



Steppingblocks

Maximize Graduate Insights Data for Academic Advising

A step-by-step guide to leveraging your graduate outcomes data to guide students towards selecting a major, identifying a pathway towards skill development, and informing course selection.

Pair with the Worksheet: Maximizing Graduate Insights
Data for Academic Advising

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Maximize Outcomes Data for Academic Advising

This step-by-step guide paired with the accompanying [Worksheet](#) helps academic advisors use Graduate Insights as a practical, student-centered tool—not just another dashboard to reference. By grounding conversations in real outcomes data, advisors can move beyond general advice and help students make clearer decisions about majors, course selection, skill-building, and career direction. With a consistent process and a few repeatable clicks, advising becomes more personalized and more actionable, giving students confidence and a plan while helping institutions connect academic pathways to real workforce outcomes.

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Advising Philosophy

Why is using Outcomes Data for Academic Advising so important?

Before diving into Graduate Outcomes or Graduate Explorer, it helps to pause and anchor yourself in the “why” behind using Graduate Insights in advising. This isn’t about pulling stats for the sake of it or clicking around a dashboard during a meeting. It’s about giving students clearer, more confident direction using real outcomes data—so they can connect majors to careers, courses to skills, and interests to realistic next steps. When you start with that purpose, the data becomes a tool for better conversations, not just more information.

From Uncertain to Confident: Turning Outcomes Data Into a Next-Step Plan

Beyond helping a student pick “something” so they can move on, advising with Graduate Insights is a chance to create real clarity and momentum. The goal is to move a student from “I don’t know” to “Here are 1–2 directions I’m excited about, and what I’m going to do next term” by using outcomes data to guide decisions about major choice, the skills worth building, and the courses, experiences, and certifications that actually support those skills. When you approach Graduate Outcomes and Graduate Explorer this way, the data becomes a practical coaching tool—turning a potentially overwhelming conversation into a focused plan a student can act on immediately.

Graduate Insights in Every Advising Session

Using Graduate Insights shouldn’t be something advisors only pull up when a student is in crisis or completely stuck. It works best as an ongoing advising habit—checking in on majors, skills, and outcomes as students progress—so each meeting builds toward a clearer direction and a smarter plan for courses, experiences, and credentials.



Identify the Student's Priorities & Strengths

Set the Foundation

This session sets the foundation for a student-centered advising conversation by helping you quickly understand who the student is, what motivates them, and what they need right now. When you start with strengths, interests, and priorities, you move from guessing to guiding—making major and career exploration more focused, confident, and actionable. Use any tools you already have with students (Personality Assessments, Strengths Assessments, interest inventories, intake forms, prior advising notes) to accelerate the conversation and create a shared language for next steps. Ask the student the questions below and use the accompanying Worksheet to guide the discovery.

What are you good at?

Think about your strengths and what comes naturally. What types of assignments, projects, or tasks do you tend to pick up faster than others? What do people consistently come to you for help with?

What do you like to do?

Think about your interests and what energizes you. What topics do you find yourself reading about, talking about, or choosing in class? What kinds of work feel engaging even when it's challenging?

What matters most right now?

Identify current priorities such as location, salary, stability, meaning, flexibility, or work-life balance. If you had to pick the top two, what would they be and why?

What are 2-3 majors you're considering?

Even if you're unsure, list a few options. What attracted you to each one, and what questions or concerns are making it hard to decide?

For an overview of how to navigate Graduate Insights, [click here](#).

Data Guided Major Exploration & Skills Prioritization

Let Data Guide Your Discussion

This section is designed to make major exploration fast, concrete, and student-friendly by showing what graduates actually do and the skills that consistently show up for each major. As you review roles, employers, and skills together, use simple prompts like:

- “Do any of these roles or employers sound interesting to you?”
- “Which of these skills feels like ‘yes, I’d like to get good at that’—or ‘nope, not me?’”

If the student isn’t energized by what they see, treat it as a clear signal to switch to a different major quickly. The goal is to narrow the conversation to no more than two majors so the student leaves with focus and momentum. Use the accompanying Worksheet to explore the different outcomes for a selected Major.

Skills That Matter Most in Your Target Career Field

This section helps you move from broad interests to a concrete, skill-based plan by starting with one skill the student actually cares about.

Using Graduate Explorer, you’ll connect that skill to real jobs and employers that value it, then ground the conversation with a real career path example. To make it tangible, open 1–2 individual alumni records and scan their career history—first role after graduation, what they moved into 2–5 years later, and any repeating skills or stepping-stone roles.

Use prompts like “Can you see yourself in any of these roles?” and “This is an example of a path, not the only path—what feels realistic for you?” to keep the student focused and empowered.

Skill Prioritization: Salary, Location, and Industry (cont.)

Skills Prioritization: Three Lenses (Salary, Location, and Target Employers)

In this Skills Prioritization section, you'll help the student identify which skills matter most by looking through three practical lenses: Salary, Location, and Industry/Employer.

