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Course Overview
The purpose of this course is to develop an understanding of how college students make and implement persistence decisions, and how institutional structures, policies, and practices impact those decisions. To accomplish this purpose, we will read and discuss theory and research on college student retention. We will consider who comprises the college-going population and the issues these constituents bring to campus, examine retention theory’s history, and conduct a critical examination of various theories of retention. Throughout the course, students will make connections between readings and discussions and their experiences in the field of education, focusing on the role of leadership in creating environments that promote retention for the diverse student populations in higher education today.

Approach to Learning
The learning experiences of this course are structured to challenge and support participants in: the acquisition of new knowledge, perspectives and skills; the questioning of taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions; the consideration of how to create higher education institutions that are more accessible and welcoming to traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations; and the integration of theory with practice. Participants in this course must take substantial responsibility for their own learning, incorporating ideas about educational leadership within their own “real” practice in the organizations in which they work. This approach to learning is predicated on the belief that each person is both a teacher and a learner, an expert and a novice, and a leader and a follower. With this in mind, traditional lecture format will be used minimally. Rather, the focus will be a combination of discussion and interactive exercises. These formats provide participants with the opportunity to contribute to the emerging knowledge by participating in discussion of issues and concepts.

Course Objectives
Several objectives guide the readings and assignments in this course, all of which contribute to the learning outcomes described for the ELP Master’s degree program in Student Affairs Administration:

1. Become familiar with research and theories on college student retention.
2. Develop an understanding of how retention issues may vary for specific student populations such as women, students of color, gay/lesbian/bisexual, working class, disabled, veteran, first-generation, and adult learners.
3. Increase knowledge of general methods for researching and presenting information regarding the persistence decisions of college students for different audiences, including policy makers, administrators, and researchers.
4. Develop the skills to create a retention plan that addresses persistence at a particular higher education institution.
5. Understand how to be a change agent for social justice as it relates to student retention issues.

Readings
Directions for accessing course readings will be provided in class. Please prepare for each class session by completing the assigned readings prior to class and coming to class ready to discuss the readings in depth.

Course Requirements
Just as in educational leadership there is no magic formula for success, there is no magic formula for assigning grades in this course. While this is probably true for all courses, in a graduate class that is directed toward improving professional performance it is particularly true. The payoff for attending this course should not be the final grade, but the “value added” in terms of professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes gained and changed through our time together. All of the course requirements support the course objectives, and are therefore essential.

This course involves participating in a semester-long simulation. Groups of 3-5 students will be assigned a specific institution around which their semester’s work will center. Students will select specific role to play within their group, and the groups will serve as persistence/retention committees for their institution, charged with developing a campus-wide plan for addressing particular institutional retention and completion issues. Each week, these committees will be presented with opportunities to discuss class readings and solve specific problems related to their work in class. In order for the simulation to work effectively, each group must become familiar with its assigned institution early in the semester. The reading load for the second week of class is intentionally light to allow groups to spend some time familiarizing themselves with their institution. Students are encouraged to visit institutional websites, look for issues concerning their institution in the media, and to contact institutional agents with specific questions to develop a clear picture of the institution. For the most part, this work will need to be done outside of class.

1) Class attendance and participation (15%)
Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to each class session and to participate in thoughtful and meaningful discussion during each class session. We will look for the quality of your participation, your individual contributions to the class, and the productivity of your interactions as a member of the class. Attendance and punctuality also factor into the determination of the participation portion of the final grade. If emergencies arise, you are expected to notify one of the instructors as soon as possible and arrange to get class notes from a classmate. Excused absences are not “free;” when students miss class, it will impact the participation grade. **Students who are absent from class more than two (2) times will receive a failing participation grade for the course.**

2) Personal Persistence Reflection (20%)
One of the elements of this course that is appealing to most students is that we have all, at some point in our academic careers, made the decision to persist in our educational endeavors. This assignment is intended to help you reflect on the
factors that contributed to your own persistence in higher education. Utilizing the literature from the first five (5) weeks of class, reflect on your own undergraduate experience and examine the barriers to, and supports for, your persistence in college. Consider the college choice process and how that played into your sense of “fit” at your institution(s), and examine the characteristics that you brought to the higher education environments that influenced your persistence. Also, think about institutional culture and how that impacted your experience.

Keep in mind that although this is a reflection on your undergraduate experience, you are asked to cite the literature from class to analyze, support, or show exceptions to your experiences. The paper should be written in APA style and should be 6-7 pages in length.

