Q28: "I am choosing a major/degree/college based on my interests and talents."	63.9%
Q21: "I know what major I want to study."	56.9%
Q22: "I have no trouble deciding between all the major/degree offerings."	50.0%
Q29: "I am choosing a major/degree/college based on expectations of a high salary."	50.0%
Q24: "I am undecided about my major/degree."	41.7%
Q23: "I may want to change my major/degree down the road."	40.3%
Q26: "I am choosing a college before I know what degree/major I want to study."	36.1%
Q27: "I am choosing a major/degree/college based on my parents' preferences."	31.9%
Q30: "I am choosing a major/degree based on the amount of work and study time involved."	30.6%

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

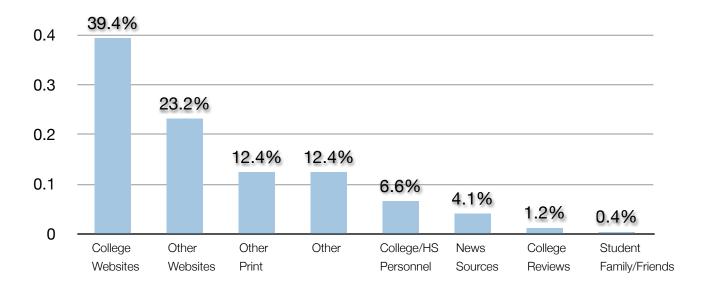
College advisors reported that a higher degree of students that they have worked with knew what major they wanted to study (56.9%), chose the major based on their interests or skills (63.9%), and chose a college that offered their selected major (72.2%). This data may imply that many students (at least those who work with advisors) are not entirely undecided about their major choices, and that this decision is significant in the college decision process.

A much lower percentage of students were reported to have selected their major or degree based on study time or parental preferences, or chosen a college/university before deciding on a degree.

Undecided Students

Advisors were asked whether they ever worked with undecided students - 72.2% of respondents indicated that they did. These respondents were then asked an additional set of questions about the tools they used when searching for majors with undecided students.

Q32-39: When searching for degrees/majors with my undecided students, I look mostly to... (please rank your top 4 selections in order of importance):



The highest-ranked information sources accessed by advisors while assisting undecided students are college websites (39.4%), other websites (23.2%), other print materials from college and elsewhere (12.4%), and other sources (12.4%).

Other Websites (Used by Advisors) for Undecided Students:		
Other/Specific Tools	23.2%	
Career Services / Occupational Outlook Handbook	16.7%	
UA Degree Search	13.3%	
UA Department Websites	13.3%	
Bureau of Labour Statistics	10.0%	
Holland Codes	10.0%	
CLAS/CES Websites	6.7%	
US News / NY Times Websites	6.7%	

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

Other/Specific tools mentioned by advisors included ARC, Think Tank, DISCOVERY, non-UA Study Abroad programs, and other websites. Advisors were also asked to clarify the other print and general sources that they accessed while working with undecided students - many of these tools are listed below.

Other Degree Exploration Tools (Used by Advisors)

- Occupational Outlook Handbook
- Holland Code activity
- College/major informational handouts
- Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS)
- CES/CLAS website
- Think Tank
- ARC
- Inventories (personal/reflection)
- Career Services Discover program
- Personal/professional experience
- Degree Search
- Meyers Briggs
- NY Times
- US News
- Gourman Report
- Princeton Review

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

Degree Search Website

College advisors were asked whether or not they had heard of or used the UA Degree Search website (degreesearch.arizona.edu) - 83% had heard of the site, 77% of those had used it, and 78% of those who had used it did so with students to review majors outside of their specialized college or department.

	Yes %	Yes #
Have you heard of the UA Degree Search website?	83.3%	30
Have you used the UA Degree Search website?	76.7%	23
Have you used the UA Degree Search website with students to review	78.3%	18
majors outside of the college/department in which you specialize?		

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

Advisors who had used the site were then asked to rank the top 5 factors from a list in order of what functions they found to be most useful on the UA Degree Search website.