First, use the Salary lens to highlight skills that tend to show up alongside stronger earnings outcomes—this helps students prioritize skills with clearer economic return.

Next, use the Location lens to see which skills are most in demand in the student's preferred city or region, so their plan aligns with where they actually want to live.

Finally, use the Industry/Employer lens to tailor the skill list to the kinds of organizations the student is excited about, ensuring the skills they build map directly to real job targets. Use the accompanying Worksheet to guide your search through each lens.

Turn Research Into Action

Turn your exploration into a clear, student-owned action plan. Use what you uncovered about priority skills to select specific courses for next term, then pair them with at least one real-world experience (internship, project, club, or campus resource) that builds those same skills.

Only add certifications or micro-credentials when they directly reinforce the skill goal and support the student's target roles.

Review the course catalog and use the accompanying Worksheet to identify courses that align with the student's major and align with the skills identified during the data exploration.

Action Planning: Courses, Extra Curricular, Credentials, and Certifications

Turning Skills into Real Practice

Now that you've identified the priority skills, take a few minutes to help the student select extra-curricular experiences that will let them practice those skills in real settings.

Aim to lock in at least one option—an internship or part-time role, a project/research experience, a club/organization, or a specific campus resource—so skill-building happens alongside coursework with clear, tangible momentum.



Immediate Action

This section helps the student leave the session with clear, immediate next steps—no ambiguity, no “I’ll think about it later.” Fill out the chart on the accompanying Worksheet together to capture one decision you can make today and three specific next steps with deadlines. End with the quick confidence check so you can gauge whether the student feels ready to move forward or needs another touchpoint.



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Resources and Contact Information

Check out our other resources for leveraging graduate outcomes data for Academic Advising & Student Support:

- [Advisor Guide to Digital Career Counselor](#)
- [Empowering Students with Essential Skills](#)
- [What is Student Success? The No. 1 Strategy](#)
- [Graduate Insights Guide](#)

General Resources

Steppingblocks Case Studies & Interviews

[CLICK HERE](#)

Steppingblocks DataU Podcast Series

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Steppingblocks Blog

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Steppingblocks Data Overview

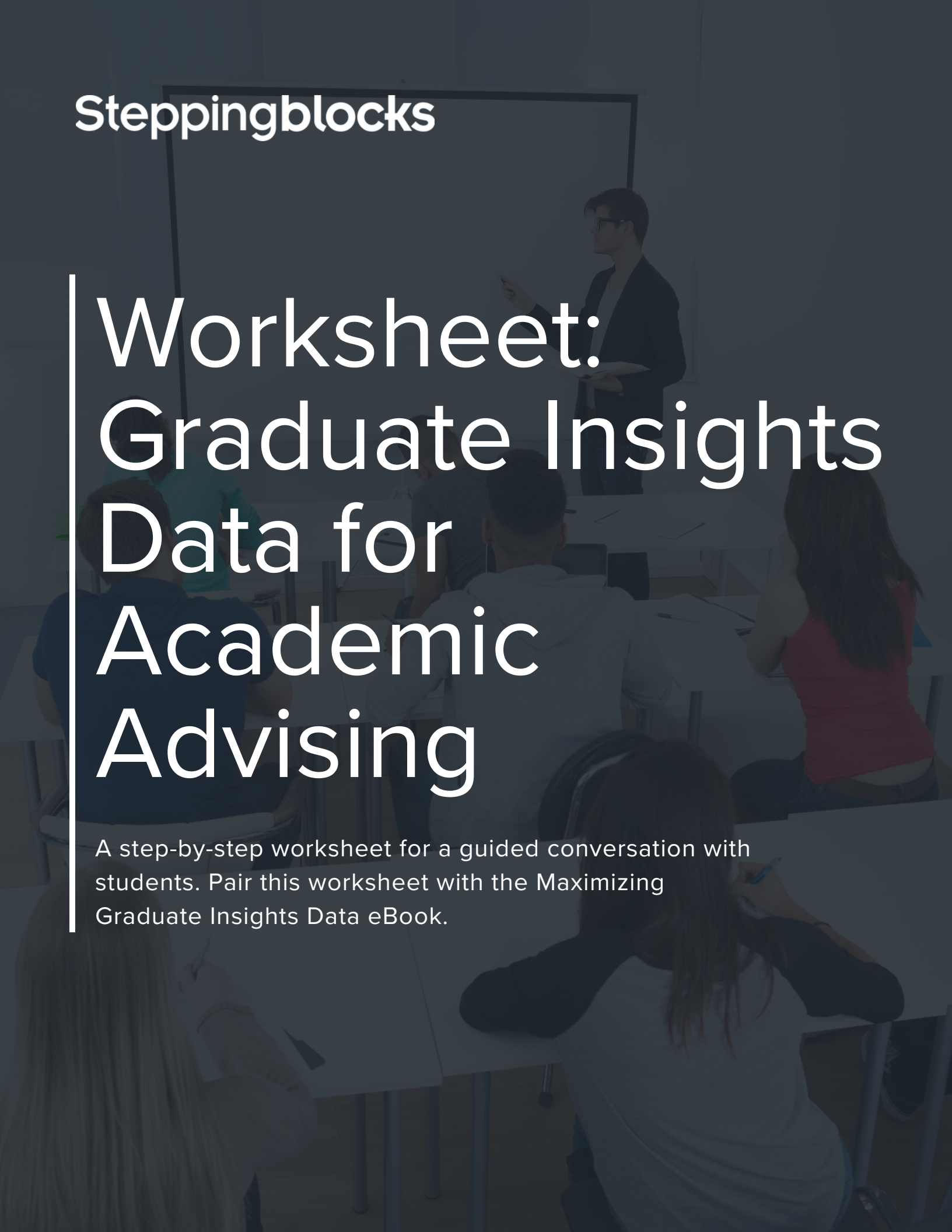
[CLICK HERE](#)