3) Retention Conference Presentation (30%)
Each simulation group will make a conference presentation to the rest of the class related to a specific group of students and the factors that impact their persistence. In their presentation, each group will utilize the readings for the class session they choose to develop an interactive presentation and discussion of the readings, including a best practices section in which each group will have a chance to discuss how the readings might frame their own institutional efforts to retain the specific student group(s) that are the topic of the presentation. Groups should model their presentations after NASPA or ACPA workshops in which theory is linked to practice. Presentations should not summarize the readings; presenters should assume that session participants have read and are ready to discuss, debate, incorporate, and analyze the readings. Along with the presentation for class, each group will turn in copies of a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation to the instructors.

4) Retention Plan and Group Presentation (35%)
Each retention committee group will develop a retention plan that is specific to their assigned institution. The audience for this plan is the chief academic officer and chief student affairs officer of that institution, but the plan should incorporate the broad institutional perspective gained from a committee that represents several facets of the campus. The retention plan should be approximately 20-25 pages in length.

The retention plan should include the following elements:

a) Problem statement: why is retention to degree an issue for this institution? What evidence can you provide that supports the need for a coordinated persistence/retention plan at this institution? Are there particular groups of students whom this institution should focus on to increase its retention/graduation rates?

b) Institutional context: provide a description of your institution, including retention and completion rates, unique institutional features that hinder or support retention of students; demographic characteristics of the student population; and local/geographical features that help frame your retention plan.
c) Literature review: what do we already know about retention that can shape the institution’s persistence/retention plan? Use this literature to shape the plan you create.

d) Retention plan: how will your plan address persistence/retention at your institution? Be specific about how you will go about increasing student persistence. How will the plan be implemented? Who are the key players in the implementation process? Make sure the plan addresses both academic and social elements of retention.

e) Evaluation: how will you know if the plan is successful? What sorts of measurements will you use to evaluate the plan?

Collaborative work has an important place in the educational process. We hope that developing the retention plan will provide students with an opportunity to develop the skills necessary for working in groups. Each student will be responsible for the outcome of the group’s project, and the groups will determine the role of each student in this process. Ten percent (10%) of the group’s final grade on this project will be determined by the quality of an in-class presentation of its work. Presentations will be made during the last two class sessions.

A Note on Written Assignments...
As graduate students, you are expected to turn in written work that is free from grammatical and usage errors as well as typographical errors. Please proofread papers before handing them in. Writing is given a 10% weighting in the determination of the paper’s final assessment. If you have concerns about your writing, please see one of the instructors.

This course is taught by an instructor and a teaching assistant. Please provide hard copies for both instructors when you turn in written work. Both instructors will read all of the papers and will provide feedback on individual and group work.

Assignments are due on the date listed in the syllabus. We will accept late assignments within 72 hours of the due date, but the assignment will automatically lose one letter grade. Late assignments will not be accepted if they are turned in more than 72 hours after the published due date.

Doctoral Student Requirement
Doctoral students in this class will participate in the retention committee simulation in a consultant role, working with institutional groups to help them understand research and policy perspectives related to the readings each week. Doctoral students will complete all written and presentation assignments, including the final retention plan, in which they will help an institution develop four distinct theory-based policies related to student persistence/retention for four distinct groups of students. Doctoral students will select an institution and the student groups on which their policies will focus. The policy paper will follow the basic structure of the retention plan; the instructor will work with the doctoral students to fine tune this structure to their assignment.

Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities
In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (Public Law 101-336), students with disabilities requiring special accommodations to meet the expectations of this
course are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the instructors and the Center for Disabled Student Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 as soon as possible. If you have a disability you may speak with us privately, but we cannot make accommodations if we are not aware of your needs. Students with documented disabilities will be accommodated based on the specific disability and as agreed in writing.

The Use of Pagers and Cell Phones
The expectation of this course is that you will be present and engaged in class during class time, which means that you will have to be free from technological distractions. Not only do these distractions contribute to one individual’s inattentiveness, they can make it difficult for others in the class to stay focused on the work at hand. Therefore, the following two policies are in effect during our time together. Please be familiar with these, and understand that any time that you are not in class will impact your participation grade:

Please refrain from using cell phones in the classroom out of respect for your classmates and your instructor. If an emergency arises and you must use your cell phone, please quietly leave the classroom in order to take the call. If you are found sending/reading text messages during class, you will be asked to leave the class and will be counted absent for that class session.

