

# ACPA23 Program Sample Program Proposals

The ACPA23 Program Team developed this resource to provide examples of what successful versus unsuccessful convention proposals look like for the same campus program. Additionally, we recommend that you review the Education Session Rubric available to ensure your proposal meets the expected criteria.

## Example of a **SUCCESSFUL** Session Proposal

**Presenter:** Alex Rivers

**Presenter Experience:** The presenter is at a four-year public university and advises students with undeclared majors. The presenter was once an undecided student in their undergraduate studies and understands the anxiety that comes with declaring a major. Also, the presenter worked in Admissions for a for-profit university and has experience in helping students define their educational goals and provide the right path to accomplishing those goals.

**Session Type:** Convention Program

**Program Title:** Help Your Undecided Students Choose a Major that Excites Them  
Professional

**Competencies:** Advising and Support, Student Learning and Development Program

**Abstract:** Research suggests 8.9% of American college students enter college without a declared major. Further evidence states that on average students their major 3 times. To ease this stress, ACPA University's Office of Student Engagement partnered with Academic Advising to create Major Madness, a 'speed dating' peer-to-peer workshop to aid undecided students in picking a major. The goal of this workshop is to share the experience of ACPA University's Major Madness and to generate ideas to apply to your campus.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- Participants will be able to identify how to create programming to help undecided students explore different majors on their home campus.
- Participants will be able to identify different colleges on their home campuses to participate in planning this event.
- Participants will be able to identify the needs of undecided students on their campus.

**Relevance to the Profession:** An academic major is an important aspect of an undergraduate student's identity. After all, "What's your major?" is one of the most asked questions during college years. Research from The Higher Education Research Institute suggests 8.9% of American college students enter college without a declared major (Eagan, et al, 2016). Further, The National Center of Educational Statistics states that the average American undergraduate student changes major 3 times (Long, et al, 2014).

Hawkins, Bradley, and White found in their study of anxiety and decision making that students experience anxiety while deciding a major because these important decisions are made "based upon incomplete information" (1977). It is up to those who provide non-academic support to help undecided students deal with anxiety and help lessen "negative feelings about major and career planning in order to facilitate student career development"

(Hawkins, et al, 1977). Their study also found that activities in which students are exposed to different fields and majors, stress levels are lower.

The information students receive about potential majors also have significant impacts on their success. Malgwi, Howe, and Burnaby (2005) surveyed students on the positive and negative factors that aid in their decision. They found that interest in a subject is the number one positive factor when it came to declaring a major. The second most positive factor was discussion with other students. The most negative factor was the introductory course taken by the student. Researchers concluded that "students appeared to be driven to change their major because of positive factors of the new major, rather than negative factors of the old major" (Malgwi, et al, 2005).

ACPA University recognized the need to connect and help students make an informed decision and partnered with the Academic Advising Center to create Major Madness, the 'speed dating' way to aid students in picking a major. This event was designed to introduce undecided students to various academic paths with other students. Using a speed dating structure, students rotate through seven minute rounds, exposing themselves to potential programs.

The purpose of this session is to help create programming to help undecided students explore different majors on your campus. I hope you will learn how to network and collaborate with different colleges and offices on your home campuses to participate in planning this event. I also hope you will guide current undergrad students to evaluate the needs of undecided students on their campus.

#### **Evaluation Criteria:**

- Advising and Supporting
  - This session will help not only higher education professionals, but also students, in developing interpersonal skills, understanding group dynamics, and connecting with others. Facilitating a program like this will help normalize a situation in which a student has an undecided major. This will also give students a chance to connect and network with others
- Student Learning and Development
  - Understanding student learning and development is important to this session because student affairs professionals should be able understand student needs and be able to create an engaging and supportive environment.

#### **Citations:**

Eagan, M. K., Stolzenberg, E. B., Ramirez, J. J., Aragon, M. C., Suchard, M. R., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2016). *The American freshman: Fifty-Year trends, 1966–2015*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Hawkins, J. G., Bradley, R. W., & White, G. W. (1977). Anxiety and the process of deciding about a major and vocation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 24(5), 398-403.

Long, M., Goldhaber, D., and Huntington-Klein, N. (2014). *Do Students' College Major Choices Respond to Changes in Wages?* CEDR Working Paper 2014-6. University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

Malgwi, C. A., Howe, M. A., & Burnaby, P. A. (2005). Influences on Students' Choice of College Major. *Journal of Education for Business*, 80(5), 275-282.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students. New York: Routledge.

