

Episode 85 - Dr. Leslie Tucker

 Tue, 8/10 6:20AM  35:48

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

students, college, undecided, love, major, scoops, absolutely, career, moira, professors, classroom, piece, university, skillshare, people, class, thought, pondering, virtual environment, conversation

SPEAKERS

Moira McCullough, Dr. Leslie Tucker



Moira McCullough 00:00

Welcome to the College Scoops podcast. I'm your host, Moira McCullough and today we are talking with Dr. Leslie Tucker about how to pick your college major.



Dr. Leslie Tucker 00:10

Make two lists. Okay, so one list, you just start writing down all the things that you love to do. It really does go back to the action piece, think about what you love to do. And then on the other list, think about all of the things that you're good at.



Moira McCullough 00:36

This is the College Scoops podcast and I'm your host, Moira McCullough, we focus on everything college related from the admissions process to where to eat, stay and explore on and round campuses. Our guests include founders, educators, authors and experts in the college space. Join us as these experts share their knowledge, experiences and lessons learned to help you have stress free and formative and tasty college journeys. Whether it's your first or last child going to college, or you're just interested in going to a college town for a game or meal, we've got you covered. If you haven't already, please subscribe to the College Scoops podcast to get the inside scoop on everything college related and leave us a review. Thanks to all of our sponsors, partners and the entire College Scoops

Ambassador team for helping us bring valuable content to our community. If you would like to support College Scoops as a sponsor, please head over to [patreon@patreon.com/collegescoops](https://patreon.com/collegescoops) and sign up as a sustaining listener, insider or Deluxe sponsor. We have exclusive benefits for our members free ebooks and even a College Scoops care package! Dr. Leslie Tucker is a virtual college planning consultant and owner of Virtual College Consulting. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology Master's in higher education administration, and a PhD in post secondary education. Before her work as a college planning consultant, she worked in higher education as an academic and program advisor and student success and retention coordinator. She still enjoys teaching educational psychology part-time. Leslie is an associate member of the Independent Educational Consultants Association, and trained as a life and career coach through the Institute for Life Coach Training. She's toured hundreds of colleges networked with administration reps from across the country and edited every type of college essay you can imagine. She speaks at national conferences about student success and college retention, which in turn empowers her college planning work. Welcome to the College Scoops podcast Leslie, thank you so much for joining us today.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 02:37

Thank you so much. I'm excited to be here.

M

Moira McCullough 02:41

Well, I would love to ask you, you are an adjunct professor at Kent State University. And I loved one of the recent articles. And it's not really that recent, but they did something during the COVID scenario, which I thought was wonderful. They had like an open house at an outdoor drive in movie theater where they had an admission session. And I thought that is such a great way to bring people in when none of us could travel and to share why Kent State University rocks with their community of prospective families. And then I found you on LinkedIn. And we started conversing. I thought Kent State University, I remember that school, they did something really unique and different from a marketing perspective. So can you share a little bit about what you do there?

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 03:26

Absolutely. And thank you for sharing with me about Kent State, because I agree with you can stay actually does a fantastic job was being innovative, you know, really across the board, whether it's in the classroom, or through the lens of student success and retention, they just really do a good job with connecting students with each other, and also the

support systems within the university. What I do at Kent State is I teach there part time, and I teach educational psychology.

M

Moira McCullough 04:06

So what is that for all those people out there that are thinking, oh, I've heard about that. But what is it?

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 04:11

Educational psychology - most of the students in the classroom are state teacher candidates. So they're students that want to be in a classroom that they're looking out with all these little heads that they're teaching. And really what it is, is it's a philosophy. It's a form of psychology, and it's all about different ways to get into students. Connect with students on the education level.

M

Moira McCullough 04:46

Was there anything different than you had to do in this past year and a half, two years in terms of helping future teachers teach in different ways? You know, you just said it. Right. I mean, you could be a great teacher, but I'm somebody who's better in person to learning how to transfer that energy, the ability to convey different thoughts, different principles, different practices in a virtual environment. It takes a little bit of maybe change on both parties.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 05:23

Absolutely. And really what I found Moira is professors and students alike, have embraced this online learning experience. And actually, speaking to colleagues, there is been, you know, okay, we're going back to the classroom. But I really wanted to continue with doing some of the teaching techniques that I was doing in that virtual experience. So it has been an evolving piece for for professors. And students actually, believe it or not really kind of enjoyed the online classroom, because they were able and required if you will, to engage.