Q48-61: Please rank the top 5 factors below in order of what you find to be most useful on the UA Degree Search website (degreesearch.arizona.edu):

Q50: Four Year Plans	77.3%		
Q56: Major Descriptions/Details	67.3%		
Q59: Search For Majors/Degrees Available	43.6%		
Q52: Math Requirements 27.3			
Q57: Personal Interest (Holland Codes)	22.7%		
Q48: Career Planning	20.9%		
Q49: Admission Requirements	19.1%		
Q60: Arizona Transfer Course Equivalents	15.5%		
Q58: Filtered List of Majors	14.5%		
Q54: College Listing Drop Down	1.8%		
Q51: Degree Type (BA/BS/BFA)	0.9%		
Q53: Second Language Requirements	0.0%		
Q55: College Descriptions	0.0%		

Data Source: Degree Search UA College Advisors Survey 2013

The most useful functions of the (current 2012) Degree Search website to UA advisors are the Four Year Plans tool (77.3%), the descriptions and details of majors, (67.3%), and the ability to search for available majors and degrees (43.6%). The math requirements, holland codes, and career planning functions were also considered useful. The least useful tools on Degree Search for advisors were the college descriptions, second language requirements, and ability to search based on degree type.

Advisors were asked why they had or had not used the Degree Search website - those that had did so because the tool allowed them to view all majors in one place, verify requirements, look at transfer options and four year plans, and refer students to explore options on their own. Those that had not used the site cited lack of time/opportunity or easier alternative options.

80% of respondents recommend the UA Degree Search website to their students, citing it as a useful tool to facilitate major exploration, answer student questions, and empower them to do their own research and review options. The 20% of respondents who had not recommended the site had not used it, or provided their students with different information.

Note: the above two questions, Q46 and Q63, were free-response questions; recommend reviewing full list of 30 unique responses for each in Appendix B and C (or raw data) below.

Additional Feedback

Additional free-response feedback from advisors was given in Q65 (Appendix C below). Many of the advisors taking the survey advised for specific programs, and rarely worked with many undecided students. This section contains some useful unique feedback about advisor experiences with the Degree Search website.

Appendix A - Free Response Answers: Q2

ount	Percent		
37	100.00%		
	Count	Percent	
	1	2.70%	A question: "What can my kid do with a Classics major?"
	1	2.70%	About study abroad.
	1	2.70%	Academic progress in chosen degree program
	1	2.70%	Academic status (i.e. good standing) and job options for their child upon graduation
	1	2.70%	Adding classes, choosing major, academic skill concerns, resources, transferring, competitive entry into major
	1	2.70%	can't get Engineering Academic Affairs Dean's Office to answer their calls or emails. can't get an answer to their question from other UA student affairs personnel.
	1	2.70%	Choice of major
	1	2.70%	Class availability, financial aid
	1	2.70%	Financial concerns
	1	2.70%	Given that I am advising young adults, it is rare for me to ever be approached with concerns from parents or guardians. There have only been two circumstances where I have met with parents. One set was concerned with the quantitative rigor of the program, the other was concerned with their son's adjustment to a U.S. college system after having attended high school abroad.
	1	2.70%	I have never been approached by any of my students' parents with concerns.
	1	2.70%	I mostly speak with parents in regards to preparing for their students to begin at UA or when academic problems (GPA, Academic Probation, etc.) arise.
	1	2.70%	I've not had a lot of parent contact in this position. Been here 7 months. I am lucky to have very self sufficient students for the most part. Their parents raised them well! :-)
	1	2.70%	If high school dual enrollment or AP credit will count for credit.
	1	2.70%	If their child has difficulties registering for a required course.
	1	2.70%	IF their student is failing or having other academic difficulties (finding classes, tutoring)
	1	2.70%	Language Proficiency Exam concerns; missing units/requirements at end of a student's degree program; concerns about prospective student issues (transfering credits when entering the University, etc.)
	1	2.70%	N/A
	1	2.70%	none; no one ever approaches me.
	1	2.70%	parents only really show up during a student's freshman year and are trying to learn the ins and outs of what their child will be doing in college and for their degree
	1	2.70%	Student academic progress, success in classes, ability to complete program on time.
	1	2.70%	student in academic trouble, inquiries regarding leave of absence, petition options
	1	2.70%	Student not doing well in classes. Restricted access to classes.
	1	2.70%	student's grades
	1	2.70%	Students' academic difficulties, possible majors, more information about CLAS majors, usually General Studies.
	1	2.70%	Their kids have some health problem
	1	2.70%	Their student's degree plan, usefulness, and their own misguided expectations.
	1	2.70%	Their students getting into the correct classes, so as not to delay graduation.
	1	2.70%	Their students' grades