**Outline of Session Presentation:**

- Introductions: The facilitator will lead introductions of self and participants. (5 minutes)
- In small groups, participants will be encouraged to share their experiences of either helping struggling students choose a major or their own personal experience declaring a major. (10 minutes)
- The facilitator will bring the group back together to share their small group discussion. (5 minutes)
- The facilitator will discuss the Major Madness program from the ACPA campus, including an overview of past studies, emphasizing the impact that this program made on campus. (20 minutes)
- Then, the groups will break off again for a role playing exercise, half of the group will be undecided students, the other half acting as upperclassmen, going through a shorter version of Major Madness to get the participants an idea of how to run the program. (15 minutes)
- Q&A (5 minutes)

**Participation Component:** Participation during this presentation will be facilitated in a couple different ways. Participants will be broken up into small discussion groups, then will be allowed to share out as they feel comfortable. Then as participants feel comfortable, some will role play a sample of what Major Madness looks like. These methods support active engagement because groups will be small and allow all to feel able to participate.

**Synthesis and Application of Knowledge:** The presenter will outline the steps taken to put on an event like this and include all of the campus partners used. The presenter will have worksheets available for participants to take notes.

**Target Audience for Session:**

- Two-year institution
- Four-year institution
- Public Institution
- Private Institution
- Institution size up to 5,000 students
- Institution size 5,001-25,000 students
- Institution size 25,001-40,000 students
- Institution size more than 40,000 students
- Mid Level
- Senior Level

## Example of an **UNSUCCESSFUL** ACPA Session Proposal

**Presenter:** Sam Diaz

**Presenter Experience:** The presenter advises students with undeclared majors.

**Session Type:** Convention Program

**Program Title:** Help Your Undecided Students Choose a Major that Excites Them

**Professional Competencies:** Advising and Support, Student Learning and Development

**Program Abstract:** Research suggests 8.9% of American college students enter college without a declared major. Further evidence states that on average students change their major 3 times.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Participants should be able to identify how to create programming to help undecided students explore different majors on their home campus.

**Relevance to the Profession:** An academic major is an important aspect of an undergraduate student's identity. After all, "What's your major?" is one of the most asked questions during college years. Research from The Higher Education Research Institute suggests that a lot of American college students enter college without a declared major. Further, The National Center of Educational Statistics states that the average American undergraduate student changes major 3 times.

The purpose of this session is to help create programming to help undecided students explore different majors on your campus. I hope you will learn how to network and collaborate with different colleges and offices on your home campuses to participate in planning this event. I also hope you will guide current undergrad students to evaluate the needs of undecided students on their campus.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

- Advising and Supporting
  - This session will help not only higher education professionals, but also students, in developing interpersonal skills, understanding group dynamics, and connecting with others. Facilitating a program like this will help normalize a situation in which a student has an undeclared major. This will also give students a chance to connect and network with others
- Student Learning and Development
  - Understanding student learning and development is important to this session because student affairs professionals should be able understand student needs and be able to create an engaging and supportive environment.

**Citations:**

Eagan, M. K., Stolzenberg, E. B., Ramirez, J. J., Aragon, M. C., Suchard, M. R., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2016). *The American freshman: Fifty-Year trends, 1966–2015*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

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### **Outline of Session Presentation:**

- Introductions: The facilitator will lead introductions of self
- In small groups, participants will be encouraged to share their experiences of either helping struggling students choose a major or their own personal experience declaring a major.
- The facilitator will bring the group back together to share their small group discussion.
- The facilitator will discuss the Major Madness program from the MSU campus, including an overview of past studies, emphasizing the impact that this program made on campus.
- Then, the groups will break off again for a role playing exercise.
- Q&A

### **Participation Component:**

Participation during this presentation will be facilitated in a couple different ways. Participants will be broken up into small discussion groups, then will be asked to share. These methods support active engagement because groups will be small and allow all to feel able to participate.

### **Synthesis and Application of Knowledge:**

The presenter will outline the steps taken to put on an event like this and include all of the campus partners involved. The presenter will have worksheets available for participants to take notes.

### **Target Audience for Session:**

- Two-year institution
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