



Since 2009, CRLT has worked with five LSA departments or programs that seek to increase the numbers of their students, concentrators and minors through changes to their pedagogies, curriculum and publicity. The work in each of these academic units has varied, depending on the key questions faculty and chairs bring to the collaboration, but typically, CRLT helped with one or more of the following:

- Analysis of Registrar data to understand students' course paths
- A survey of students (e.g., a short paper survey is distributed to all students in large lecture classes in the department) informed by research about students' course selection processes.
- Focus groups of students

Across projects, key findings and recommendations from the student surveys (600+ respondents), discussions, and other departments' best practices include:

- (1) Source of information about courses: The LSA Course Guide is undergraduates' key source of information for course selection. Other top sources include friends' recommendations and for first- and second-year students, LSA advisors.
  - Rather than publicizing courses through posters (which students report do not influence their course-taking decisions), use the online course guide better. Students want to see thorough descriptions of classes and syllabi.
  - Give LSA advisors a brochure about your program and courses in it, so they can recommend a course in your department to students who need one. Student quotes (i.e., recommendations from peers) also can be used in these documents.
- (2) Course characteristics: "Class meets a requirement" is reported to be the most important factor in students' selection decisions. The second most important factor is "interesting topic" for the course. Interdisciplinary course titles are perceived as being more relevant and engaging, as are courses that make connections to future professional/educational plans.
  - When applicable, link courses to an LSA or concentration/minor requirement.
  - Cross-listing and thematic topics help. For example, the Department of History revised its introductory courses to feature cross-cutting topics such as, "*History of Rock and Popular Music*" and "*Climate Change, Nuclear Power, and Energy Futures.*"
  - A large number of U-M undergraduates indicate they have a pre-professional specialty (e.g., pre-med). Having course offerings that link to those common future educational/career plans is helpful.
- (3) Concentration decisions: For concentrations and minors, students indicate that key disincentives for pursuing these plans are (a) not having learned enough to make a decision and (b) perception of a lack of relevance to career possibilities. Students seek department website resources.
  - Use the department website to feature resources for students about why they should choose a course/concentration in the area -- e.g., alumni videos or common careers that students go on to take. (U-M's School of Information has nice examples of online videos.)
  - Invite students to a gathering early in their U-M career. LSA has lists of students who indicate an interest in certain topics/disciplines upon admission to U-M.
  - Use introductory courses more deliberately to cultivate concentrators and minors. For example, Latino/a Studies invites faculty to speak in the introductory course, not only about a specific topic but also to invite students to take their upper-level classes.
  - For some departments, parents were reported to have a key influence on course/concentration selection. Letters sent home (as is done by math) and events during parents' weekend could be an additional source of outreach.