

# Are Undecided Students Changing? A Twenty-five Year Study

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## Presentation Outline

- Rationale for the study
- Description of the survey and results
- Comparison with national data
- Implications for academic and career advising

## Purposes of the Survey

- To create a profile of our undecided first-year students from 1974 -1999
- Compare them with national data
- Advise them more effectively based on what we learned about them

## Variables Used in Survey

- Age
- Gender
- Self-reported high school rank
- Enrollment
- Living arrangements
- Why attending college
- Self-reported levels of decidedness
- Self-reported level of anxiety about choosing
- Self-reported career areas of interest
- Type of assistance preferred

## Survey results

- Spanned from 1974 to 1999
- N=18,953
- Represented on average 18% of Ohio State University's new student enrollment
- More males initially; now more females
- 90% or more of the student are 17-19 years of age
- Self-reported high school rank most years between "highest 1/3" and "middle 1/3"; late 80's more middle third.

## Survey results

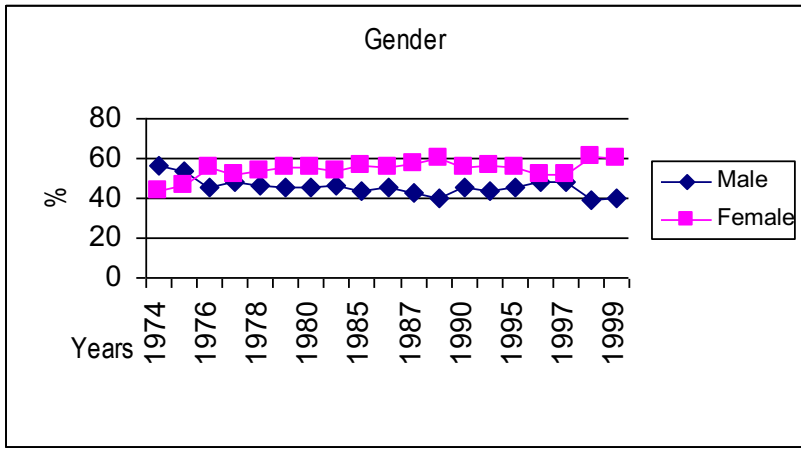
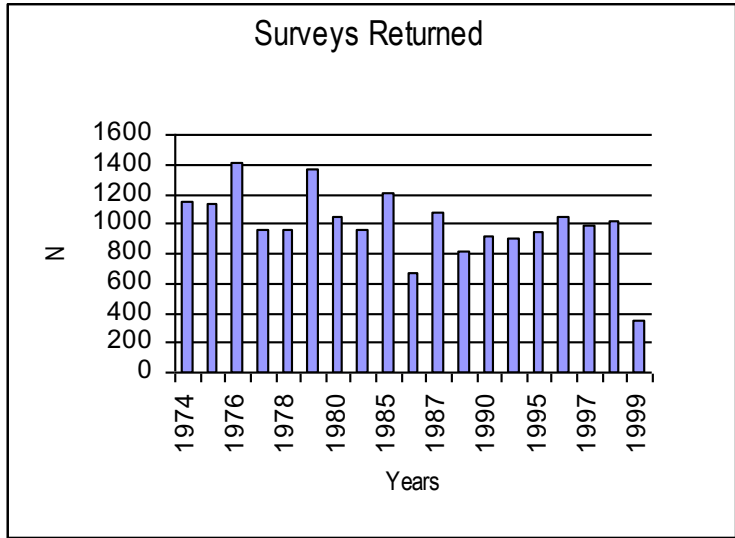
- Generally over 90% of the students were new first year students
- Most students live in residence hall; then parents; very few on their own
- Reasons for attending college dominated by "desire for an occupation" (70-90%) followed by "to become an educated person" (9-19%)

