

# How YouScience® helps strengthen and scale career services at the University of Iowa



For nearly a decade, pundits both in and outside of higher education have been marking a significant decline in traditional undergraduate enrollments at U.S. colleges and universities. Fall 2021 showed the most striking decline—more than 1.3 million fewer students enrolled in college than the previous year. Key drivers of the decline include:

- Decrease in college-age population
- Increase in tuition and fees
- Changing demographics
- ROI - dwindling belief in the importance of a college degree, i.e. a perceived mismatch between college academics and workforce needs

Four-year public colleges and universities have also seen declines, but one large public university—the University of Iowa—is bucking that trend. The fall 2022 incoming first-year class was the third-largest in school history, with 5,178 students.

One of several important elements of their success is a growing focus on the career services they offer students, including career coaching, career-related academic and leadership courses, experiential education, and on-campus recruiting made possible by strong corporate relationships. Key to ensuring this range of services work in a cohesive, results-oriented way at UI is YouScience® Career & Aptitude Discovery, a career exploration tool based on aligning a student's aptitudes with their interests to create a personalized guide of potential careers—and the academics that will get them there.

## More than an aptitude test

YouScience Discovery is more than an interest-based test, it measures both aptitudes and interests to produce scientifically-backed results. We've all taken the free interest-based online tests designed to be completed quickly and tell us if we should be a rocket scientist or an opera singer. YouScience is different. Based on time-tested aptitude assessments, this guidance platform relies on data and AI to help identify aptitudes, validate one's strengths, and match those outcomes with educational and career pathways.

### Impact at a glance:

#### University of Iowa

- **9,306** students served
- **95%** of students in jobs, pursuing further education, or not searching for a job within 6 months of graduation

For Mallory Becraft, associate director of career coaching and campus partnerships at the University of Iowa, YouScience was a welcome platform when the university's Pomerantz Career Center adopted it in 2017. "For me, it was easy to be an early adopter because it provided a tool students were craving—objective, tangible results. Many of our students had taken online assessments that asked about their interests then gave results based solely on those interests. It was self-fulfilling."

While YouScience takes a student's interests into account, its results show potential career paths based on a student's strengths, such as strategic thinking, ideation, communication, and so on. Not coincidentally, these strengths align with the "soft skills" employers seek in new hires. And it goes a step further—it provides a list of majors a student can explore to help them determine the path they need to take to graduation and employment. Narrowing the opportunity gap.

For Becraft, implementing YouScience across the UI campus also strengthens the university's diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

The University of Iowa has a larger percentage of students from low-income backgrounds and underrepresented groups than many public universities of similar size. In the fall of 2022, about 21 percent of new students were the first in their families to attend college. At the same time, 20 percent identify as African American, American Indian, or other ethnicities not well-represented on U.S. college campuses. These are powerful numbers when placed in context with Iowa's demographics—fewer than 3 percent of Iowans identified as non-white in the last census.

At UI, Becraft and her colleagues are leveraging YouScience to support students in the TRiO program, including the assessment in the second semester as part of a required seminar course. Once students have completed the assessment, a career coach walks them through the results—and how to interpret and use them.

"While we definitely focus on how the assessment can help develop a greater sense of self-awareness and exposure to a variety of career options, we also focus on the exposure gap," Becraft said. "It would be hard for a student to know if they are well-suited for a career they don't know exists. While some students may have an exposure gap, we know that there certainly isn't a talent gap."

Career center staff revisit students' results during sophomore year, then take advantage of the "Describing Me" section within the YouScience platform to guide students in writing a sample cover letter, practicing for interviews, and preparing their elevator pitch.

Here are some powerful statements to use in resumes, letters and essays.

### Work Approach

Your Work Approach is how you are likely to fit into a workplace or group.

- I'm happiest when I can use my expertise while contributing to a group or project.
- I have Generalist and Specialist qualities, so I have the potential to lead and bring out the best in people.
- I balance between collaborating with others and focusing on my area of expertise.
- I can fill gaps in a team because I can be a collaborator or an expert.
- My Specialist side craves the expert's deep knowledge and passion for a particular field, and the rewards that individual achievement can bring.
- I provide the crucial, understanding link between Generalist and Specialist colleagues.
- I'll have opportunities for leadership because I can

**“When I took the YouScience assessment, my results for professions and careers weren't related to anything I was studying at the time. A year later, I changed my major and now realize that my strengths are exactly what my results showed, which gives me confidence that I am doing the right thing.”**

—Meg Callaghan, sophomore, University of Iowa



## Building advocates and ambassadors

For career service professionals, YouScience can be a powerful part of their tool kit. But its true strength lies in its ability to provide users with insights into their current strengths and future opportunities, making it an ideal aid in making good academic choices, such as majors, courses, and service opportunities.

For this reason, developing advocates and ambassadors among faculty and other college departments leads to widespread adoption and implementation. And for Becraft, the most effective way to demonstrate the potential of YouScience is to provide her campus colleagues with the ability to use Discovery themselves. “It is the best way to develop powerful advocates,” she said. “And unlike some other assessments, no special training is required to interpret the results or guide students through the outcomes.”

This approach has led to more faculty advisors referring students to Career Services to help them develop their academic and career paths or using the Discovery results to counsel students on the next steps in their course planning.

**“What really sets YouScience apart from other assessments is that it covers all the areas students need to make informed decisions. Within my Major & Career Explorations course, we’ve used YouScience for 5+ years, and, hands down, it is one of the most well-liked activities by the students.**

—Sara Burden, senior associate director, employer engagement and adjust instructor at University of Iowa



## Long-term impact

“What I value most about Discovery,” Becraft said, “is that it is designed to give students and parents discussion points as they plan for college—it helps fortify student decisions and pathways.”

The UI Pomerantz Career Center has been integrating YouScience into its career coaching and advising for three years, and has included it as a required component in the university’s College Transition course.

“We acknowledge that a primary reason students come to college is to help them be more successful in their future careers,” Becraft said. Discovery plays an important role in this journey, enabling students to be more self-aware and confident in making major and career decisions.

Now that YouScience is embedded in the career center’s practices, Becraft and her colleagues are committed to tracking impacts on retention, graduation rates, career paths, and student satisfaction. For the University of Iowa, YouScience is more than just a tool; its insights and recommendations provide a tangible way to narrow the exposure gap, help students understand their full potential, and demonstrate a clear return on investment in a University of Iowa education.

**Schedule a demo today to learn more about how YouScience can help your program**

[youscience.com/demo-request/](https://youscience.com/demo-request/)

**or contact our sales team at [sales@youscience.com](mailto:sales@youscience.com).**