M

Moira McCullough 06:17

Okay, so that's interesting, because you would think it would be easier to hide in the virtual environment or not participate. But was there any particular technique that you found that you really enjoyed, that you used and tried to convey to your students in the

past year that you hadn't before? Like when you said, there's some certain teaching techniques, I'd like to continue going forward? Is there anyone that stands out that you particularly found impactful?

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 06:49

Yes. And you know, just to kind of back up a little bit when you'd mentioned hiding? Yes, students can hide behind the screen. But if there is, clients attached, you know, they're more apt to say, Okay, well, I need to. And another thing that I learned through this experience, is students want to be heard. The online virtual learning experience allowed them to be heard, but still kind of be behind the scenes. To answer your question. One thing that I enjoyed doing was discussion, you know, posting discussions for topics of conversation, or pondering that students were required to go in, of course, using the information that they're learning to answer the question, but then also have their own point of view, to add to the conversation, so kind of like an ongoing dialogue within the students in the classroom. And so students were able to go back and forth like, Well, you know, I hear you on that. But, you know, research tells us this, and, and what my experiences have been, have been this. So it was just kind of a way to have a large group conversation, if you will. And also another way for students to ponder the material, and then also give them a chance to express their position about it from a personal stance.

M

Moira McCullough 08:45

That's a really good point in terms that dialogue in that conversation, when that might not happen as freely versus in a classroom, it's more constraint. As a teacher, people are raising their hands or whatever they're interjecting that way. This allows, as you said, people who may not be in a position or that confident yet to do it in person. And then to have that dialogue, continue on and have this type of engagement that lingers kind of Yes, I love how you just something so so nice. I think with everything else, I think we've all learned like you take the good and the bad. And there's many things that came out of it that I'm not somebody who's a virtual learner, but I'll take positives out of that particular learning environment that I would have thought, Oh, wait, I wouldn't like it. But actually, even in talking with my kids, I think kids nowadays, the transition for them wasn't that hard. And actually for for many as as I've heard from others, sometimes it was so much easier, as you said, just even from a social part, like my whole thing going in and classroom like where am I going to said, all that goes out the window you're just logging on. So what am I gonna wear? So a lot of that energy negative sometimes that we were worrying about non class related, that all of a sudden now we are able to like focus on the class and listen to what the professors are actually saying and engaged in that way. So,

well, we invited you on today to talk about college majors. And I love that because I was undecided when I applied. And I remember going on my first college visit with my oldest son, and we were at a college and you know, at the tours and information sessions, they asked the students to raise their hand, if you're thinking about majoring in Business engineering, and I remember my son would get a little bit pale and nervous and think he's undecided. And I'll never forget one particular school, it was the last, you know, round that he said, his who is undecided here. And he saw my son like, kind of raise a little bit his hand and he said, raise it high, you should be proud that you're undecided, because that's not a bad thing. So how do you work with students and and strategies for being comfortable with undecided and then where to go from there in terms of picking out your major?

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 11:16

Sure, Moira, this is actually really intimate piece for me in the college planning process, because I find that it is so important. And, you know, so many times I'll hear students and parents are like how am I supposed to figure out ? What to do with the rest of my life? I haven't even graduated high school, in the same breath. I want to go to college, but I don't want to waste money or time and how can I get in and get out and, and have a career that I love. There's a lot that goes on, under this umbrella of choosing a major in college, a major that's gonna have a career outlook, that's really super, that you'll love what you're doing. You mentioned how important it is to reflect on what are the things that you might want to study in terms of going into college, but if you're undecided, like what are some strategies that you do to work with students to narrow down their options. Sometimes students have a lot of things that they love. And they're really in turmoil in regards to, you know, I just can't decide on a major, they switch back and forth, sometimes weekly, sometimes hourly, it's like this pressure of oh my gosh, I have to figure this out before school starts, I'm not wasting money, and I'm not taking classes that I don't need, and so on and so forth. And that is okay. It's really actually wonderful that students are spending time and contemplation of, I really love all of these things, all of these things that I'm passionate about all these things that I'm good at. Now, what's Uh, okay, let's kind of narrow that down into something that I can really sink my teeth into. So one strategy that I advise students to do, when they're wanting to kind of narrow down all of these really exciting things that they they foresee for themselves into a major options that they can put their finger on, is to actually just sit down with a piece of paper to depend on on how you function or how you work and make two lists. Okay, so one list, you just start writing down all the things that you love to do, it really does go back to the action piece, think about what you love to do. And then on the other list, think about all of the things that you're good at. So one list all of the things that you love to do, and the other list all of the things that you're really good at, and then kind of look at those lists together side by