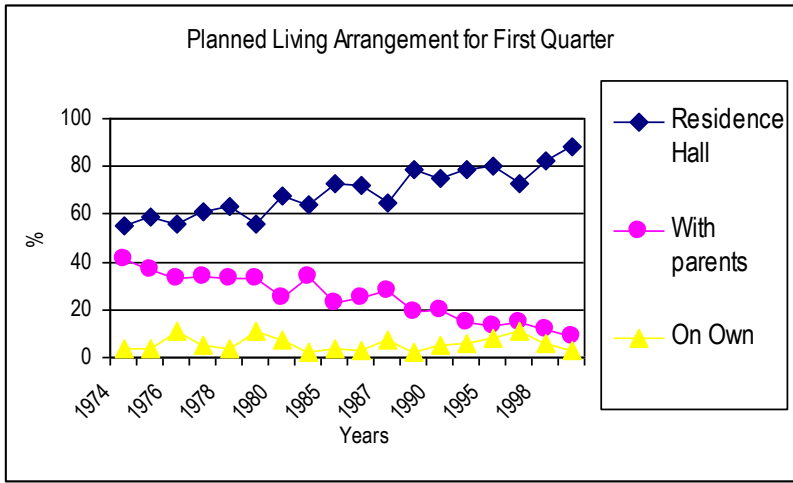
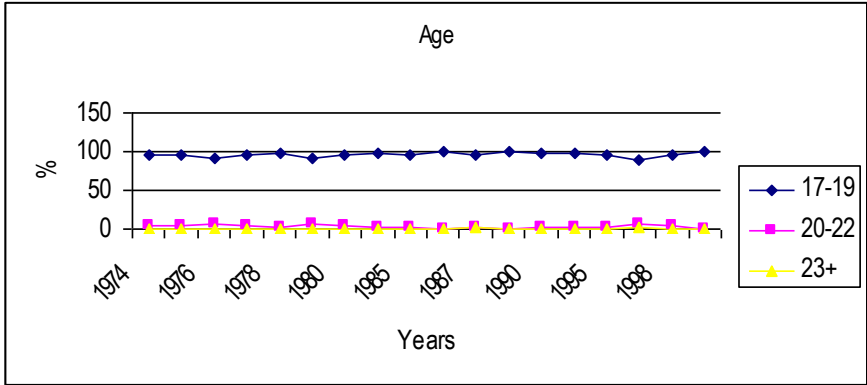
## Survey results

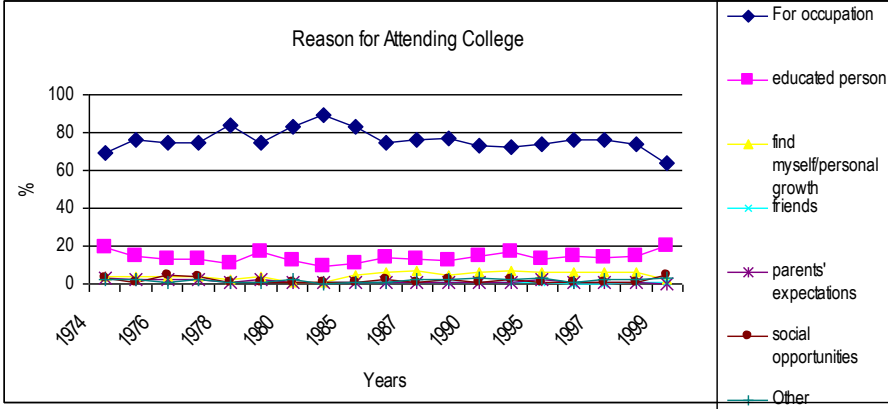
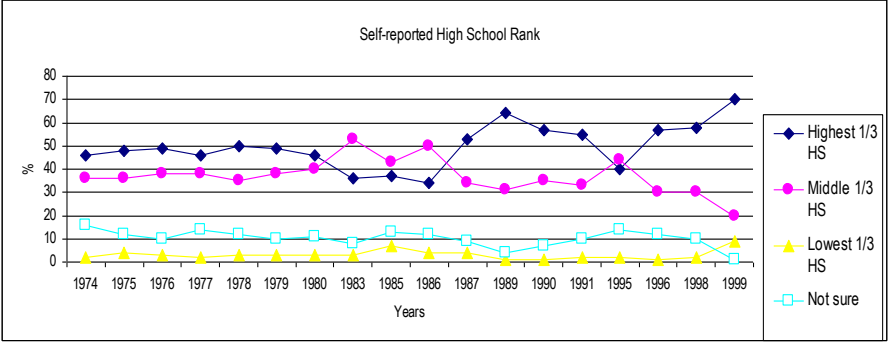
- Students self-reported state of undecidedness remained consistent with reports of “several-ideas,” (avg. 43.4%) “tentatively decided,” (avg. 31.1%) and “completely undecided” (avg. 22.4%)
- Feeling towards being undecided remained consistent with reports of “somewhat anxious,”(avg. 63.%) “very anxious,” (avg. 21.3%) and “not anxious” (avg. 14.9%)

