



# Shifting the focus from undeclared to *exploratory*.

Teaching students to take  
an active role in major selection

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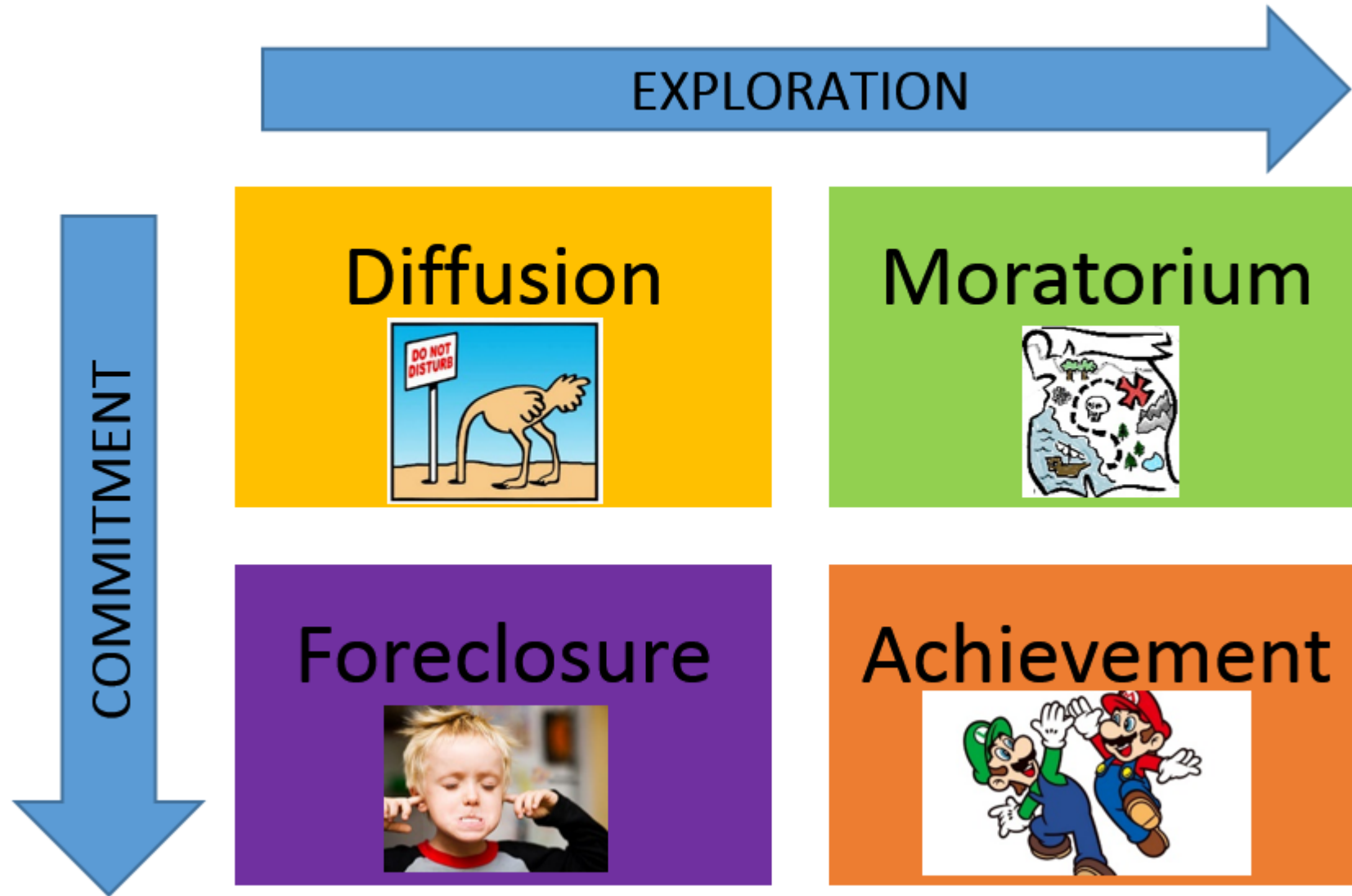
# A Snapshot