side. And notice the congruency amongst the two of them. Ideally, there's a lot of concurrency and then just kind of start identifying the pieces and parts on your list in and start then moving into this next stage of self reflection in that Okay, now what is what can I do with this? So for example, I love to read, and then the next question could be okay, could I get paid for reading what would That look like for me, could I become a book editor or work in publishing or write book reviews? So just kind of looking at each line item individually, and then just start brainstorming the actions, the careers that you can see yourself going into. And then it's okay, well, what is the career outlook look like in this career? And is my personality and what I want in my life and my other goals? Does that match? So you can actually go through and just kind of start pondering in that fashion. And then if you're able to really start putting your fingers on, you know, the doing piece that Oh, and yeah, the career outlook looks really good. Now, maybe what I want to do is go out and shadow, some folks that are in that career to say, Oh, yes, this is really a great place for me to be or not, and then you just kind of go from there. And more times than not students going through that process, they'll really be able to start pinpointing some things and having some aha moments.

M

Moira McCullough 16:16

Absolutely. You've been sharing a piece with College Scoops as well on our blog. So we'll have a whole host of information for people to refer to as well. But you also mentioned some online classes as well, that are courses that one could look at, if they were to say, I'm interested in marine biology, or I'm interested in computer programming. There's some online courses that one could look at, and take that might help to further their interest. And or have the aha moment that I really don't like this. And I'm not into computer programming,



16:58

There is actually tons of different options and there's free options. And there's options where you can pay for a class. And actually, I advise students just to go to YouTube videos. And that's really you could type in what does a structural engineer do? What does a day look like as a structural engineer, and people are really excited to share what they do?

M

Moira McCullough 17:27

Isn't that amazing? I mean, what did we do before YouTube? I love it. You know what I do believe all the free information, it's out there, and so many people who are thrilled and encouraged and want to help students learn or other adults learn about that particular

profession, or lessons learned that they went through as they navigated their career?
Sure, absolutely.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 17:57

So, you know, as far as Skillshare, there's classes on Skillshare, I don't have any specific connection to Skillshare, I just like to provide resources for students to have the opportunity to go into and know about to see if the service is there for them. So for example, on Skillshare, there's, you know, embrace creative journaling, or, you know, create easy, playful art with everyday objects, you know, to hone in on creativity, or, you know, so absolutely, there's tons of resources for students to partake in, to be able to just continue that exploration. They just need to choose to do it.

M

Moira McCullough 18:48

Well, I think the other resource too, and I would say, as college freshmen, if you're entering college, and you're undecided, not to worry, there's a whole host of other students that are in your position. But as you said, reach out to different organizations, different clubs, I mean, at in high schools, now they have the same breadth of clubs at many of these high schools. But also you mentioned something, which I think is great. And you as an adjunct professor would be the first one if somebody came to you in your class or outside of your class and said, What is educational psychology? If I want to go into this particular profession? What are some of the classes I should take? What are some of the internships that might be open to me or organizations, professional organizations that I could join? So that is something that I think is available to students whether they're in high school or college.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 19:45

Yes, absolutely. Moira and I would just have to throw out a little suggestion blurb or advice blurb. Each university and college has a career center and they're really a fantastic resource. As far as helping students hone in on their skill sets, their aptitudes their strengths, and then what are some majors that would make sense for them based on their findings, but professors are really super, and that they are the professionals in the field. So they're going to be asking students questions that maybe a career advisor wouldn't no doubt ask. So keep that in mind as well, you can actually use both of those resources simultaneously of going into the Career Center, and I'm spending time in exploration. And now I have some pieces to sink my teeth into. Now I'm going to go to my professors and say, let's look at this from a different angle and look at some different directions that I can

take based on my interest. Absolutely.

M Moira McCullough 20:57

But I always say, I'm somebody who has a lot of questions. And I don't mind asking same question to 20 different people, because for whatever reason, somebody his answer will resonate with me differently than somebody else's. And it may take a couple conversations before either you realize that this is not something that I would like or Yes, I would like to continue to pursue this. If you're undecided, what are some majors that you would suggest for students, if they're not dead set on pre med, or business per se, it's more general, and they're going into language and arts?

