Choosing Your Major
Talking Points

Here are some suggested Talking Points for turning this brochure package into a full-fledged presentation.

Suggestions to Go with the PowerPoint Presentation:

Slide 2: Beginning the Process
- Ask participants what it feels like to hear other students who are feeling pretty confident about what they want to major in.
- You can use this time to assure them that, if they’re not sure about a major at this point, going through some of the questions and information in this brochure, plus talking with their advisor and other trusted consultants, can help them get a clearer picture.
- Also assure them that change is okay – and many students wind up changing their majors as they learn more about their interests, abilities and passions.
- Use some of the questions on this slide to get them thinking. You may even want to ask volunteers to share some answers.

Slide 3: Your Thoughts & Feelings
- To go with the questions on this slide, you can have some feelings and thoughts about choosing a major pre-identified:
  o Feelings could include:
    ▪ Panic and anxiety
    ▪ Excitement and enthusiasm
    ▪ Pride
    ▪ Worry and indecision
    ▪ Being “stuck”
    ▪ Not wanting to let anyone down
  o Thoughts could include:
    ▪ What identity am I taking on?
- Will I be able to handle the course load?
- Do I have the skills?
- Am I being swayed by anything/anyone?
- Am I smart enough?
- What jobs will I be qualified for?

- Also remind participants that it’s not just about choosing a major. Selecting a minor is another way to put some of their interests and abilities into play.

**Slide 4: Identifying Your Interests**
- Encourage participants to take a few minutes or to break into pairs to brainstorm everything they can think of that interests them, from bodybuilding to anime to cooking to the movies of Judd Apatow. Make sure they don’t censor themselves – anything goes!
- Then, ask them to think about what they’d like to learn. Sometimes putting it in the context of “What 5 things would you like to learn this year?” makes it more manageable for them to think about.
- Good place to use the “Making the Most of Your Learning” and the “Value of Getting Involved” handouts.

**Slide 5: Exploring Your Values**
- Ask participants to close their eyes and imagine themselves “stuck” in a job that doesn’t jive with their values. What does this look like? How does it feel?
- Then have them explore the questions on this slide, especially the key values they hope to have in the workplace.

**Slide 6: Acknowledging Your Abilities**
- Encourage participants to think about things that they are good at, whether it’s at work, in school or as part of their leadership and service involvements.
- Let them know that these abilities lend numerous clues in the search for a major. They can go through the questions on this slide to help them get more in tune with their abilities.
- Good place to use the “Your Interests & Abilities” and “Your Employee Package” worksheets.
Slide 7: Checking Out the Details

- Although you don’t want to bombard participants with the nitty-gritty details about prerequisites and major requirements, you can use this opportunity to give them the basics and to guide them to resources where they can learn more on your campus.

- Good place to use the “A Major In…” handout.

Slide 8: Don’t Get Overwhelmed and Slide 9: Taking Initiative & Developing Relationships

- Again, emphasize that deciding on a major isn’t something they need to do alone.

- Give example of how they can go about developing relationships with key players in their academic life, like advisors, faculty, department chairs and career counselors.

- Having an upperclass student talk about his/her journey in taking initiative and how it led to choosing a major successfully might resonate with participants during this section, too.

- Good place to use the “For Parents & Families: Supporting Your Student in Selecting a Major” handout.

Slide 10: Tapping Into Resources

Some additional points to make with each of these bullets could include:

- The Career Center. This office offers self-assessment instruments, thousands of job descriptions in the Directory of Occupational Titles and career counselors who are eager to talk with students throughout their college careers, not just when they are seniors!

- The Course Catalog. Students can browse through all the classes available within each major. This can help them determine what it takes to get a major and what’s required for a minor. And if the course listings spark their interest, they may be on to something!

- Upperclass Students in Certain Majors. Advisors can help connect students with upperclass students in majors that interest them. Talking with these students can be some of the best time a student spends!

- Alumni. Talk about any major/career services offered through the campus alumni office, such as job shadowing to see what really goes into certain careers.

- Academic Advisement. An academic advisor can be a very helpful guide throughout a student’s college career.
- **Campus Happenings.** Since campus is a lively place, filled with the exchange of ideas on a daily basis, it makes sense for students to take advantage of this. They can do so by attending free activity and job fairs, residence hall programs, career panels, guest lectures and so much more. Soaking in these various pieces of information can help students in their decision-making process.

Slide 11: Discovering Your Real Self

- Ask students if they can tell a difference between their Ideal Self (who they may wish to be or who others have built them up to be) and their Real Self (who they are now, flaws, talents and all).

- Encourage them to jot down 5 characteristics of their Real Self in this moment. They can share these, if they’re comfortable.

- Good place to use the “Getting In Tune with Your Ideal Self” worksheet.

Slide 12: Making Some Choices

- Participants can use the back of their brochures to narrow some things down, including majors they’re likely not interested in and others that could be definite contenders.

- Then, you can wrap up by reiterating how choosing a major is a process – a process of exploration that can form students just as much as the end result. Encourage them to talk with professionals, explore their interests, get involved, examine their values and discover the possibilities. They’ll undoubtedly get to know themselves better in the process, which is invaluable.