Because this course is a seminar course, students are expected to engage in discussion during class sessions. Some students may want to take notes on their computers. However, many students find that it is difficult to refrain from surfing the web, reading email, and engaging in other activities not related to the class. This is distracting to those around you. Therefore, if you are found engaging in computer activities not directly related to the class, you will be asked to leave the class and will be counted absent for that class session.

Academic Misconduct
The following policy regarding academic misconduct is from the University of Utah’s Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, which can be found in its entirety at http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html

1. “Academic misconduct” includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one’s work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information, as defined further below. It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct.

   a. “Cheating” involves the unauthorized possession or use of information, materials, notes, study aids, or other devices in any academic exercise, or the unauthorized communication with another person during such an exercise. Common examples of cheating include, but are not limited to, copying from another student's examination, submitting work for an in-class exam that has been prepared in advance, violating rules governing the administration of exams, having another person take an exam, altering one’s work after the work has been returned and before resubmitting it, or violating any rules relating to academic conduct of a course or program.

   b. Misrepresenting one's work includes, but is not limited to, representing material prepared by another as one’s own work, or submitting the same
work in more than one course without prior permission of both faculty members.

c. “Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.

d. “Fabrication” or “falsification” includes reporting experiments or measurements or statistical analyses never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; falsifying or misrepresenting background information, credentials or other academically relevant information; or selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data and/or results.

2. “Academic sanction” means a sanction imposed on a student for engaging in academic or professional misconduct. It may include, but is not limited to, requiring a student to retake an exam(s) or rewrite a paper(s), a grade reduction, a failing grade, probation, suspension or dismissal from a program or the University, or revocation of a student’s degree or certificate. It may also include community service, a written reprimand, and/or a written statement of misconduct that can be put into an appropriate record maintained for purposes of the profession or discipline for which the student is preparing.
## Course at a Glance

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>August 22</td>
<td>Welcome Introduction to Simulation</td>
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| August 29      | College Student Retention/Persistence      | Berger, Ramirez & Lyons  
Morrison & Silverman  
Astin & Oseguera  
Mortenson |
| September 5    | College Choice and the Retention Continuum | Weidman  
Tinto, Ch. 4  
Tierney  
Reason: An examination of persistence research  
Seidman |
| September 12   | Foundations & Current Approaches to Retention Theory | Dynarski  
Nora  
Paulsen & St. John |
| September 19   | Student Characteristics that Impact Retention | Bean & Eaton  
Dennis, Calvillo & Gonzalez  
DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh  
Reason: Student variables |
| September 26   | Campus Culture and Retention               | **Personal Persistence Reflection Due**  
Hurtado  
Baird  
Museus, Nichols, & Lambert  
Rhee  
Museus & Quaye |
| October 3      | Role of the Classroom in Retention         | Tinto: Colleges as Communities  
Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie & Gonyea  
Pascarella, Seifert & Whitt  
Braxton: Toward a scholarship of practice |
<p>| October 10     | Fall Break: No Class                      |            |</p>
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<tr>
<th>October 17</th>
<th>Social Class and Generational Status</th>
<th>Berger, Bergerson, Ostrove &amp; Long, Cabrera, Burkum, LaNasa, &amp; Bibo, Martinez, Sher, Krull, &amp; Wood, Lohfink &amp; Paulsen</th>
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<td>October 24</td>
<td>Race/Ethnicity and Retention</td>
<td>Herndon &amp; Hirt, Guillory &amp; Wolverton, Hernandez &amp; Lopez, Conway, Rendon, Jalomo &amp; Nora, Johnson, Soldner, Leonard, Alvarez, Inkelas, Rowan-Kenyon, &amp; Longerbeam, Yeh</td>
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<td>LGBT Students</td>
<td>McRee &amp; Cooper, Lugg, Sanlo</td>
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<td>November 7</td>
<td>Regional NASPA Conference:</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<td>November 14</td>
<td>Veteran and Adult Students</td>
<td>Livingston, Havice, Cawthon &amp; Fleming, Cook &amp; Kim, Hensley &amp; Kinser, Sissel, Hansman &amp; Kasworm</td>
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<td>International Students and Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>Andrade, Galloway &amp; Jenkins, Getzel, Belch</td>
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<td>November 28</td>
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**References**


