

The **rate** at which the two groups of **Open Option students declared** majors was **also measured** for the interval **fall 1979 to fall 1980**. By fall 1980, **93%** of those having taken **S&H 100** had **declared** majors, compared to **47%** of those advised in the **OOAC** but not having taken the **class**.

Retention for three groups was **measured** for the calendar year **fall 1979 to fall 1980** (**Table VII**). Both groups of **Open Option** students had higher retention **rates** than did the **students entering** with declared majors.

SUMMARY

The **development of the Open Option** Advising Model has:

- moved **Open Option** advising from **academic departments** to a **college** advising center,
- brought Faculty to the **Center** to represent three **general areas** (arts, **humanities** and communication; sciences and mathematics; social and **behavioral sciences**),
- brought faculty and professional **advisors together** to share their areas of **expertise**,
- used **highly trained peer advisors**, and introduced a career **planning/orientation** course.

The study indicates that students advised in the **Center** are **satisfied** with the advising they receive and **believe that** their **S&H 100** advisors are personally **interested** in their progress. Students taking **S&H 100** are achieving the goals set for the course and rate **most** of the **course activities as valuable**. Conditions causing student dissatisfaction with advising, uncovered in the **1977** study, have been changed and the present **strategies** are highly effective.

The academic progress of **Open Option** students equals that of students in **majors**. For the academic year **1979-80**, the retention of **Open Option** students were higher than for those with declared majors (**93%** vs. **89%**). The mean credit load and grade point average for **Open Option** students are equal to those of students in **declared majors**. The retention of **Open Option** students for the calendar year **Fall 1979 to Fall 1980** was greater than of students **entering** into majors. and the students participating in the **S&H** class had the **highest** retention of the three groups.

The **new Open Option** advising model in the **S&H** College is very successful and is serving as a pattern for other **colleges** at the University. It can be implemented at other **institutions where** commitment to quality advising is high.

Life Designing in the Market of the Future

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"...if we can actualize our beliefs and **goals** with repeated and consistent action, our decisions will lead us toward a future we **can** cope with and **control**... **When** we accept the first alternatives and don't look ahead to consequences. when we allow others to make our value **choices** for us. when we do not act on our **beliefs** and ideals. **then** we relinquish control over our futures and find **ourselves** floundering in a world and a body we do not understand."

— Alvin Toffler

Advisors in higher education—the time has **come** to publicly **re-define** our mission. **Of course**, we will still provide sage advice on course work and **programs**, but let us stop pretending we have a crystal ball and can see into the future. Let us **tell** those students who ask us to predict the future the way it **really** is. that we do not know which academic program is going to provide them with eternal employment and happiness. Let's go all the way and tell them **a college degree does** not guarantee a job upon graduation. In fact, they may find the college degree a detriment to employment when they start looking for "any job" as opposed to "The Job." and employers **tell** them they are **over-qualified**.

People invest in a college education for reasons other than the pursuit of knowledge. Many **students decide** to **attend college** because conventional **wisdom claims**: as night follows day, **college follows** high school. We **even see older** students entering academic **programs** because of a vague feeling that they have missed something and **believe** that a **college** education is the means to a **better** life, **i.e.**, more satisfying employment.

Students are seeking "the answer" to the question which major they should pursue to **be sure** of employment after graduation. What **classes** should they take to make them acceptable to the job market? The market place is **where** we **expect** to buy and **sell** goods, and many students **these days** are willing to sell or trade their identity to secure a good job. There is a lack of understanding that a **career ideally incorporates**, or at least need not conflict with. **a person's values, interests, beliefs, strengths, skills, or** aptitudes. There is **also** a lack of understanding as to what is **an** education. Dedication to illuminating these two areas for the students we advise is a challenging and exciting opportunity to advance the cause of **humanity**, and to advance our own value in **the** eyes of our students.

College years should be used for increased discovery of self and society. If students do not perceive their own humanity and uniqueness, they will not be able to perceive the humanity and uniqueness of others. To find meaning in their lives they need to know that what they believe is meaningful. This cannot be done through an opinion survey that tells the student what everyone else thinks he/she should do or believe. Students willing to exert the effort may find exploration of one's self and society can lead to discovery of new facets of one's personality and new paths to pursue in life, also increased awareness of the various career options available. The most rewarding and exciting of all is the understanding of how the varied elements in life can come together as a unique life design, a vivid portrayal of one's identity.