D Dr. Leslie Tucker 21:32

Sure, what I would advise for students to think about is looking at majors that are not ultra specific. So when I refer to ultra specific, I'm talking about majors like nursing, for example, or engineering for another. If you're on the fence about nursing, I wouldn't advise you to just go into the university and your first semester, be in nursing track. And the reason that I say that is, you're going to expect that you're going to have anatomy and physiology, biochemistry, you know, a heavy math course, you know, students that aren't science driven, people are not going to do well in those courses.

M Moira McCullough 22:28

Absolutely. Take that scenario, and you're not that strong, and you want to change. And if there's any requirements for that major, or to get into a different program or a different school, it's going to be a harder mountain to climb, shall we say, if you didn't perform at the level that you would have in your other areas of strengths?

D Dr. Leslie Tucker 22:56

Exactly.

M Moira McCullough 22:57

I'm trying to say that as diplomatically as I can.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 23:01

You know, it really Moira, the truth of the matter is breather social science folks, or we are stem folks. You know, and that's okay. I'm a social science girl. You know, I will not be just putting myself into biochemistry. And it's, yeah, and it is what it is. So for example, you know, this ultra specific piece, if a student wants to go into nursing it nine times out of 10 when you ask them why they want to go into nursing as well, I want to help people. Okay, well, do you want to touch their blood? No, no. So just having those conversations, you know, can help them kind of move into a major that they would find a value.

M

Moira McCullough 23:54

And the other thing I think you've probably addressed with with students as well, is this four years of done. Yeah. But that's the conversation that if you were to pursue x degree, you do know that that would require a five or six year commitment. And I just remember one of my kids said, there's no way I want to go to school after four years, I need a break and I thought, great, then you've just narrowed down your major hers options significantly, because you can just take these out of the equation given certain criteria that you've set up.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 24:29

Absolutely. And really, Moira that's my biggest plea to students and families. And I'm just all of the the years that I've worked with students and families in this arena, or at the university. If students go through the process of exploration, and they spend time pondering their skill sets, their strengths, their interests, their aptitudes and what they really love doing If they do that, before they show up on campus, the probability of them graduating with a major, or that they love and a career outlook that looks fantastic, is really pretty high.

M

Moira McCullough 25:15

I cannot agree more, I think that the more self reflection, as you say, and asking yourself as a student, and going through I love that pros and cons, I always have a pros and cons list your list of like, what do you love? And what do you do? Well, somebody said, once, I love marine biology, but I really stink at math well, that you can do other things other than going down that track. There are other opportunities available, but that might not be the one that you want to follow. In terms of colleges, some of the colleges that are really good. I mean, I went to liberal arts school. So that really suited may very well, because I was undecided. And there was a lot of opportunity there. For me, are there any particular

schools that you jump out at you that are really great for students that are the undecided more liberal arts?

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 26:09

Absolutely. And you know, just like you said, Moira, some schools are just much better than others. From the standpoint of being ready, if you will, for undecided college students, for instance, some schools won't allow you to pick an undecided major, they're really looking for you to show up on campus, ready to pursue the major that you've chosen. There are other schools like for example, the University of Chicago, they don't have students declare major before enrolling, they're really set up and equipped for students to go into the university and go through some exploration before deciding.

M

Moira McCullough 26:56

I love that identity in so many ways. I mean, it again, this is there's no right or wrong. It's what's best for each and every student. But I think sometimes that allows you to take a whole host of courses that you might not even have thought, or you wouldn't have been able to have you been on a set major track to begin with.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 27:18

And I absolutely agree. I would like to see all universities have that, you know, that system in place. But but they're not. Most of them are.

M

Moira McCullough 27:34

Exactly No, so that's so anyone who's who has the I mean, University Chicago, kudos to anyone who gets in as well. I mean, that's right. It's not, it's not gonna be an option for everyone. But that's a great example of a school that there are schools out there who embrace the undecided and allow you to come back

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 27:58

At the University of Chicago. So yes, kudos to the folks that get in, but also Brown University, Wake Forest University. You know, those are actually both universities that do a fantastic job with allowing students to take courses to kind of help explore their options that they can then you know, kind of shift and negotiate into a program that makes sense for them. And sure, liberal arts colleges, are the best for undecided students. Hamilton

College in New York is actually fantastic, has lots of great ratings for being equipped and prepared to help students and that one on one guidance and attention that they need, you know, students go to college, and they're shifting and trying to negotiate the world, and that not having a major adds an extra stress.

