P2P Student Survey Report Highlights

Factors assessed in pre-, post-event and comparison group surveys: career decision making factors, career outcome expectations, career planning behaviors

RESULTS

Positive Impact

**How interested are you in thinking about a career pathway for yourself?** There was a significant difference across the response categories for pre-event compared to post-event AND for post-event compared to the comparison group.

**How sure are you that you know what you want to do for a career?** There was a significant increase in the number of students who reported that they were mostly sure that they knew what they wanted to do for a career after attending P2P. The students who attended P2P posted significantly different responses than the comparison group in the *mostly sure* and *neither sure or unsure* categories.

**Factors influencing career decisions.** There were changes in the patterns of responses from pre- to post-event: increases in looking for a job near family or home, how strong the job market demand is, and how much education is needed.

**How likely are you to complete a 4-year degree after high school AND then complete an advanced degree?** There was a statistically significant increase in the percent of students who reported they were very likely to compete a 4-year degree AND an advanced degree.

**If you had no constraints, what would you choose to do after graduating from high school?** There was a significant increase from pre-event to post-event in the number of students who reported they would obtain full-time employment with no additional training or education. There was also a significant decrease in the number of students who were uncertain after attending P2P.

Career Decisions

Students who attend P2P increase their awareness of the need for more information and consideration as they engage in career planning.

Career Choices and Follow-Up

The results indicate that there is substantial interest in:

* Health Science
* Arts, AV Technology & Communications
* Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
* Engineering & Polymer Science

It is important to note that there were some significant changes pre- and post-event. For example, fewer students indicated that they were interested in athletics, whereas, more students indicated interest in

* Human Services
* Finance
* Education & Training

Interestingly, slightly more students indicated that they were undecided AFTER attending P2P compared to before the expo. This is likely because students learned about additional fields and opportunities that they were not aware of prior to the expo. This indicates a need for follow-up counseling after attending the expo for students to work through and consider some of the new information and exposure they gained from the expo.

Researchers classified students’ expressed career interests as 54.6% careers that require a college education, 15.8% require technical education, and 29.6% uncertain whether the expressed interest was a college-required career or a career needing technical education.

Pathways Offered

A review indicated that every single pathway is mentioned, indicating that all of the pathways and the specific careers exhibited are important and should be continued in future expos.

Emergent Themes

* Hands-on nature of exhibits (Researchers term this a key ingredient based on results.)
* Friendliness of exhibitors (Researchers term this a key ingredient based on results.)
* Variety of career opportunities and information about them
* How impactful
* Independence
* Friendship

**Hands-on** – It is rare to have one particular theme dominate the responses in this manner, but it is clear that this is by far the most important aspect of the expo experience for students.

Comments – “It provided a youthful twist to the otherwise mature subject.”

“We learn about these in class, but now we have a better understanding of them.”

The welcoming nature of the way the activities were set up and the ability to move freely through the exhibits was also important.

**Friendliness** – For students of this age, the individual with whom they interacted at each station was critical. In addition to their kind and welcoming attitudes, the professionalism and knowledge of exhibitors was important to the students. Their willingness to answer students’ questions, to go into detail, and to help the students gain a real understanding of the field was clearly valuable to the students.

Comments related to excitement and interest are indicative of how engaged the exhibitors were from the students’ perspectives. The idea that a career could be exciting could be a very powerful message to a student.

Comments – “I liked the kindness of the people there and how they went into detail about things.”

“How they took their time to explain to us about what they do and not rush us and they were very nice!”

“The excitement in the mentor's eyes when discussing their career.”

“I liked all the people that were willing to show me how interesting certain jobs were.”

“I liked how they weren't boring about it, they made it fun to look for different jobs so it interested me.”

**Variety and information** - Many indicated that they learned about careers they did not even know existed before the expo.

**Impact** – For some, the expo provided a window into worlds they had never even known existed. For others, it helped them see the connection between their choices and their future.

**Independence and Friendship** – Middle school-aged children are at a unique developmental stage and their friendships can be important influences on how they perceive certain life choices. Making career exploration an enjoyable activity to engage in with peers may be positive impacts that extend beyond the day of the expo.

Summary

Overall the results of the survey study indicate that participation in the P2P Career Expo was well received and had an impact on students, while also pointing to additional needs. For example, students’ responses indicate that they learned new things about careers. They changed the factors they are considering when selecting a career and are more likely to expect to go to graduate school. While they decreased their uncertainty about what they would do once they graduated from high school and increased their certainty that they knew what they wanted to do for a career, there was a substantial increase in their interest in engaging in further career exploration. Additionally, they significantly increased their reported need for more career information and for more self-knowledge related to career planning. These results indicate that while the P2P Expo is effective at exposing students to new career areas and at increasing their interest in career planning, the event also increases students’ needs related to career planning. The needs identified in this survey study are not likely best served by an event but rather by career counseling. Follow-up counseling after the event would assist students in seeking and gathering the increased information about career planning and about themselves that they indicate they want and need.