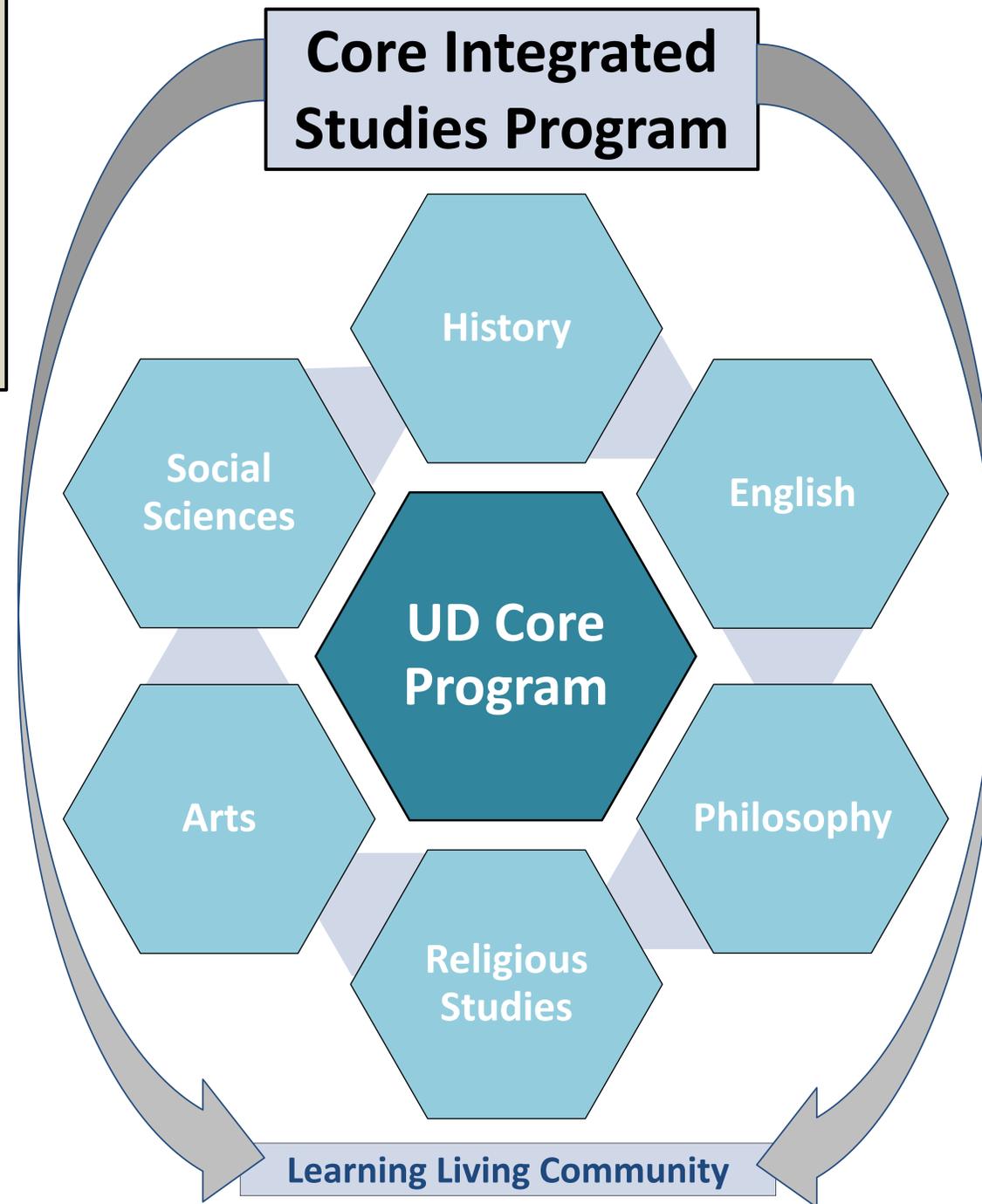


The Impact of an Interdisciplinary Program on Undeclared Students' Academic Major & Vocation Discernment

By: Marissa L. McCray Advisor: Graham Hunter, Ph. D.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- (1) How do UD Core Discover Arts students describe their process of selecting a major?
- (2) What role does the UD Core Program have in shaping Core Discover Arts students' academic major selection?
- (3) What role does Core have in shaping Core Discover Arts students' vocation discernment?



ABSTRACT

While selection of an academic major is pivotal for undeclared students, many lack direction and struggle to understand the meaning of prescribed general education courses. Many students grapple with a sense of purpose among academic choices, future careers, and broader aspects of adulthood. An interdisciplinary curriculum counters the disconnect between compartmentalized disciplines and helps students recognize connections between wider concepts.

RESEARCH METHODS

- Qualitative Case Study
- Semi-structured, individual interviews - coded for themes
 - 13 Junior year Core students who began the Core Program undeclared (Discover Arts)

CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ Core Discover Arts students found Core had varying levels of impact on academic major choice and vocation discernment.
- ✓ Some students noted a direct link to major choice, while others noted an indirect link.

IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- **Narrow vocation lens**
 - ↳ further vocational programming
- **Student development**
 - ↳ fosters self-authorship
- **High-impact program**
 - ↳ deeper learning & engagement
- **Undeclared anxiety**
 - ↳ variable levels, unique needs
- **Director advising & ASI 150**
 - ↳ key for undeclared students
- **Integrated curriculum**
 - ↳ students make connections

- Longitudinal study of one cohort through all years of Core Program
- Further study on student relationships; study broader range of students
- Insight for best practices & assessment; potential expansion of Core

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Graham Hunter and Dr. Savio Franco for your unwavering support and guidance during this research study. Special thanks to Dr. William Trollinger for your abundant mentorship and constant encouragement; you made this research possible. Thank you to the Core students who provided their voices and shared their wonderful stories. I dedicate this research to them. My friends and family deserve enormous thanks, especially my husband, whose patience, counsel, and support were unfounded during the rough patches of this difficult journey. And Julie Huckaba—we were meant to cross paths—I'm forever grateful we walked this long road together.

SELECT REFERENCES

- Cunningham, D. S. (2016). *At this time and in this place*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Gordon, V. N. & Steele, G. E. (2015). *The undecided college student: An academic and career advising challenge*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.
- Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: The Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Lattuca, L. R. (2001). *Creating interdisciplinarity*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Van Slyck, P. (2006). Learning communities and the future of the humanities. *Profession*. 14, 163-176.



Academic Navigation



Inter-connections



Cognitive Mindfulness



Advocacy



Relationships

FINDINGS