Stepping up to the major

Completing the first class in the major contributes significantly to retention

Four majors, four colleges

2009 cohort – student enrollment after taking 0 to 9 required courses in major

Findings:
- A significant proportion of students who left had not taken a course in the major.
- In three of the four majors, students became increasingly less likely to leave as they took more courses in the major.

Questions for further research
- Does a lack of lower division classes in the major discourage students?
- If the major includes lower division coursework (as these four do), why are students leaving without taking it?
- If there are lower division courses in the major, are the courses offered frequently and are there enough seats for freshmen and sophomores to get into the courses?
- How do majors determine the right number of lower division courses to include?

Possible Strategies to Support Student Success
- Majors may want to include some lower division courses
- Offer exploratory courses with the major prefix to fulfill general education requirements
- Assure that there are sufficient seats offered to meet student demand in lower division courses
- Improve articulation of lower division major courses to support transfer students