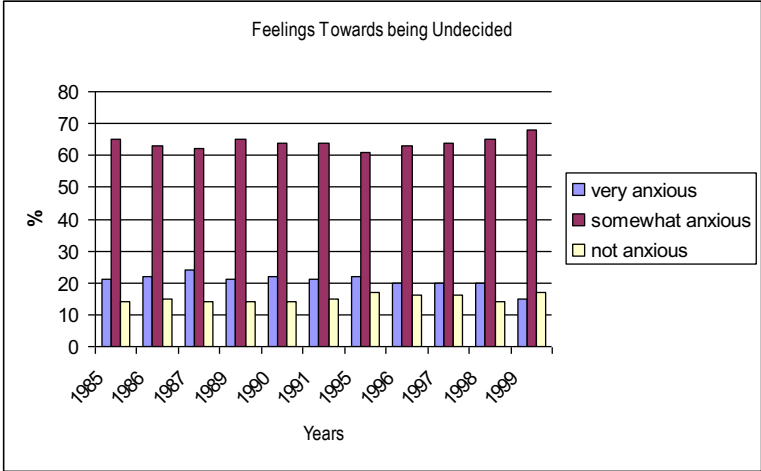
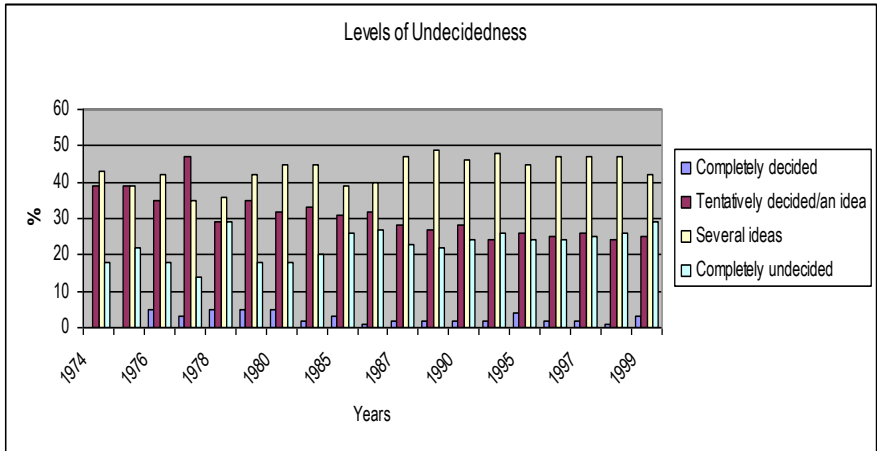
## Survey results

- Type of preferred assistance requested: “talk to counselors,” (avg. 20.5%) “field experience,” (avg. 18.5%) “faculty information sessions,”(avg. 18.3%) “career planning course,” (avg. 17.1%) and “informational interviews” (avg. 12.4%)
- Reported career interests: “business,” (avg. 18.4%) “health professions,” (avg. 9.9 %) “education” (avg. 8.3%) and “social sciences,” (avg. 8.2%), the most highly reported