Partner Success Team

At Steppingblocks, we greatly value the insights and ideas of our stakeholders. We warmly welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have. Whether you have comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Partner Success Team!

Contact Us:

support@steppingblocks.com



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Worksheet: Graduate Insights Data for Academic Advising

A step-by-step worksheet for a guided conversation with students. Pair this worksheet with the Maximizing Graduate Insights Data eBook.

Identify Priorities and Strengths

Topic	Student Notes
Session Goal(s)	Select all that apply: ☐ Narrow to 2–3 majors ☐ Select a major ☐ Choose next-term courses ☐ Build skills plan (courses + activities + certs) ☐ Explore jobs/employers/industries/locations
Personality & Strengths	What are you good at? (strengths, favorite classes, feedback you've received)
Interests (Subjects/Topics/ Activities)	What do you like to do? (topics, activities, problems you enjoy solving)
Priorities (Location, Salary, Lifestyle)	What matters most right now? (circle below & add notes) Salary Location Stability Meaning Flexibility Graduate School Other Preferred location(s): Ideal Salary (rough):

Data Guided Major Exploration

Selected Major to Explore: _____

Top skills for this major:

Filters to use: [Graduate Outcomes](#) > [Skills](#) > [Major](#) > [Degree Level](#) > [Grad Year](#)
(last 5 years recommended)

Skill fit with student (circle): Strong / Some / Weak

Pick 1 skill to explore: _____

Top outcomes for that skill:

- **Job titles:**
- **Industries:**
- **Employers:**

Filters to use: [Graduate Explorer](#) > [Major](#) > [Degree Level](#) > [Grad Year](#) (last 4 years) > [Select the Skill you want to explore from the Top Skills List](#)

Student reaction (circle): Yes / Maybe / No

Skill Prioritization: Salary, Location, and Industry

Skills That Matter Most in Your Target Career Field

Filters to use: [Graduate Outcomes](#) > [Skills tab](#) > [Major](#) > [Grad year \(last 5 years\)](#) > [Degree Level](#)

Top Skills by Volume	Most Relevant Skills	High Salary-Associated Skills	Skills the Student Would Like to Develop
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5			

Tip: Volume shows how many graduates at your institution have the skill. Relevance shows how much more common that skill is for your institution compared the rest of the US. Salary shows which skills tend to be linked with higher graduate earnings, so you can prioritize skills with stronger payoff.

Skill Prioritization:

Salary, Location, and Industry (cont.)

Skills Exploration

Filters to use: Graduate Explore > Major > Grad year (do all grad years first, then search again filtering by last 5 years) > Select Salary Range

Major to Explore:

Top Job Titles:

Top Employers:

Top Industries:

Student Reflection:

Skill Prioritization:

Salary, Location, and Industry (cont.)

Location Exploration

Graduate Outcomes Map or Graduate Explorer Geographic Filter

Major to Explore:

Location Filter:

Top Employers:

Top Job Titles:

Student Reflection:

Skill Prioritization:

Salary, Location, and Industry (cont.)

Industry/Employer Trends Exploration

Filters to use: Graduate Outcomes > Employer Trends > Major> Degree Level

Major to Explore:

Trending Up
(Industries/Employers):

Trending Down
(Industries/Employers):

Benchmark Employer
Selected:

Top Skills for Employer:

Student Reflection:

Action Planning: Courses, Extra Curricular, Credentials, and Certifications

Courses to Take (list below)	Skills to Build (list below)

Action Planning: Courses, Extra Curricular, Credentials, and Certifications

Experiences that build the skills you need:

Internship/Part-Time Job Ideas:

Project/Research Ideas:

Clubs/Organizations to Join:

Campus Resource(s) to Utilize:

Certifications/Microcredentials to Earn
(Only if they clearly support the skill
goal)

Action Planning: Courses, Extra Curricular, Credentials, and Certifications

Make A Decision Today (select 1-2)

Declare a Major Now:

Identify 2 Majors to Explore Further

Identify 2 Skills to Develop Next Term:

Identify 3 Steps to Take

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