	1	2.70%	They most often approach me when their student: 1. is unable to make the grades they need in key classes 2. does not want to take their math class online, but we've told them they need to take the class 3. is upset that our major isn't as easy as it should be - they think Comm is just learning skills and don't understand the emphasis on research (and hence, the need to understand statistics)
	1	2.70%	They want to know exactly which courses will meet requirements here at UA
	1	2.70%	time to graduation
	1	2.70%	Usually the parents of high school students interested in applying call to ask what the requirements are.
	1	2.70%	What careers are related to the degree program?
	1	2.70%	When their children are not doing well and they need help or when their child has applied to the University and they want to know more about our Department.
	1	2.70%	When their daughter/son is struggling academically, i.e. academic probation, they usually want to be kept in the loop and sit in on advising meetings.
	1	2.70%	Whether or not their children can graduate 'on time', and when their children are having academic difficulties (probation).
37	Responder	nts	

Appendix B - Free Response Answers: Q46

ount 23	76.67%	Yes (why?	
2.5	Count	Percent	
	1	4.35%	A transfer student came in and had the printout. I am still confused about how to use it and our four year plan is not yet on there.
	1	4.35%	All of the majors are in one location and are searchable and refinable by certain criteria. It's easier to read and navigate than the University of Arizona Catalog and also includes career information.
	1	4.35%	Degree Search allows students to see every major offered, as well as the math requirements. Students discover majors they never knew exsisted. It is a fabulous tool.
	1	4.35%	Great place to find 4 year plans, dept websites, basic description
	1	4.35%	Helpful to find info. about majors all in one place.
	1	4.35%	I find the website to be extremely useful for a) prospectives students who are not yet attending the UA and b) current students exploring another of our majors. For both of these groups, Degree Search is useful for offering a general overview of course requirements in an easy to read, semester-by-semester format.
	1	4.35%	I haven't used it much. I use it with students who tell me what really matters to them in a degree is what kind of job they can get. I would use Degree Search more if it contained more information about what students would learn about in any particular major and if it enabled better searches for students whose primary concern in choosing a major is intellectual engagement with the classes they'll take.
	1	4.35%	I work extensively with undecided/No Major Selected students. I used to use program guides available from the ARC website (and preferred those, since they gave me all the information I needed in a snapshot, rather than the four year plans on degree search which are much more vague and don't tell me what I need) when working with students on major exploration.
	1	4.35%	It has all the major curriculum information in one placethough I wish it had an easy link to the advising information from ARC.
	1	4.35%	It provides a central source for students to access information on other majors and their course requirements without relying on an advisor. It provides them a place to look at options and narrow down their interests before setting up any meetings.
	1	4.35%	It's ok at referring students to various options but it's terrible at being up to date, robust, and complete.
	1	4.35%	just sparingly, as i deal mostly with students who are decided on their major. If they are leaving, they usually know what major they want to go to, or if they are unsure, the BGS degree is where they are recommended to check out because it works best academically for them
	1	4.35%	look up major requirements, suggested sequencing, career info
	1	4.35%	Mainly when I was an advisor at Pima Community college to help students find a major at the U of A and see what the requirements are
	1	4.35%	Mainly with transfer students
	1	4.35%	One-stop-shop for the UofA's degree offerings
	1	4.35%	To find degree information about other UA majors. Program descriptions and four year plans have been most helpful.
	1	4.35%	To help students understand their options at UA
	1	4.35%	to help students who might be interested in majors other than the one they are in
	1	4.35%	To look at four year plans and transfer options.
	1	4.35%	to verify required courses, math courses, second language
	1	4.35%	To view requirements, four year plans, and also I send students considering moving into another major that website.
	1	4.35%	When showing students how to search for majors on campus