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- As of Monday, Oct. 31: 515 students (41.3% of student body)

Major	5-Year Spring Term Average (April)
1) Undeclared	22.2%
2) Business Administration	11.4%
3) Psychology	9.6%
4) Biology	9.0%
5) Criminal Justice	6.7%

# Identity Status



# “How do I tell the difference between Foreclosure and Achievement?”

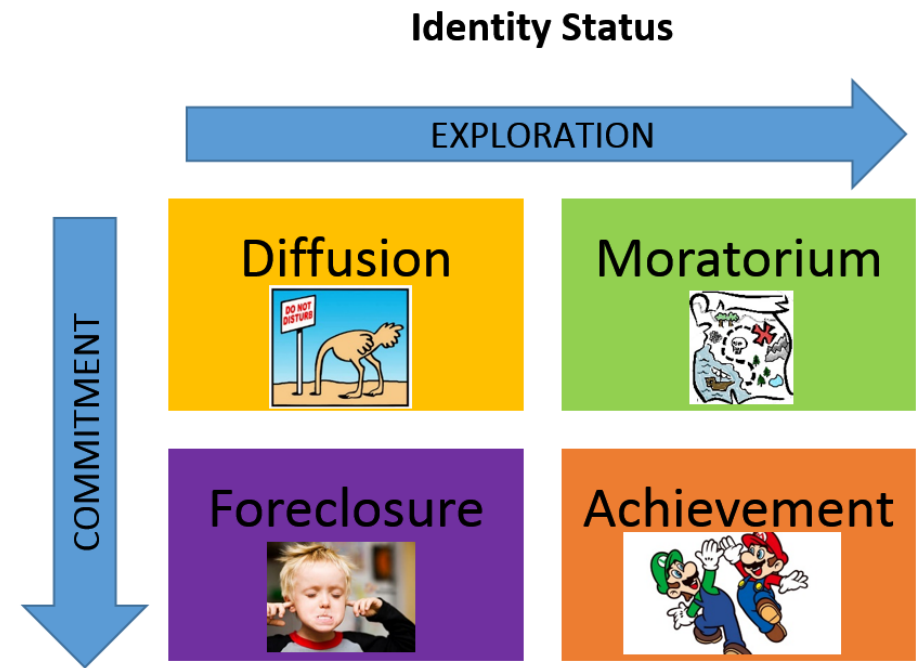
*Before signing the Major Declaration form...*

## Ask a few questions:

- What inspired you to choose this major?
- Which major courses have you taken so far? And what grades did you earn?
- How well does this major match with your interests, skills, & values?
- How will this major pair with your career aspirations?
- Have you connected with someone who does this for a living?
- Have you met with \_\_\_\_, the Career Advisor yet?
- Who will you ask to be your new advisor?