In an advising conference we have an opportunity to affect a student's awareness of life as a unity and not just unrelated bits and pieces here and there. Choice of a major program by the student is generally related to concern with career path, and contemplation of career should include more than the latest job market demands and future projections. For example, some of the "pieces" students need to see are that an academic program and a career are not one and the same (personal interests, values, and goals can be used to understand the relationships between major program, career, and lifestyle); and formal education should provide more than employment credentials (development of critical and humane thinking, and verbal and written communication skills).

The easiest students to advise are the ones who tell us their major choice in a clear sure voice. The most challenging students are the ones who have no idea what majors interest them and are unable to articulate my interests or goals. I began asking students, who seemed quite certain of their major choice, why they had chosen that particular program. Because I wondered whether such information would benefit undecided students. Their varied replies were:

- "My roommate likes it."
- "The job prospects are good,"
- "I have to have a major."

Students who were able to explain beyond the superficial often gave some variation of:

- "I have given it a lot of hard thought."
- "I talked to . . ." (usually more than one person and included someone in the career areas of the student's interest),
- "I worked at (or observed. . .)"

I soon realized that only a few students understood what the process of wisely choosing a major required; most students were not aware of all the "pieces" involved.

As an advisor I was becoming increasingly aware of the complexity of the issue and I asked myself, too often for comfort, "What is it I am trying to accomplish in an advising conference? What is my responsibility to the student?" I struggled to sort out the "pieces" in my own mind as to what needed to be done to choose a major and it seemed to me that:

- 1) A major program should be a positive experience. chosen because of an individual's interest and desire.

- 2) If a program is chosen for this reason it will in all likelihood be relevant to a person's life beyond the classroom.
- 3) Career choice needs to include consideration of society's needs as well as the individual's needs, values, interests, skills, and aptitudes.

It is important for students to realize the value of assessing their situation, and accepting responsibility for their own destiny by asking themselves the hard questions, such as, "Why am I going to college?"

The rationale underlying my advising has been evolutionary and is based on a desire to provide students with more than academic program planning and a few suggestions for their career paths. Advising has come to mean helping students not only understand that a degree does not guarantee a job, but that education means their continual self-development in order to be contributing members of the society. Students need to realize the importance of logical, rational thought not only in a classroom, but in directing and guiding their lives. They also need experience in trusting their own judgment and intuition.

To this end my efforts have evolved from a basic outline entitled "How To Choose a Major" to a three-part program entitled "Life Designing!" Life Designing was chosen because Life includes everything, and Designing conveys a feeling for the aesthetic as well as for the flexible and the functional. The goal of the program is twofold:

- 1) To enable students to develop an awareness of the many components involved in "choosing a major."
- 2) To increase awareness of the relationship between career choice and personal interests, values, and goals.

The Life Designing model was developed so students would see it as a decision process that could be used for a lifetime rather than a one-time exercise in choosing a major. The model itself is intended to convey a sense of interaction between the individual and the community; to cause or increase awareness of the crucial role of questions, and the questions that need to be asked, both of self and society; to reinforce the concept of active personal commitment and involvement in making decisions; to clarify that it is possible for an individual to be his/her own "expert" (given enough information a person can rely on own judgment).

Part I of Life Designing lays out the "pieces" and clarifies basic concepts regarding major choice and career choice. Part II assists the student in sorting out the multitude of thoughts in his/her head. Using interests, values, expectations, hopes, and dreams can lead a student from fantasy to reality as practical means are identified to reach toward a vision of the Ideal. Anyone who has ever seen the glow on the face of a student who has decided to pursue what was really wanted all along knows that the pursuit of the ideal is where the joy of life is to be found; that the meaning of the race is not found at the finish line but in the effort to reach the finish line.

The information gathered from Self In Part II is then used to assist the student in focusing on which academic programs to seriously investigate, and where to begin career exploration. A "Decision Aid For Choosing A Major" serves as a guide for students gather-

