EDPS 105 – Academic & Career Planning Course Overview

Welcome to the Exploratory Studies Family!

Our mandatory, 3 credit hour, academically rigorous course is the cornerstone of our program and key to your student’s exploration process. One of the **BEST** ways you can assist your student through their major and career exploration process is to engage them in pressure-free conversations about what they are learning in EDPS 105 (and other courses) as the semester moves along. Ask them how the material they are encountering in our class modifies or confirms the career ideas they have so far. Most importantly, encourage them to keep an open mind throughout the semester and “try new ideas on for size” first before discarding them. Sometimes the major that seemed the least likely to them at the beginning of the semester turns out to be the best fit later on.

EDPS 10500 is a hybrid course which means part of the weekly instruction time is in person and part is online. The hybrid course design is used in many different areas of study across campus so students should get used to working well in this format.

In our version of the hybrid design, students have 2 hours of in-class time per week plus 1 hour of online class instruction per week PLUS homework (vs. the traditional in-person course design which has all 3 hours of instruction per week in a classroom plus homework). The online class time in EDPS 105 consists of prep work, reflections, videos, readings, and other activities. These are designed to encourage students to prepare to actively participate in class each week and actively process what they are learning about their personality characteristics, Purdue’s colleges/majors, and career paths.

To help you to talk to your student about EDPS 10500, here is an overview of the topics and activities we cover over the semester:

**Community Building:** The first step is to get to know each other and start to work in groups. This is an active learning classroom, so students do most of the talking! Most of the in-class time is spent working together, hearing each other’s stories, and discovering how similar and different we all are.

**Reflective Writing:** Reflection involves revisiting and processing what students are learning in class and in their college experience. Through this process, they clarify the connections between new and already established information. If they consistently practice reflective writing and thinking, they will be able to more confidently express their strengths and career goals to others.

**Success in College:** We cover academic integrity, campus help resources, first-semester reflections and wisdom from past Exploratory Studies students, Road Trip Nation professional interviews, and decision-making strategies.

**Self-Directed Search (SDS):** This is the first assessment students complete in EDPS 10500. If you attended our STAR Parent Session this summer, you took a shorter version of this assessment. The SDS reveals the range of students’ personality types, potential interests, ideal work environments, and skill sets. For best results, encourage them to answer the assessment questions **HONESTLY** based on who they are now rather than the person they think they’ll be when they graduate four years from now!

The SDS is NOT intended to prescribe a single major or a career path, but to open their eyes to the wider possibilities. Help them to see these. For example, if their SDS results suggest careers that don’t require a college degree, encourage them to view this more broadly based on the types of skills and interests a
successful person in those careers might need. Then ask them, “How can those skills be leveraged into a similar career that requires a college degree?”

**Majors at Purdue and Plans of Study:** Plans of study are complex, but very useful, so we teach students how to understand the main components of a plan, such as math and science requirements, and then analyze the plan for personal fit. This includes “asking questions” of the major and determining the “deal-breakers” (e.g., certain course requirements, lack of flexibility, etc.). Understanding plans of study helps students more efficiently squeeze in experiences such as study abroad, internships, and co-operative education. Students can make the plan their own. It also makes for a better conversation with their advisor and with faculty, who can then use their expertise to tease out the finer points of the plan with the student.

**Student Interview, Evaluation, and Reflection:** Students use their knowledge of their plan of study they have gained in class to intelligently interview a junior or senior in that major. We then ask them to tie assessments, their interview, and plans of study research together during the evaluation phase. In the reflection phase, they link their own past experiences with what they learned from the interview process. Making meaningful connections between seemingly disparate sources of information and experiences often prompts a lot of “a-ha” moments with our students.

**The World of Work:** Students will find and share information about important issues they will face as they move into the working world. The topics for research and class discussion will include generational differences, globalization, social media, work-life balance, the crossroads of STEM and Liberal Arts Education, technological advancements, and economic forces all of which will impact career options and decisions over time.

**Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI):** This assessment examines preferences. During class discussions, student can see just how different preferences can be and use this insight to narrow or broaden their career scope. They examine how these results might affect group dynamics, study and learning styles, job preferences, work environment choices, and more.

**Strong Interest Inventory (SII):** The SII is a well-researched assessment based around the hypothesis that if you have likes and dislikes in common with someone who is happy in their career, then you might also be happy in that career. This gives them a TON of great information (an 11- to 14-page report), which can helps students narrow down choices or give them surprising new areas to research.

**Family Influence:** If students are to have the full picture of where they may want to go, it is critical that they spend time reflecting on where they come from. We ask them to examine their family career history and to think about how your lives together helped weave their own story. In class, student share their stories in small groups, so they can experience other perspectives and histories.

**StrengthsQuest (SQ):** This Gallup-penned inventory is a student favorite. SQ identifies their top five strengths and describes how the unique interrelations of those strengths can be leveraged to accomplish goals. It’s a complete turnabout on the idea that to truly improve ourselves, we need to conquer our weakness – instead, we say focus on where we shine naturally. We spend time in class comparing strengths and sharing how our strengths could be used in our particular majors. If you are interested in this inventory, you can take it, too! It’s $20 on Gallup’s website: [https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/Purchase/en-US/Product?Path=Clifton%20StrengthsFinder](https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/Purchase/en-US/Product?Path=Clifton%20StrengthsFinder).
**Using Inventory Results:** Our jobs and our lives requires us to be able to clearly articulate, through both speaking and writing, who we are and what we want. Fortunately, EDPS 10500 builds in a lot of opportunities for students to practice! Recruiters who come to campus to hire our students list communication as one of the top critical skills they look for in their candidates. The sooner students understand how to tell other people who they are in a succinct and practiced way, the better.

**Career Information Research:** This assignment familiarizes students with excellent online resources, introduces them to critical questions they can “ask of” websites while exploring, and encourages them to explore the connections between major and career. This is often the favorite assignment of the semester.

**Career Story Interview:** Students then build upon this career research outline by interviewing a professional working in a career of interest. They cannot interview parents or family members, so this is a great opportunity for you to pull on your networks to help your student find a fantastic interviewee!

After interviews are conducted, we spend time in class sharing what we learned! One of our favorite lessons students get from this interview is that they often don’t need to figure out what they want to do for the REST OF THEIR LIVES right now. Careers are built in stages - choice by choice, and opportunity by opportunity. We try to get them to thoughtfully work through each stage: First, researching and choosing a major, taking courses, and seeking out experiences that will clarify major and career paths.

**Your Future:** We end the EDPS 10500 course with some fun exercises that illustrate that unexpected things happen in life to everyone. We often must make daily decisions based on incomplete information. Therefore, how can reflecting upon our core values and unique experiences help us embrace the inevitable disappointments, the coming successes, and the constant change we encounter? One of our goals is that they walk away from this class with better decision-making tools, plus a better sense of who they are and why they are here.

**E-Portfolio Project:** The final project for this class gives students the opportunity to show what they have learned throughout the semester in this class (and others). Showcasing their personal and professional development in an online format is great practice for things to come. Creating and updating an E-Portfolio is a concrete transferable skill they can use throughout their career to give hiring managers and graduate schools a picture of who they are, the quality of their work, and their skill sets.

**Theory of Planned Happenstance:** While we don’t dedicate a specific class to this career theory, we weave many of its tenets into the class content. This theory is based around the idea that none of us can predict the future - we can only prepare ourselves to both recognize and take advantage of good opportunities when they come along. To do this, we need to learn to practice persistence, flexibility, curiosity, and optimism – and we need to be willing to take some risks. What we often see when we read the Career Story Interviews is that many people change career paths several times in their lives. We want your student to see the benefits of both planning and flexibility as they move through this important time of their lives.

Thank you for taking the time to read this outline of our class. We hope this encourages you to engage your student in meaningful conversations about what they are learning and encourage them to participate fully in this exploration process.

*The Exploratory Studies Advising Team and the EDPS 105 Instructor Group*