**Look at the course requirements together.**

**Do a “what if” program evaluation on WebAdvisor.**



# “How do I move a student from Diffusion to Moratorium?”

**Key:** Shift the focus from *choosing* to exploring.

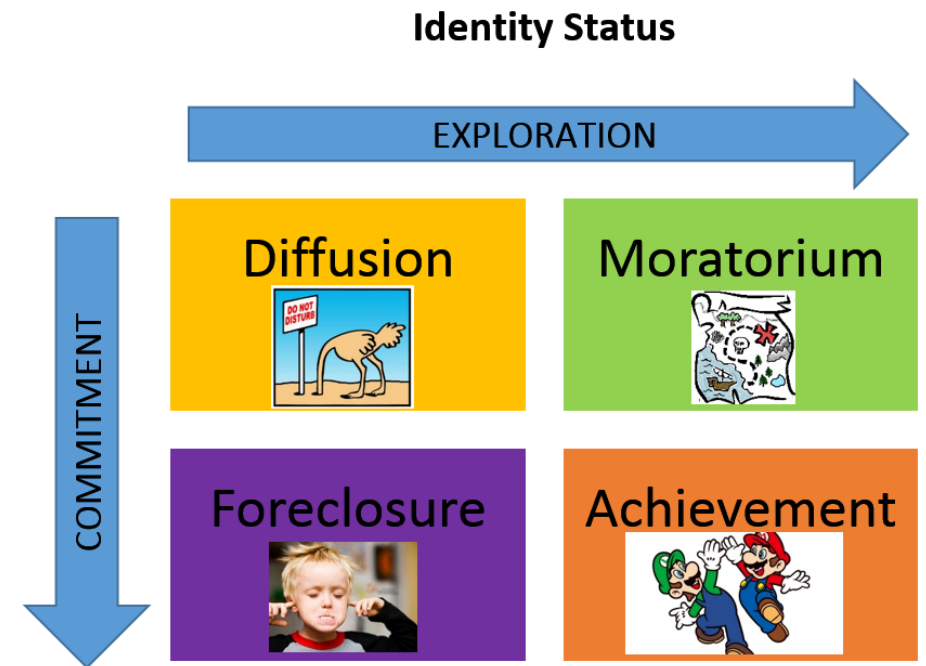
**Role model open-mindedness.**

- Instead of: “Have you decided on a major yet?”
- Try: “What majors are you most interested in?”

**Create a dialogue:**

- Tell me about your hometown and high school.
- How did you choose Lycoming?
- Which classes are you enjoying the most?
- In what ways are you getting involved on campus?

**Assign exploratory tasks.**



# Advisor “Hat”

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## Exploratory Strategies:

1. Enroll in a distribution course in that area
2. Refer to colleagues in other departments
3. Encourage student to do research
  - [What Can I Do with this Major? Website](#)
  - [Bureau of Labor Statistics: Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)
4. Refer to Career Advisors
  - Strong-Campbell Inventory
  - Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
  - Connect student to job shadowing or internship opportunities
5. Ask the student: “What other steps would help you feel more confident about choosing a major?”



# Professor “Hat”

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## Exploratory Strategies:

### *Assignments*

- **ENGL-106** – series of writing assignments themed around major/career
- **SSCI-159** – series of reflections surrounding goals at Lycoming

### *Career Advisor Lessons*

- **PSY-110** – Occupational Research Assignment
- **CJCR-448/449** – interactive presentations about interviewing, job and graduate school searches; mock interview assignment
- **SOC-325** – interactive presentation about resume building with Career Advisor follow-up appointments



# Department “Hat”

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## Exploratory Strategies:

1. Targeted outreach using Academic Interest Report
  - **Education Department:** postcard with Smarties delivered to residence hall inviting them to attend information session
  - **Political Science Department:** ice cream social at end of first week of classes
2. Campus-wide or targeted invitations to campus events
  - Psychology Department: PSY-331 posters in Pennington Lounge each semester
  - IMS speaker series
3. Invitations to attend a meeting for the major’s organization
  - Society of Physics Students, Association of Mathematically Interested Students (AMIS)





# Scenario 1

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DJ is a sophomore who's still undeclared but has been following the Pre-Med / Biology track. DJ has always wanted to be a doctor. Some of his family members work in the medical field, too. During his first year, DJ earned a D in BIO-110, a C in CHEM-111, and a D in MATH-128.

How would you advise DJ?

What questions would you ask?

What resources would you encourage?



# Scenario 2

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Sarah is an undeclared sophomore who's been earning As and Bs across the board. Each time you meet, Sarah reports enjoying her classes and throws out a new idea for a major. First it was History, then English Literature, and most recently Astronomy. Honestly, it seems like Sarah could be successful in any of these majors.

How would you advise Sarah?

What questions would you ask?

What resources would you encourage?

# References

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Shaffer, L. S., and J. M. Zalewski. "It's What I Have Always Wanted to Do." Advising the Foreclosure Student." *NACADA Journal* 31.2 (2011): 62-77.

Evans, N. J., D. S. Forney, and F. Guido-DiBrito. *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.