ED 430 College Retention: Theory, Research, and Practice
Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development
Thursdays: 4:50-7:25
Fall 2010

Instructor
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Course Description
This course introduces students to salient research, theory, and practice related to college student support and retention. Students will explore cultural, institutional, and individual factors that contribute to college student attrition and critically review theories attempting to explain the student departure process. Effective student support and retention practices, programs, and assessment procedures will also be identified, examined, and implemented.

Course Objectives
• To understand the causes, scope, and consequences of college attrition.
• To critically evaluate theories seeking to explain the student departure process.
• To identify effective student support and retention practices and programs.
• To develop communication skills that foster student retention.
• To develop writing, presenting, and critical thinking skills.

Required Reading
Additional reading available on Blackboard.

Course requirements
1. College experience paper- each student will write a 4-6 page case study about either (a) your own experiences in college (master’s students) or a student with whom you have worked in a support role (doctoral students currently working in college student affairs). The case study should examine challenges you or the student faced upon entry to college (e.g., academic preparedness, motivation, transition issues), academic and social challenges faced while in college, important support people or programs, and services or supports that you wish would have been made available or that the student should have participated in. These papers will be presented informally to the class and discussed.
2. Textbook chapter presentations- in small groups students will briefly present a chapter or chapters (depending on class size) from the textbook to the class. Presenters should plan a 15-20 minute formal presentation (using overheads/PowerPoint) covering all the material in the chapter.
3. **Multicultural retention reflection paper**- students will complete a 3-5 page reflection paper on the issue of multicultural retention, which should include perspectives about the “What’s Race Got to do with it?” video. Papers should include references (using proper APA format) to course readings relevant to the topic.

4. **College Retention Theory Critique Papers**- in this paper you will briefly outline and critique three theories of Student Retention: Tinto’s Interactionist Model, Astin’s Involvement Theory, and one other model of your choosing. Papers should be 4-6 pages and be written using APA format.

5. **Student Services Interview (Master’s students only)**- students will conduct an interview with an academic advisor, counselor, or administrator in a student support program. Students will present the results of their interviews to the class and submit a 3-5 page paper in which they summarize the results of the interview. Presentations and papers should include a brief description of the program, the institution, the background of the interviewee, the person’s theory or personal philosophy regarding student departure (i.e., why do they think students leave), how they attempt to retain/support the students, and any other learning that resulted from the interview. Presentations should include use of overheads or PowerPoint.

6. **Student Support/Retention Analysis of “Frosh” and “Seniors” Videos (viewed in class)**- in small groups students will select two diverse characters from the “Frosh” video (one must also appear in the follow-up “Seniors” video) to analyze from a student support/retention perspective. This analysis should include identifying how individual developmental stages and characteristics, relationships at home (e.g., families, friends, etc.) and at college (e.g., peers, faculty/staff, organizations, etc.), and campus culture impacted student transitions to college. Students should also identify campus resources and services that were available or that could have been available to these students to effectively support and retain them. These analyses should be guided by and include references to the research and theory presented in the readings. In addition to turning in their presentation materials (overheads, handouts, etc.) each student will also turn in a 1 page summary in which they report the quantity and quality of each group member’s contributions to the final products.

7. **Freshman Mentoring (master’s students only)**- each master’s student will mentor two incoming UR freshman. You will be required to meet with each freshman at least 5 times throughout the semester. The content of the meetings will be designed by you and should be based on best practices derived from the reading, your own experiences, and the individual needs of each mentee. At the conclusion of the class, you will use theories from the class readings to write a 8-10 page paper and give a 30 minute presentation (including 10 minutes question/answer) in which you provide descriptions of the following: (1) an overview of your mentee (including issues they faced upon entry); (2) a description of your intervention and rationale for implementing the approaches you used; and (3) an overview of the experience, including reflections about things that worked well, things you would do differently, and learning from the experience related to your intended career. It is important to note that your
evaluation on this project is not contingent upon the success of the mentee (student success in college is sometimes connected to things beyond your control). What is important are your effort, creativity, ability to derive interventions based on class readings, and your reflections about your learning from the experience.