Count	Percent	
1	14.29%	Don't have the time
1	14.29%	I find that it is easier to discuss with students what they are interested in and point them to advisors for those programs to discuss requirements. (ARC advisor directory).
1	14.29%	I'm new
1	14.29%	No opportunity yet. Will be using it in future.
1	14.29%	Not easy to search through; courses listed under degrees continually change.
1	14.29%	Students come to me generally when they are considering changing to Anthropology, so I can go through our requirements with them. I would assume students use Degree Search when they are considering changing majors but haven't narrowed the field down yet.
1	14.29%	The majority of undecided students who meet with me are already in the College of Engineering and are deciding primarily between different engineering majors.

Appendix C - Free Response Answers: Q65

unt	Percent			
10	27.78%	Yes (please	explain)	
	Count	Percent		
	1	10.00%	Degree search drops all your search parameters when you follow a link. Further, it doesn't combine parameters (such as "Artistic and Conventional" which doesn't eliminate Accounting for not being Artistic). The links to Degree Search from the advising resource center never work, and EVERYONE has a 4-year plan but not all the degreesearch programs include them.	
	1	10.00%	I don't have that many students who come talk with me who are completely undecided. By the time they get to me they are usually either wanting to become a major or this major is one of two-three majors they are considering so, at that point, they don't need a broad overview of all the UA majors. I would think degree search might be most relevant for potential student before they enter the UA, when they want to see what is required of a variety of majors.	
	1	10.00%	I like the degree search site! Some of the specific majors/tracks within colleges are a bit confusing because it looks like a lot of data, but it's always nice to truly show a student how much opportunity exists at UA and give them the tool to find the information.	
	1	10.00%	I think this survey was intended for a generic advisor who meets with incoming freshmen who either have not declared a major, or have no idea what they want to declare as a major. I rarely advise undeclared students, unless they have already somehow heard about the Environmental Hydrology (EHY) major, and show up at my office to learn more about the EHY, but are pretty much already convinced that EHY is what they want. I also advise a large number of transfer students, or students who simply want to declare EHY as their major after being at UA for 1-2 years and their other major is no longer inspiring them, or is simply not a good fit for what they want in life. Again, when these students show up at my door, they are already interested in declaring the EHY major. I just need to introduce them to the Department and the vast array of hydrology careers, and then help them select their classes for the forthcoming semester(s).	
	1	10.00%	It would be great to have degree search include minor plans as well. I frequently send students links to both degree search and the catalog, but would be super helpful to have both of these in the same place so students could compare the major with the minor.	
	1	10.00%	It would be very useful if the 4-year plans were printable and if there are major electives, if it linked to where those courses could be found. I also think it is important to have AZ Transfer Equivalency on the fourth page and not the new search engine because often students don't know what to look for or what to enter into this field, and they would have to look up each individual course (which they won't do). Having the transfer course equivalencies already listed (this can be requested of the departments, since they have to update their programs yearly and are usually quite familiar with their major's transfer course equivalencies) will be useful for students who are looking to transfer to the UA to see what requirements they have already met, as well as for current UA students who need to attend another institution for financial or course availability reasons.	
	1	10.00%	Our system is not really user-friendly. Courses we list for our degree program appear and disappear as departments revise their curriculum and change faculty. We are continually revising our degree sheet. Students come to me have not completed math placement tests, or meeting their foreign language requirements. Some students do not know how to use the online system for enrolling in courses, and miss their enrollment window.	
	1	10.00%	Please increase the size of the font on the links to the majors. Many students do not realize that is the link	
	1	10.00%	This wasn't the most user-friendly survey. A number of the questions were very confusing, and forced me to pick answers which were far from true.	
26	72.22%	No		
36	Responde	nts		

Appendix D: Raw Survey Data (attached)