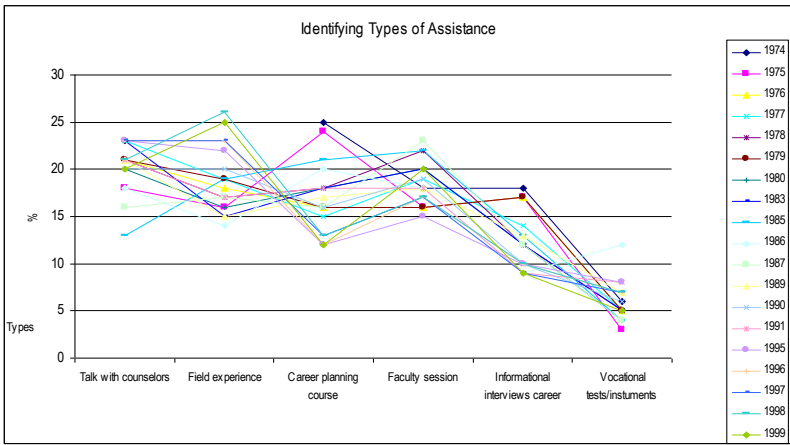
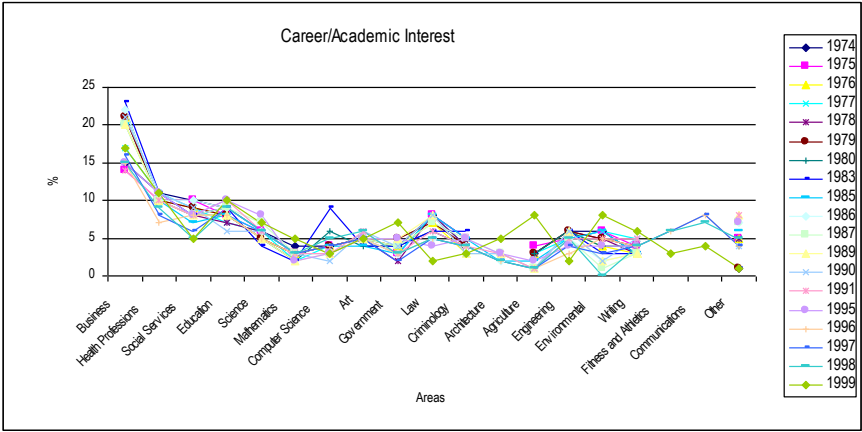












Excludes: (All below 5%)

- Use of computer programs
- Use of Internet (from 1996 on)
- Information sessions on employment opportunities

## National Data

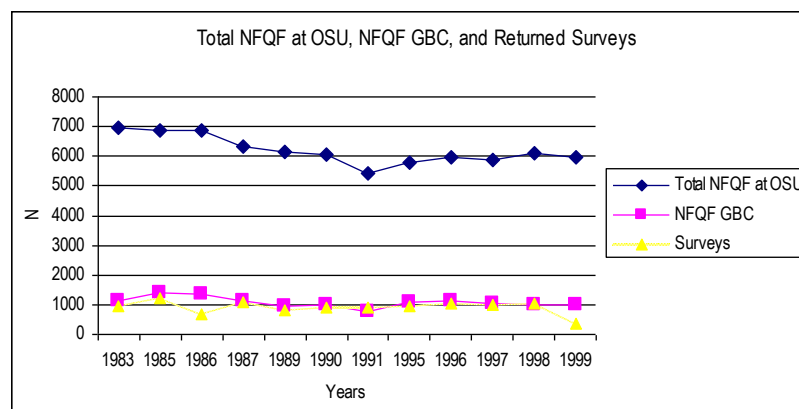
- Collected from Chronicle of Higher Education “Fact-File: Freshman Characteristics and Attitudes” (published each January)
- Collection and reporting of data varied over time
- Compared national with local data when possible