8. **Student Retention Research Paper and Presentation (Doctoral Students Only)**—students will conduct an in-depth, critical review of the literature regarding an aspect of retention theory or practice that is applicable to their current or future higher education settings. Examples of topics include the impact of support programs on college retention (e.g., student activities, housing, multicultural affairs), examining the needs of college student subgroups (e.g., African American students, adults learners), or issues specific to certain college settings (e.g., community colleges, research institutions). Before beginning the project, students will submit a 1-2 page proposal in which they describe the project (due Oct. 7), which allows the instructor to assist students in choosing appropriate topics and finding quality resources. Students will also submit a brief outline of the paper along with a reference list (due Oct. 28). Papers should be written in publishable form using APA style, include at least 10 professional references, and be between 12-18 pages (including cover page, abstract, and references). Students will also present their papers to the class (30 minutes including 10 minute question/answer). Prior to submitting the papers, students are required to have the paper reviewed by two peers in the class. Students should submit the final paper, along with the names and comments of the two peers who reviewed the paper. I also encourage all of students to attend the Warner School writing center workshops and to schedule individual appointments with the writing center when preparing this paper. Please check the Writing Support Services webpage (http://www.rochester.edu/warner/studentservices/writing/) for instructions on how to schedule a consultation and for the workshop schedules and a list of proofreaders you can hire to proofread/copyedit your papers.

**Attendance Policy**

The emphasis on personal reflection and experiential learning in this course, combined with the large number of guest speakers, necessitate attendance and participation in class meetings, which includes being active in classroom discussions and participating fully in class activities. While students are encouraged to attend all classes, students are allowed one excused absence without penalty. If a student misses a second or third class meeting, he/she will be required to complete a make-up assignment for each absence, the content of which will be determined in consultation with the professor. Makeup assignments will normally be targeted towards material the students misses and can include watching a video and writing a reflection paper on it or doing an independent reading assignment and reflection paper. Students who miss more than three classes will normally not pass the course unless they provide documentation warranting extended, excused absences.

**Grading**

Grades will not be used to evaluate students in this class. Instead, students who successfully complete all assignments and course requirements will pass the course with
a grade of satisfactory. Students who submit work that is not at a satisfactory level will be allowed one opportunity to improve and resubmit the work.

Teaching Apprentices and Assistants
As a doctoral training institution, our program often incorporates doctoral student apprentices and teaching assistants into master’s level courses to assist the professors in course design, creating assignments, presenting lessons, and grading assignments. Teaching apprentices are advanced-level doctoral students who are assisting in the class as part of their doctoral training and often receive internship credit for the experience. Teaching Assistants are doctoral students who are paid by the University to assist the instructor with the class. All teaching apprentices and assistants have already attained a master’s degree in higher education or a related field, have post-master’s professional experience in the field, and expertise and interest in the content of the courses in which they apprentice. While Professor Guiffrida will review all the assignments and maintains final authority regarding all grades, the teaching apprentices and assistants will review and provide suggestions for grades as part of the apprenticeship experience. This fall we are fortunate to have a teaching apprentice (Monica Miranda-Smalls) and a teaching assistant (Aimee Whyte) who both have extensive experience in college student affairs and retention. Monica Miranda Smalls is a Ph.D. student in the Higher Education and has had previous experience as a teaching apprentice for the Administration of Student Affairs in Higher Education course. She received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University at Albany, SUNY. Her master’s degree was in Educational Administration and Policy Studies with a concentration in Higher Education. Monica began her career in student affairs as a Resident Director for the Higher Education Opportunity Program/Bridge Summer Institute at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and continued as a Student Activities Associate there until she moved to Rochester to serve as the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, a role she has held since July of 1999. Monica has a special interest in investigating how Latina students make meaning of their collegiate experiences, with a particular focus on exploring the cultivation of social and cultural capital through their involvement in Latina sororities, and how that may affect retention of Latina students in college. Monica is President-Elect of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA). Aimee K. Whyte, MA, NCC, ACS, is a Ph.D. is a doctoral student in Counseling. She received her M.A. in Mental Health Counseling from Gallaudet University and her B.S. in Professional and Technical Communication from RIT/NTID. She is currently a part-time counselor at Deaf Wellness Center, University of Rochester Medical Center. Previously she was a staff counselor at the RIT Counseling Center/NTID Psychological Services and Domestic Violence Program Coordinator at CSD of Minnesota. Aimee’s career and research interests include: Deaf-centered counseling, human development, Deaf college student development, culturally Deaf identity development, systemic (“Procrustean”) issues, dual relationships (particularly in small communities), domestic violence prevention, bibliotherapy, American Sign Language poetry and music, and the “dinner-table syndrome.”
Accommodations
Students requiring special accommodations due to a disability should contact the instructor as soon as possible. It is also important that students requiring special needs contact the Office of University Disability Resources, which is the department responsible for maintaining the Universities compliance with regulations under Section V of the Rehabilitation Act.