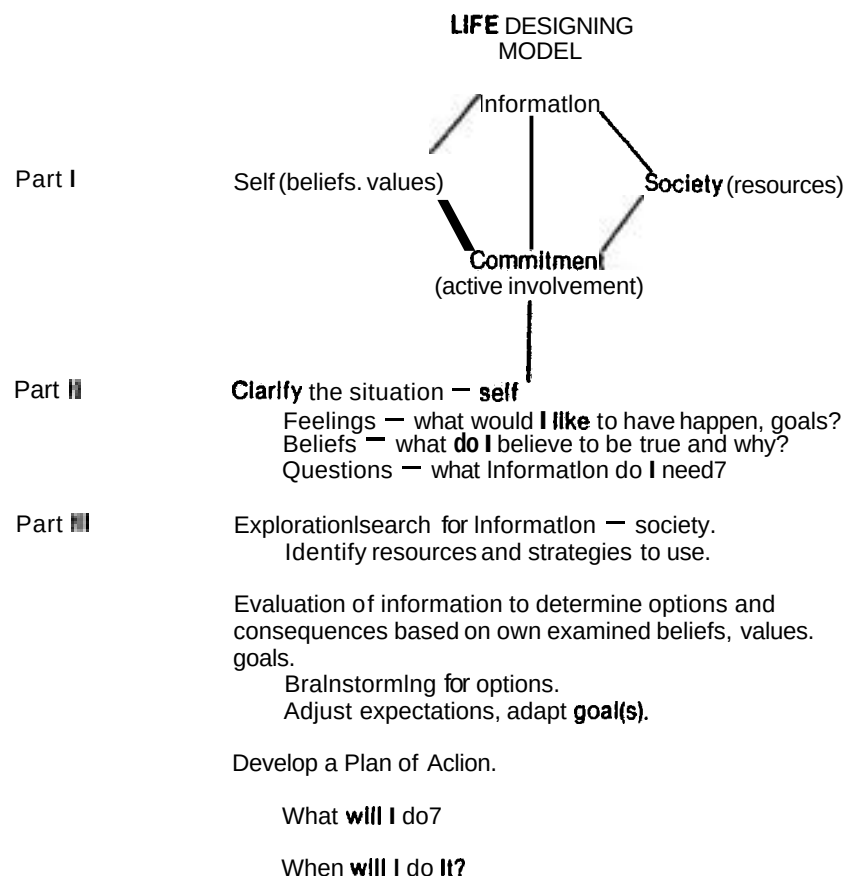


Figure 1

ing information regarding academic programs. In Part III career exploration, the students use an outline of all resources available on campus, and suggestions for activities off campus.

For many students Part II is a formidable task. They have difficulty responding to a question that attempts to elicit their interests, and advisors have heard responses ranging from "I can't think of anything," to "I have so many I don't know where to start." For the latter student it is useful to have him/her "lay out" the possibilities and examine each one, to see if "what it is" and what the student "thinks it is" are one and the same. Asking students what it is in a particular career or major program that is attracting them is another means of identifying interests, desires, and values. It has often been very helpful in clarifying what the student previously had difficulty expressing. Asking students to explain further to make sure I understand what they mean, can also highlight contradictions for students between what they are saying and what they, in fact, mean.

Hesitant students, reluctant to express interests because they are not related to current job market demands, may have been discouraged by family and friends from pursuing their interests. These types of students may benefit from talking to people who are in occupations in which they are interested. It may be possible that other means exist to include this experience in a person's life. Students must become actively involved in seeking first-hand information rather than relying completely on the opinion of second-hand sources.

By asking a student to list what he/she has enjoyed doing in the past few years, I avoid the "I don't know" response. It is often necessary to inform the student that I mean list anything, including a vacation, not just academic or work-related activities. I examine this list to see what it was about each experience that the student said he/she enjoyed, and to identify patterns and relationships. These patterns can prove very helpful to the advisor in suggesting course work, programs, and career exploration activities for the student. This method also serves to help the student understand how insight can be gained from experiences.

In discussions regarding enjoyable experiences, the advisor may discover that students have had few experiences that focus on academic programs or career exploration. For these students the most vital elements that may be missing are 1) lack of experiences outside the classroom, 2) lack of awareness of what is involved in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood, particularly of the requisite skills: decision-making, accepting responsibility for one's self, how to use resources in the environment, and awareness of one's own values and goals. It may be necessary to advise those students what elective classes to enroll in for the coming term, and identify specific steps they should take so progress in personal growth is achieved. These steps may be seeing a counselor at the campus counseling center, if this seems to be appropriate; checking into volunteer opportunities as a means of enriching personal experience and learning more about the work world; also, suggested reading. Whatever the steps taken, students need options from which to choose.

