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Student Decision Making About Community College Information Technology Programs and Careers

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World Future Forum
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IVY TECH
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Background & Study Goals

- NSF Advanced Technological Education grant
- Collaboration with Ivy Tech Community College, Indiana
- Currently in Year 3 of the project
- Understand student decision-making relative to Community College IT programs and careers

Community College and IT Programs

- IT programs are attractive because of their job prospects
- IT has a wide variety of sub-fields, graduation requirements, short-term credentials options, and academic pathways
- Many options/opp's=potential confusion

Survey Distribution & N Size

- Distributed to Ivy Tech community college students enrolled in key IT courses
- Data controlled for first semester students (n=727)
 - Pre-pandemic students (n=539)
 - In-pandemic students (n=188)

Demographic Information (pre-pandemic)

- 69% Male, 71% White
- Current level education:
 - 69% High School diploma
 - 10% Associate degree
 - 7% Bachelor's degree
- 56% Full-time, 43% Part-time students

Program & Career Decisions

- **Key Point: Most students indicated they had chosen a program, but only about half had chosen a career**
 - 84% have selected a program
 - 51% have selected a career
 - Many students remain unsure of what career to enter even after choosing a program

Educational Goals

- **Key Point: Students are interested in short-term educational goals, multiple educational goals, entering the workforce, and building pathways toward a bachelor's degree**
 - 72% reported being interested in transfer
 - When asked about their **current** educational goals, however, only 38% of survey respondents said they wanted a bachelor's degree
 - 32% said their goal was to attain an associate degree (AA or AAS)
 - 32% said they were pursuing an industry certification

Where Students Find Info—Programs

- **Key Point: Students are relying on Institutional sources for program information**
 - College Website (60%)
 - General Advisors (46%)
 - Instructors (27%)
 - Family/Friends (22%)
 - Other students (14%)
 - Students do not appear to be utilizing these resources fully or effectively

Where Students Find Info—Careers

- **Key Point: Institutional sources rank high in providing information on career paths**
 - Received information on careers from:
 - Google (52%)
 - College Website (41%)
 - Instructors (36%)
 - Advisors (34%)
 - Family/Friends (19%)
 - Other students (11%)
 - Other (7%)

Advising

- **Key Point: Most students saw a general advisor, but reported still needing information, mostly about careers**
 - Most students (92%) reported seeing a general advisor
 - Students who had seen a general advisor reported seeing them on average 2-3 times
 - Over a quarter of students (27%) reported never seeing a faculty advisor

Takeaways

- Students are entering programs with some sense of short- and long-term educational goals
- Lack information about key pieces of data to make fully informed choices about which programs/careers to pursue
- Unsure of career options at this early stage of enrollment

Pandemic subset

Survey fielded Fall 2020 with the addition of a set of questions meant to understand how the pandemic may have impacted how students make decisions about their education and career

n=188

Pandemic Subset

Demographics:

- Slightly more male (3% more) and more students of color (6% more) than pre-pandemic respondents
- Slightly more part-time students (5% more)
- Less educated than pre-pandemic survey respondents:
 - 17%--less than a HS diploma or GED (12% more)
 - 61%--HS diploma (8% fewer)
 - 6%--Associate degree (4% fewer)

Pandemic Subset

- **Key Point: More students seem to be interested in short-term educational goals**
 - About same percentage interested in transfer (76%)
 - But 23% fewer reported their current goals included a bachelor's degree
 - More are interested in completing a certificate

Pandemic Subset

- **Key Point: Students attending during the pandemic may not know where to go to get information**
 - Percentage of respondents receiving program and career information vastly decreased across all categories
 - Knowledge of programs lower overall
 - Only 12% had switched programs (as compared to 20% pre-pandemic)

Pandemic Subset

- **Key Point: More students reported not seeing an advisor**
 - Nearly 30% had never met with an advisor, nearly 40% had never met with instructor about advising
 - Only 18% of students had taken IVYT115, a course designed to help students understand the field and available program options
 - 63% of IVYT115 students reported the course helped them make decisions about their program and career options

Pandemic Subset

Takeaways:

- This group is more interested in short-term workforce-related goals
- Seem to be receiving less information about programs and careers
- This group could benefit from institutional outreach
- The pandemic seems to be exacerbating some pre-existing challenges



Discussion

- Thoughts?
- Questions?

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