Course Calendar

September 2
Activities: Introductions, course syllabus

September 9:
Lecture: Defining college retention and the importance of studying it.
Activities: Discussion of college experiences
Sign-up for textbook presentations
Guest Speaker, Dr. Marcy Kraus, Dean of Freshman & Director, College Center for Academic Support, UR.
Guest Speaker, Sylvia Kless, Associate Director for Student Services, International Services Office.
Assignments: Seidman-Chapter 1 (Berger & Lyon) Historical Look at Retention
Seidman- Chapter 4 (Hagedorn) How to define retention
Sewall (2010). Colleges focus on international students…

College Experience Paper

September 16
Lecture: Listening Skills for Student Affairs Professionals
Activities: Listening Skills Role Play
Listening skills activities
Sign up for Student Services Presentations

September 23  No Class- NARACES Conference

September 30
Activities: Student textbook presentations
Seidman- Chapter 2 (Mortenson) Measurement and persistence
Seidman-Chapter 9 (Astin & Oseguera) Pre-College and Institutional Influences
Seidman-Chapter 6 (Nora, et al.) Beyond the first year
Student Services Presentations
Assignments: Seidman chapters 2, 6, 9.
October 7
Activities: **Student textbook presentations**
Seidman-Chapter 7 (Cabrera et al.) Pathways to four-year degree
Seidman- Chapter 8 (Bean) 9 Themes
Seidman-Chapter 10 (Schuh) Finances and Retention

**Student Services Presentations**

Assignments: Seidman-Chapters 7,8,10.
**Doctoral student research paper proposals**

October 14:
Lecture: CollegeRetention Theories- Doug
First-year seminars, **Guest Speaker, Dr. Steve Demarian**

Assignments: Seidman- Chapter 3 (Braxton & Hirshy) Theoretical Developments.
Seidman-Chapter 5 (Braxton & Lee) Toward Reliable Knowledge
Astin, A.W. (1999) Involvement in learning revisited: Lessons we have learned.

**College Retention Theory Critique Papers**

October 21
Lecture: Minority college student retention research- Doug
Fraternities and Sororities and Retention-Monica.

October 28
Activities: Video, “What’s Race Got to do with it?” (49 minutes) and discussion.
Community College Student Retention: Guest Speaker, Julie White, Assistant Director, Student Services, Monroe Community College, Daemon City Campus.
Assignments: Both Dougherty chapters are available on UR ebrary site—first 60 pages also included in blackboard.
Dougherty, K. J. (1994). The community college’s impact on students, the economy, and the university (chapter 3). In K.J. Dougherty, The contradictory college: The conflicting origins, impacts, and futures of the community college (pp. 43-83). Albany: State University of New York.

November 4
Lecture: Student Development and Retention
Activities: Mentoring updates/consultation
Watch “Frosh” Video (98 minutes)
Form groups and begin assignment
Assignments: Multicultural Retention/What’s Race Got to do with it? reflection papers due
Begin “frosh” analyses

November 11
Activities: Mentoring updates/consultation
Watch “From Frosh to Senior” (87 minutes).
Continue Frosh analysis in groups.

November 18
Lecture: Supporting students with disabilities, Guest Speaker, Michele Reed, Student Support Counselor, UR.
Issues faced by Deaf College Students, Guest Speaker, Aimee Whyte.
Whyte & Smith (2010). Deaf College Students.

Frosh/Seniors Presentations
November 25   No class- Thanksgiving Break

December 2:   Final Presentations

December 9:   Final Presentations