In order to assess the student's needs, the advisor must consider the uniqueness of the individual, and identify with his/her expectations and assumptions for the advising conference. This assessment may highlight the various pieces that are necessary for the student to make enlightened academic decisions, i.e., the difference between demands of choosing an academic program and a career, the role of goals, expectations, values, interests, and dreams. Highlighting the place of experience is an important piece in the "puzzle." When engaging in in-class as well as out-of-class experiences it is important that the student understand the experimental nature of this initial examination of course work and career exploration; how to use the experience to learn more about Self (values, beliefs, skills, interests) as well as Society; and the implications of this information. Students should be conscious of what they are really trying to do, namely, figure out what direction they want their lives to take; what kind of person they want to be; what kind of lifestyle they want to have; what their value system is; and what it is that make them unique in this world.

If students do not take time now to engage in developing a better understanding of their Self, what their dreams and goals are, it won't be any easier when they graduate and an employer asks, "Why do you want this job?" Much of the mid-life crisis revolves around people looking at themselves for the first time and asking, "Is this all there is? What do I want from life?" And, even then, many still don't bother to engage in self-awareness and

confuse it with activity. **Rolls** May reminds us that activity is not a substitute for **awareness**.¹ Along with **activity** students need to include **evaluation**, **analysis**, and **reflection** on the activity to achieve some measure of insight and self-awareness.

The next step, Part **III**, leads to exploration of Self and Society. **Consideration** and analysis of **self-knowledge** can provide some focus for exploration of **society**. The library is a **good** place to begin one's research.

In Part **III** the student should **discover**:

- **who** in the work world **would** be helpful to talk with.
 - **what** questions need to **be** asked.
 - **what** kind of **experiences** relate to **the** student's interests, and
- **how** may the student arrange for such experiences?

Students can develop an understanding of Self and Society by engaging in **these** activities. When students become **actively involved** in this process they **increase** their self-awareness as well as an **awareness** of the work world. At some point, **hopefully**, they will **begin** to understand their role in society.

A job upon graduation from **college** is an important consideration, but students must **realize** that while the **degree** may be **crucial** in getting the interview for a job it does not guarantee a job. It is important that along **with** their **formal** college **education** they prepare outside the classroom for the world of work through experiences that **will** enhance not **only** job **opportunities** later, but **also** **serve** to enhance their **personal** development now. **The integration** of work experience and classroom experience can **serve** to make **both** more meaningful **for** students. **Volunteer** work, **internships**, **observation** and **interviewing** **people** are some of **Be** **means** students might **use** to gain valuable **experiences**.

Joseph Katz states it well:

"In a **way**, it is **inevitable** that large numbers **of our students** will not have had adequate **opportunity** to examine their career plans **critically**, because nowhere are they encouraged to **do** so. Their experience is filled with **mixed** messages. So many different, **equally** powerful, **often contradictory** positions are presented to the student that **efforts** to help him as an individual tend to be **remedial**, **temporary**, and **time consuming**. The **pressures** to **conform** are too **great** for many individuals to resist **successfully**. If widespread changes are to be **effected**, all segments of the educational institution must be **genuinely committed** to the task of encouraging the individual student to **explore** and to grow."

Encouraging students to **learn** how to **use** self-knowledge and **knowledge** of the **environment** (in this **instance** the **work** world), to **arrive at** **decisions** that will **lead them** forward in their journey through **life** is a means advisors can use to facilitate growth.

In a rapidly changing world students must know and understand their **Self** by learning to ask hard questions: **be willing** to **actively gather information** from their **environment** to make important decisions **as** they travel **through life**; and, **based** on an evaluation of this information, be willing to **risk** trusting their judgment. Students should not **be** seeking

definitive answers from **other** people regarding what **they** should do with their **life**. **Students need to be asking** for information, advice, or the opinion **of others**, that they **use** in **determining their own answers**. While engaging in this **interaction between Self** : **Society** they **hopefully** will discover commitments they **care deeply about** for both **Self** **Society**.

Democracy requires an educated citizenry. Education in the **1980s** means much **more** than the traditional **3R's** or knowledge of the **Greek classics**. **Leo Buscaglia** provides a useful definition:

"Education should be the process of helping **everyone** to **discover his uniqueness**, **teach him how** to develop that uniqueness, and then **to show him** how to give it away **because that is the only reason** for having anything."

We may not be able to reach every student we see. **However**, as attention to the **underlying needs** of students we will find **ourselves** searching for ways to **enrich development and growth**, and our own as advisors. Isn't this **after all** what **life and education** are all about?

¹Rolls May, *Man's Search For Himself* (New York: Dell, 1953), p. 117.

²Joseph Katz, *No Time For Youth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1968), p. 237.

³Leo Buscaglia, *Love* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1972), p. 30.