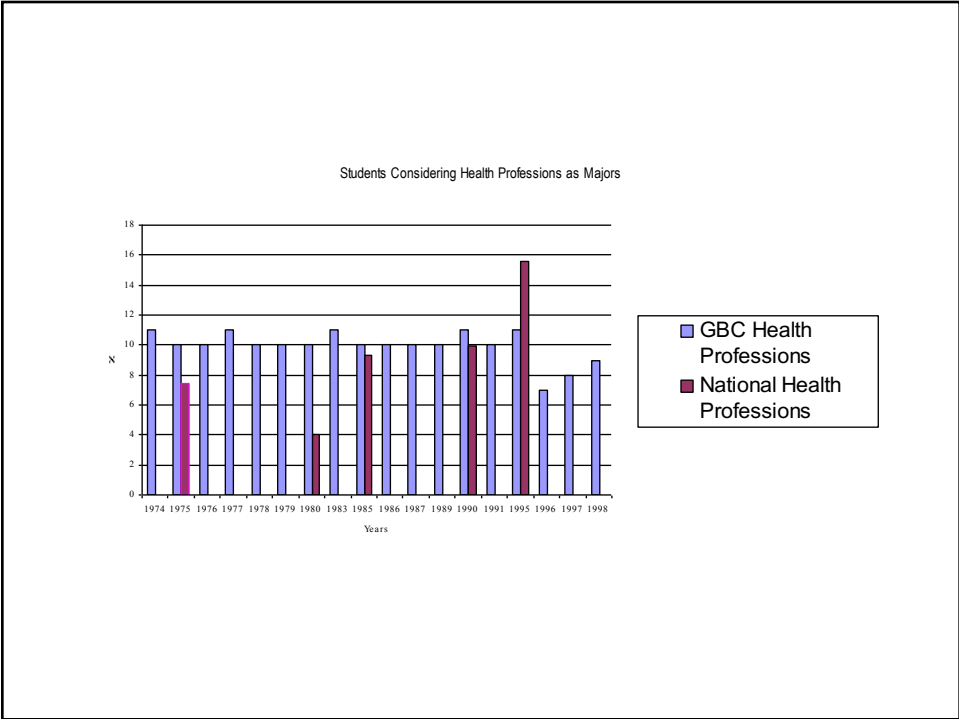
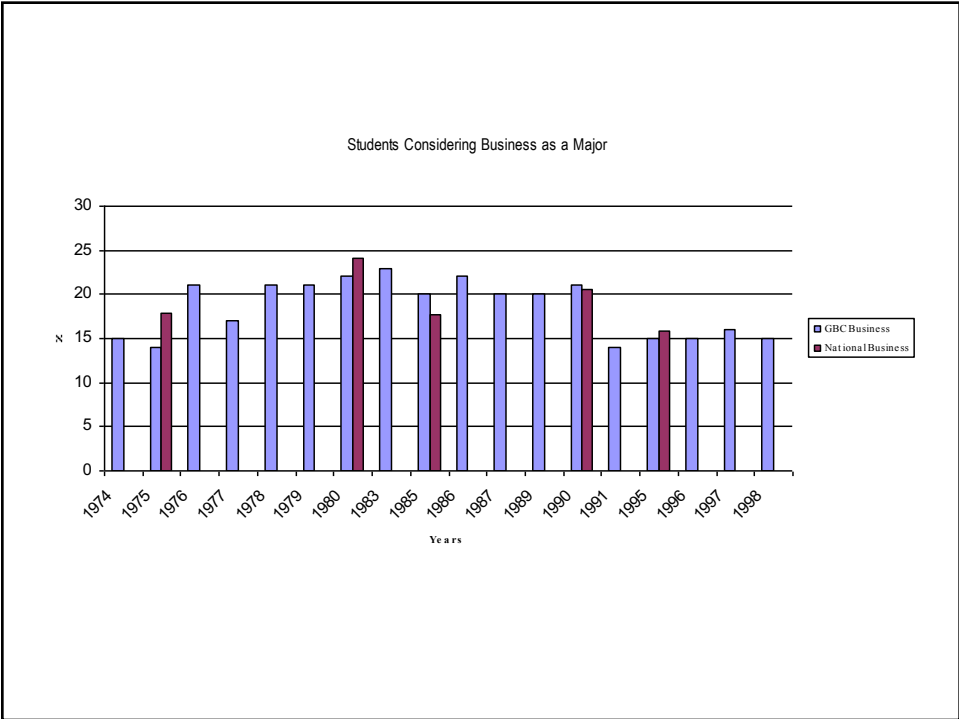
## Comparison with National Group