M

Moira McCullough 28:58

Exactly. And then on the other flip side of that you have programs like Northeastern was one of the first if not the first, who embraced the whole Co Op scenario. And that's now spread throughout many different colleges where you can actually go in and then take having, you know, a semester that's dedicated to an internship as well.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 29:21

Absolutely. And, you know, the point that I want to send home is that if students were to at least even if they go to the university, that they choose undecided, at least have a track at least have a path. am I interested in the sciences? Is that what I'm really good at? Or am I interested in the social sciences? If students do that, then they're more apt to more seamlessly find themselves in a track that they absolutely Love. Okay, so

M

Moira McCullough 30:01

that would be your like, top tip. To use this time, July in August, and kind of use it to reflect and, and the type of path that you would. Perfect. So let's say What do you wish you knew before you attended college?

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 30:23

How long do you have? I'm just kidding. What I wish that I knew was that college is just not about taking classes and getting the grade and then receiving and conferring a transcript. It really is an in it should be it is, but we don't know that it is a holistic learning experience. There's opportunities for you to partake in to have a personal, academic, and career growth. So I didn't really realize that I was a student that went to class and I got the grade and I got my diploma. And then when I was ready to go out and start doing some searching for a position, I went to a college fair, I didn't have a resume. So at the end of my experience, as an undergrad, I'm trying to round up a resume. And then I go to a career fair. And I have all my nice resumes and my nice leather pouch. And I walk in and I don't talk to anybody.

M Moira McCullough 31:40

I don't think you're the only one.

D Dr. Leslie Tucker 31:42

Yes, I wasn't prepared, you know. So I would advise students to, you know, put themselves out there, connect with professors connect with their advisors, you know, put themselves in situations where they build confidence, and that they actually go through some sort of curriculum, to really be ready to go from all angles.

M Moira McCullough 32:08

It's such great advice. And my only plea would be, especially if that was to my kids, it would be do it earlier rather than later. As you said, it's not too early starting freshman year and starting to build those connections with those professors. And or peers in your courses in your majors and your different types of schools or activities that you're in. The more you do up front, the easier it gets. And the wider your network is for when you do have questions and you do you want to ask for help or for referrals?

D Dr. Leslie Tucker 32:47

Absolutely. Use your academic advisor each semester plan on putting something on your resume, plan on, you know, moving forward at some level each semester and use your academic advisor as a support tool for that they love when students come in and say,

M Moira McCullough 33:06

What can I do to have a beautiful experience here? Absolutely. And they probably don't get as many students coming to them. So for any student listening, they're there for you at their job, and they exactly have have the ability to help people. We are all about food here at college Scripps, is there a favorite dessert spot on around a college campus that you have been to or have heard about, as we are all about food.

D Dr. Leslie Tucker 33:34

You know, there's so many one that's come into my mind is it's called Madison Social. And it is walking distance from Florida State University. And it's really super, because it just has a fun college vibe. just happened to place with great food.

M

Moira McCullough 33:58

I love that. Okay, we don't get many on Florida State University. So I love that that's gonna be we're gonna. It's thrilled I'm going to put all these key inside scoops from all of our different experts together one day and have a collage. And as people will be able to travel to every state and have at least one that they'd love to go to. Wonderful. Leslie, thank you so much for joining us today. It was great speaking with you.

D

Dr. Leslie Tucker 34:22

Thank you Moira and have a wonderful day.

M

Moira McCullough 34:26

Thank you Leslie Tucker, for joining us today to help students who are struggling to pick a major entering college undecided can seem a bit daunting, but it's not something to fear. Remember to utilize online resources such as YouTube and Skillshare in order to narrow down your major choices. Additionally, partaking in self reflection and creating actionable goals can assist students during this process. College is a time for self exploration and growth that's going into college undecided can benefit students who need extra time to determine their passion and interest. You can find all of our show notes and links to the helpful resources mentioned throughout our conversation on our website at Collegescoops.com/podcast. You can learn more about Leslie and Virtual College Consulting at Dr.Tucker.education. Please take a couple minutes to rate review and subscribe to College Scoops. Thank you for listening to our College Scoops podcast. Our entire College Scoops team strives to make the college journey a little bit easier, less stressful, fun and tasty by sharing all the inside scoops we have curated along the way. We would love to hear from you about topics to cover and your ideas and everything college related. Reach out to us at collegescoops.com or follow us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.