



YouScience® & Piedmont University: Creating four-year career plans for students

Impact at a glance:

Piedmont University

- **300** first-year Piedmont students were assigned a career plan based on their Discovery results in August 2022
- **93%** of students have created a resume and cover letter, and developed a networking plan
- **95%** of students created a LinkedIn profile

Piedmont University, a small, private liberal arts institution in Demorest, Georgia, makes this promise to its students and their families: “For all students, Piedmont will provide an educational experience that is personal in approach, passionate in application, and practical in impact.”

It’s a promise that resonates with prospective students. Fall 2022 saw the largest first-year class in the university’s history, and applications for the 2023-24 academic year are already up 30% over the previous year.

Delivering on this promise takes a concerted, integrated effort across academic and administrative departments on campus. The challenge of aligning a liberal arts education with practical outcomes is not unique to Piedmont. Private colleges and universities in the U.S. face the shared challenge of demonstrating the return on investment of a college education to a student—and parents—a population that increasingly questions the value of a college degree.¹

For Piedmont University, YouScience® Discovery offers an opportunity to answer those questions.

More than an aptitude test

YouScience Discovery is 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. The tool is more than an aptitude test. Based on time-tested aptitude assessments, this guidance platform relies on data and AI to help identify aptitudes and talents, validate one’s strengths, and match those outcomes with educational and career pathways.

Lisa Mann, director of career services at Piedmont, has led the initiative to develop the university’s use of YouScience and integrate it into not only career services activities, but the required first-year curriculum.

Mann has developed a four-year career planning program that begins with a deep dive into the results in year one and is woven through the college experience until graduation—and even beyond.

¹ <https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/americas-hidden-common-ground-on-public-higher-education/>

A four-year approach

Year one: introducing Discovery

Piedmont undergraduates are introduced to YouScience during their required **first-year** experience immersion course. Career services staff do a thorough walkthrough with each student to help them understand the outcomes.

“We help them use their results to understand the existing tools in their toolkit,” Mann said, “and help them differentiate between their aptitudes and interests. So many students can’t understand how to turn their love of theater, for example, into a career. The Discovery results help them understand who they are and start the conversation about career.”

“When students have the support to connect their education to a career, they are more likely to say their education will be worth the cost.

— Strada Outcomes Survey, Spring 2021²

Piedmont has embedded YouScience into its student success and retention efforts by identifying two key ways to use student results inside Starfish, an early warning and student intervention tool. First, Mann sets up a four-year plan for each student, based on their Discovery results. Then, when Starfish provides a set of specific early warning indicators, an intervention is initiated by career services to schedule a one-on-one meeting with a student to reconnect them with their YouScience results, and counsel them on strategies to re-engage the student and get them back on track. This integration strengthens both Discovery and Starfish, providing a deliberate and effective pathway for student success.

Year two: using Discovery results for internships

Year two sees Piedmont’s career services team using Discovery results to help students prepare for internships. “We have them review what we call ‘the wheel of you,’” Mann said; their interests, characteristics, aptitudes, likes, and dislikes. Students and career services partner to identify curricular and co-curricular activities, and community service opportunities to contribute to personal development.

Perhaps most importantly for the current college-going generation, impacted by COVID, Mann notes, “COVID contributed to a loss of developmental time for this generation, and Discovery can help them catch up.”

Mann has found Discovery results are just as useful for students who are still exploring majors. In one-on-one sessions with students, she reviews the career suggestions section—based on a student’s aptitudes and strengths—and has them list their top five potential careers, exploring and identifying the pros and cons of each one. “We use our time to look at a day in the life of each type of career,” Mann said. “Our goal is to have them narrow their list to the top two or three.” From there, students are paired with someone in their network, or the Piedmont alumni network, working in that field or role. These connections—allowing college students to explore potential careers by shadowing a working professional—have been instrumental in helping students make informed decisions about their futures.

“YouScience helped me discover that I am best fit for ‘social’ work that allows me to help and support others,” said Gracie Martin, Piedmont student. “The Career feature encouraged me to pursue a career in health care. The ‘Describing You’ feature was translated directly to my resume, and it helped me discover my strengths/weaknesses. YouScience was a great tool for me to start creating my future goals!”



Years three and four: creating personalized pathways

Mann adjusts her approach during **a student’s junior and senior years** depending on whether a student is bound for a career or graduate school. She encourages students to use YouScience to develop their elevator pitches, participate in mock interviews, and develop answers to frequently asked interview questions. “We focus on helping answer questions such as ‘tell me a little about yourself,’ and ‘tell us why we should hire you,’” Mann said, “so they can give a powerful two-minute statement in response.”

² <https://stradaeducation.org/report/pv-release-june-15-2022/>

Perhaps most important for Mann is using YouScience results to support women in their careers. In 2017, she earned a Smart Start Salary Negotiation Facilitator certification from the American Association of University Women to aid in her work with college students. Combining those skills with the tools offered by the YouScience platform, Mann counsels women, especially, to explore their strengths and aptitudes and leverage those in salary negotiations. “And when we’re looking for fit, Discovery’s list of hiring employer types makes the job search easier and more productive.”

Looking ahead

Just over 300 first-year Piedmont students were assigned a career plan based on their Discovery results in August 2022 and, so far, Mann’s strategy to support student career planning is on track.

- **93%** of students have created a resume and cover letter
- **95%** of students have created a LinkedIn account
- **93%** of students have developed a networking plan

Career Services has scheduled due dates in Starfish for the remaining items on each student’s individual career plan, ensuring students receive notifications when a due date nears. From there, students will work with Career Services to complete the remaining items through individual appointments, campus activities, and internship opportunities.

Mann has ambitious plans for making YouScience an integral part of life at Piedmont, hoping to thread it into the curriculum beyond the first year. Piedmont faculty support YouScience, a critical factor in making the tool successful at any institution. “If anything comes up when they are advising students,” Mann said, “faculty refer them to career services for another look at their YouScience Discovery results to pursue options.”

“YouScience has created a package that is scientifically-based and can’t be manipulated by students. It’s the perfect model.”

— Lisa Mann, Piedmont College

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has developed a list of career-readiness competencies³ that factor into Mann’s long-term goals. These include:

- Career & Self-Development
- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity & Inclusion
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology

NACE has identified these traits as “requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college-educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management.” For Mann, combining an emphasis on these competencies with the resources YouScience Discovery offers will, she believes, give college students the clearest path to success once they leave Piedmont.

³ <https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readinessdefined/>

To learn more about how YouScience can help your program, schedule a demo at youscience.com/demo-request/



or contact our sales team at sales@youscience.com.