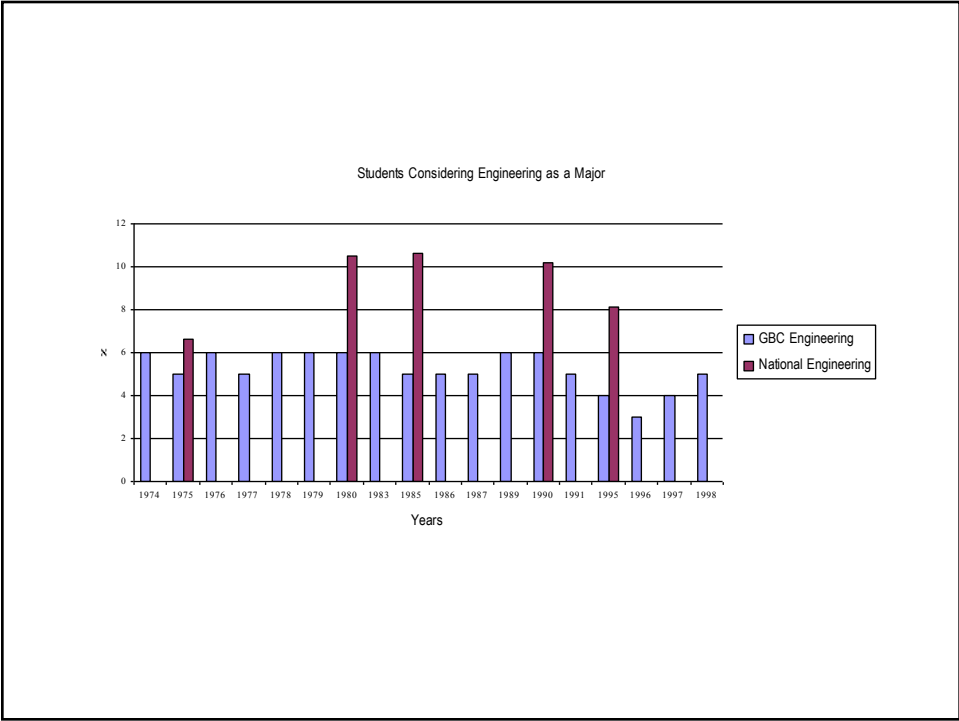
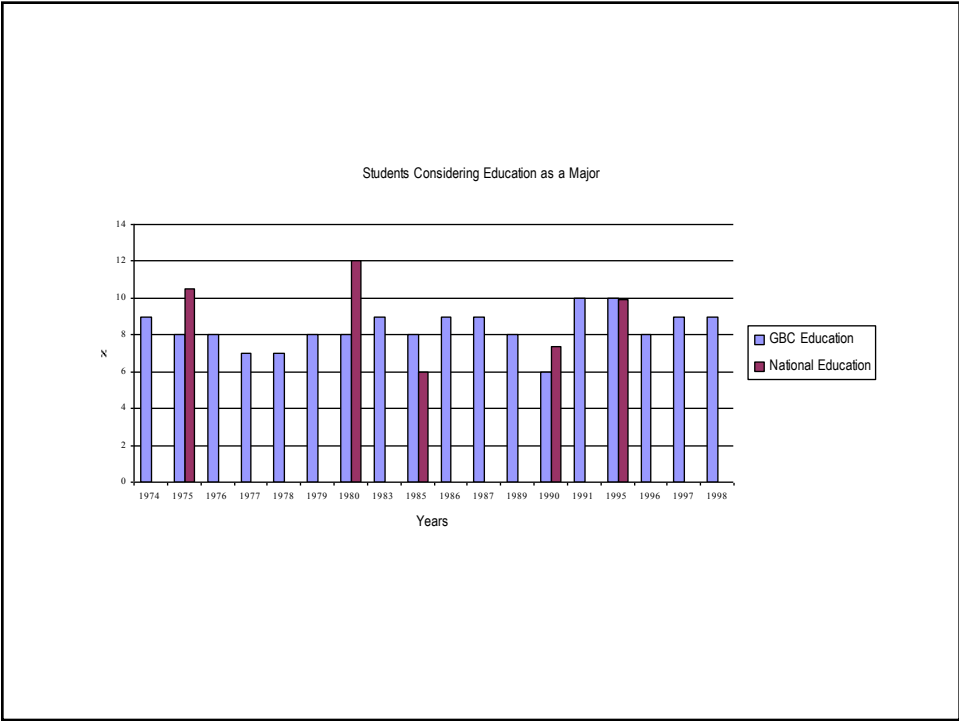
- GBC students less likely to say they were influenced by their parents to attend college
- GBC students similar in reporting they are attending college to prepare for a better job/ occupation
- GBC students similar to national trends of considering business as a major
- GBC students do not follow national trends in considering education and health fields

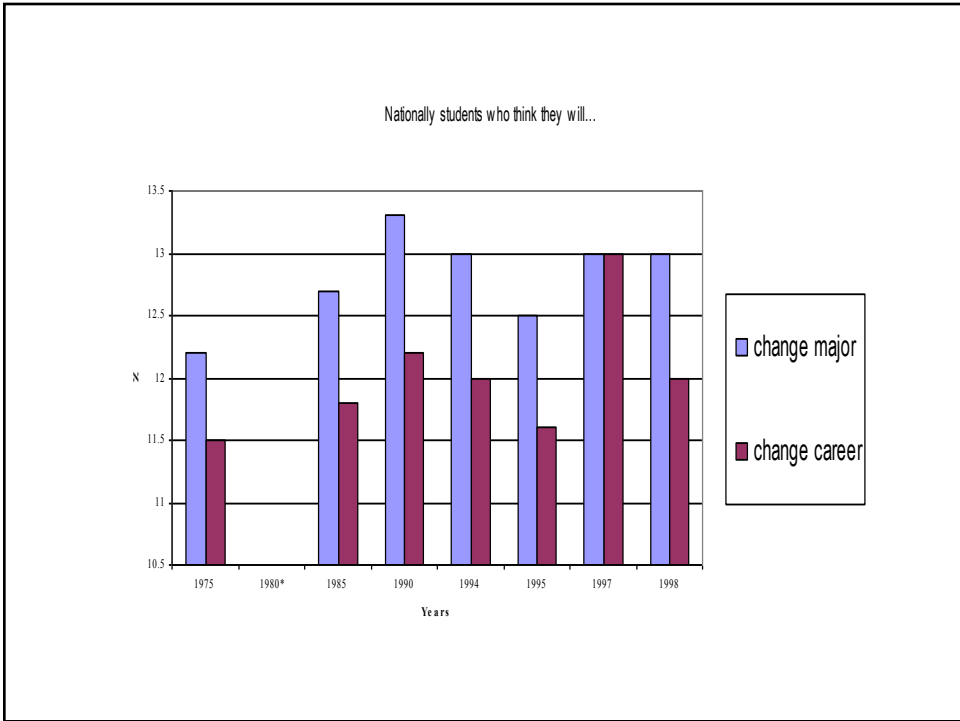
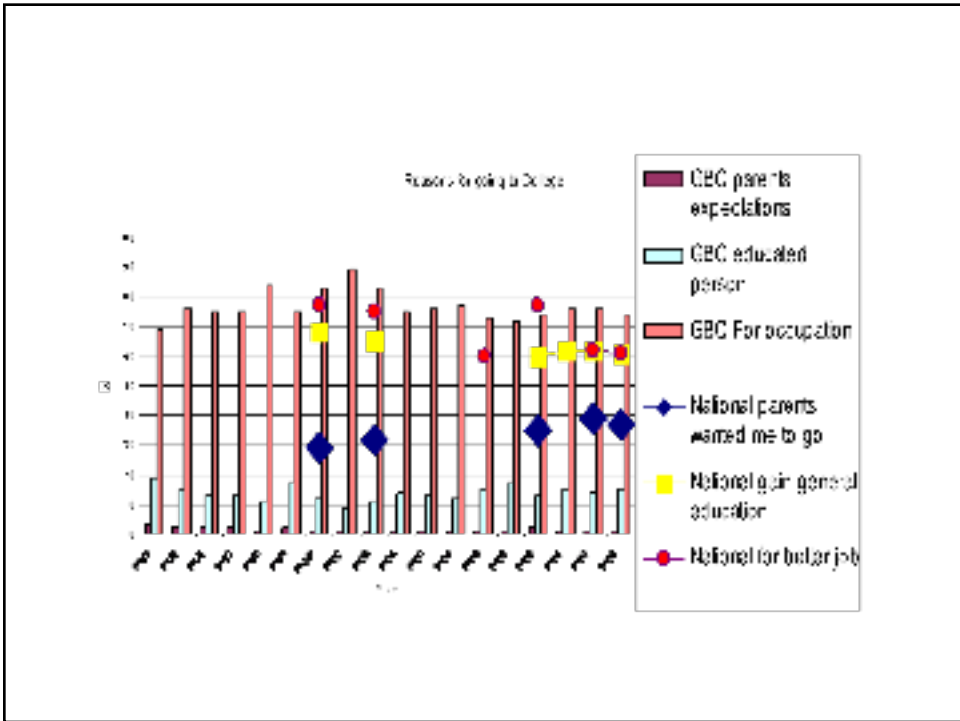
## Comparison with National Group

- Significantly fewer GBC students consider engineering as a major compared to national data
- Nationally, students who think they will change majors or career direction while in college has remained consistent









### Within the GBC population over 25 years

- Consistent number of undecided students in general first-year population
- Consistent levels of anxiety towards undecidedness
- Diverse academic and career interest areas
- Requested variety of types of advising assistance

### Changes over 25 years

- More reported higher levels of undecidedness in recent years
- Became more career oriented over the years
- Higher self-reported high school rank in recent years
- Some differences from students in national study in career interests and reasons for going to college

## Advising implications

- Program adjustments – more concentrated information about specific major/careers as interests shift
- Increasing levels of undecidedness over years meant advising approaches needed changing
- Specific attention to the anxiety expressed about being undecided

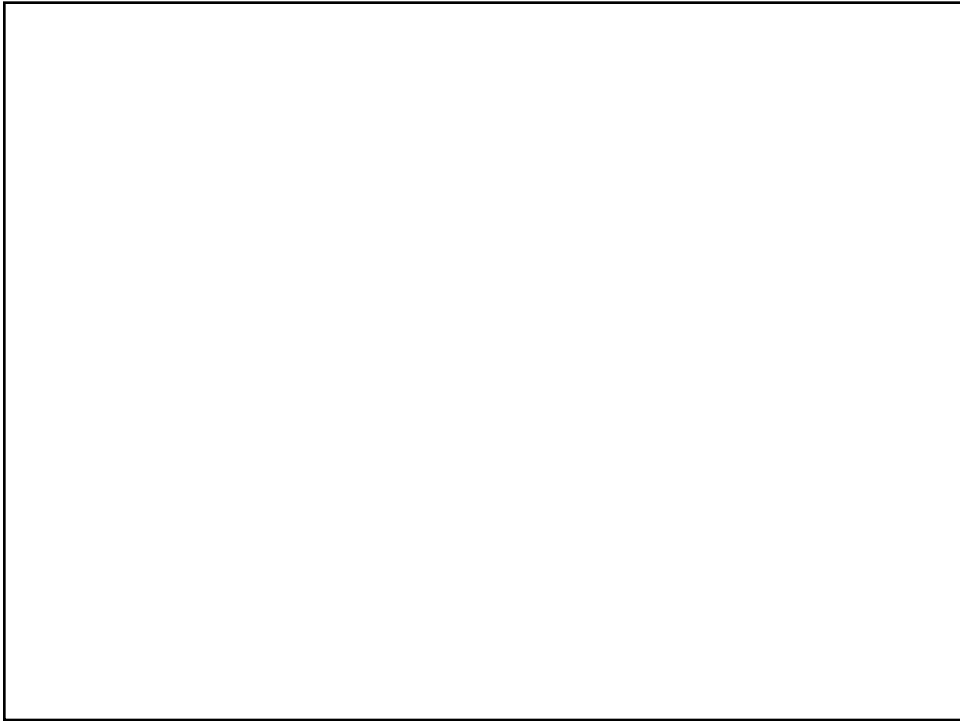
## Advising implications

- Reasons why students were in college changed so more career emphasis was programmed
- More recruitment efforts since fewer minority students admit undecidedness



## Questions for the future

- Are institutional policies about being undecided changing?
- Will numbers of major-changers increase as being undecided is not encouraged?
- As more minority students enroll in college proportionately, will the number of undecided students decrease?



Years in the study

1974	1986
1975	1987
1976	1989
1977	1990
1978	1991
1979	1995
1980	1996
1983	1997
1985	1998
	1999