NOTE: This is a tentative syllabus aimed at providing students with an idea on the context and content of this class. As such some items included may be changed during the semester. However, the following items will not suffer modification: the class meeting schedule and the required texts. Students who by April 27 have not secured this syllabus nor have done significant reading before the first weekend should NOT enrolled in this class.

Course Title: Retention Strategies in Colleges and Universities
Course Number: EDH 6938

Course Description:
The study of the educational and political ramifications of college attrition with a special focus on the considerable variation in retention practices and strategies.

Meeting dates and times: May 29-30-31; June 5-6-7; 19-20
Fridays (4:30pm-8:30pm); Saturdays (8:30am-4:30pm); Sundays (1:00pm-5:00pm)

Course Instructor: Rosa Cintrón, PhD, Associate Professor
Course Co-Instructor: Maribeth Ehasz, PhD, Vice President

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Other hours available, if requested by student.
Location: TA 201

Textbooks and Instructional Material:


Course Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Review, discuss and analyze the historical and political basis of the notion of dropouts;
2. Describe strategies to resolve the problem of attrition; and
3. Evaluate and critique retention efforts.

Academic Integrity and Ethics
As reflected in the UCF creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community. I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values, and so are very serious academic offenses. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the university. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the University’s Rules of Conduct (see http://www.osc.sdes.ucf.edu/).
**Disability Access Statement**
The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

**Turnitin.com**
In this course we will utilize Turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, you will be expected to submit all assignments in both hard copy and electronic format. After the assignment is processed, as an instructor I receive a report (‘an index’) from Turnitin.com that states if and how another author’s work was used in the assignment. These indices do not reflect Turnitin’s assessment of whether a paper has or has not been plagiarized. Originality Reports are simply a tool to help find sources that contain text similar to submitted papers. The decision to deem any work plagiarized must be made carefully, and only after in-depth examination of both the submitted paper and suspect sources in accordance with the standards of the class and institution where the paper was submitted. Note the expectations regarding the expected Originality Index for different assignments throughout this class.

For a more detailed look at this process, including training on how to use this system visit [http://www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)

YOU MUST COMPLETE THIS TRAINING BY CLASS SESSION TWO.

The ID number for this class is 2671193.
The Class Enrollment password is retention.
The Originality Score for this class is ≤ 10%.

**Internet Usage**
You will be expected to have daily access to the Internet and email, since I will be emailing you about assignment updates, additions and changes. If you do not have an UCF email account, get one now! If you do not own a computer, there are computers accessible to you in all UCF's computer labs. For further information on computer labs, please see the following website: [http://registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/webguide/index_quickfind.aspx](http://registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/webguide/index_quickfind.aspx).

In addition, note that I will be creating a ‘home-made or class-made’ listserv inclusive of all the members of this class and it will be distributed to all students. It will contain this information: name, residence address, email address, phone and cell phone numbers. If for any reason you do not want this information included, let me know no later than our first session.
Grading
100-90=A
89-80=B
79-70=C
69-60=D
59 and lower=F

NOTE: Plan ahead; plan for unpredictable events in your life…especially during the summer! Late work will NOT be acceptable nor will arrangements be made to satisfy incomplete performance and/or work not submitted on time. Also, problems with your computer, printer or technology in general will not be accepted as excuses for not doing your work on time. Again, plan, plan, and plan.
Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:

Class participation and Questions. You are expected to attend each class meeting. In addition, I expect that each of you will participate fully in class activities and discussion by coming to class with a good understanding of the assigned reading(s). In addition, for each class you will submit the 3 questions for each of the chapters assigned for that day that according to you capture the main points being addressed. Provide the answer to each question and indicate the page number where that idea or point is addressed. Questions must be objective (multiple choice, fill-in-the-black, true/false, etc.). Do not provide essay-type questions. You may want to organize some sort of ‘question sharing system’ among yourselves since these are the questions which will be used in your midterm. Make sure that at the beginning of every session your questions are on our desk before the beginning of class (this is a hard copy—no emails). Points=20

Retention Plans on the Web. You are expected to be familiar with the retention plan of a university, college or community college. You can do this by asking a Reference Librarian how to find this information or just by using Google and the phrase (or derivatives): retention plans. At every class meeting I will call, at random, 3 or 4 students to present the retention plans they found on the Internet. You will use the technology available in our classroom. As an example, review the plan of Syracuse University by perusing the entries on the navigation column on the left side. This is website: http://retentioncenter.syr.edu/ By the way, this is an excellent model to use for your final report! These are some questions to guide your review: What was your overall impression on the information posted? What is the main problem being addressed by the retention plan? What data are provided? Does the plan argue the problem comprehensively and clearly? Who are the key players? What is not said? What impressed you the most? Points=20

Midterm Test. There will be an objective midterm examination. Points=20

Balancing retention and attrition: A report on a modern Sisyphus. You will develop a report depicting an institution facing the challenges of balancing retention and attrition rates. You are the VP/Student Affairs who will chair The Campus Taskforce on Retention. In framing and analyzing the problems at your institution, you will be expected to draw from the course texts and other research literature. Points=40

How long is this report? As long as it takes for you to produce graduate level work.

During our last weekend you will provide class with a brief presentation on Part Three and Four of your report. Note that you will dress as if you were doing a formal presentation to the President’s Council. No PowerPoint.

Due Date: Monday, July 13 no later than 12:00 noon. Leave a hard copy of your essay under my office door. Electronic attachments are acceptable but notice that having last minute technological problems is no excuse for not having your essay on time!

😊 Tips

Always remember that you will be judged by the quality of your work, which includes your written work such as the Taskforce report. Sloppy, disorganized, poor quality work will say more about you than you
probably want said! To ensure the quality of your written work, keep the following in mind when writing your report:

- Give yourself enough time to write the report. You don't want to rush through it.
- Be analytical, not descriptive.
- Proofread your work! Not just on the screen while you write it, but the hard copy after it is printed. Fix the errors before submitting.
- You should expect that your computer or printer will stop working 24 hours prior to when this report is due and will not be available for next 48 hours. Plan for it.
Course Outline

Session 1 - *Historical and political basis of the notion of dropouts*
Required Reading:
  • Dorn—Chapters 1 thru 3
  • Fine—Chapters 1 thru 2
Collect Questions for all chapters

Session 2 - *Continuation of previous session*
Required Reading:
  • Dorn—Chapter 4
  • Fine—Chapters 3 and 4
Completion of Turnitin.com Training
Collect Questions

Session 3 - *Continuation of previous session*
Required Reading:
  • Dorn—Chapter 6
  • Fine—Chapters 5 and 7
Collect …

Session 4 – *Retention and attrition: What is the puzzle about?*
Required Reading:
  • Braxton—pages 1~80
Collect …
Draft #1 of your report (after submission to Turnitin.com)

Session 5 - *Continuation of previous session*
Required Reading:
  • Braxton—pages 81~156
  • Kuh et al.—Chapters 1, 3
Collect …

Session 6 - *Successful practices*
Required Reading:
  • Braxton—pages 157~256
  • Kuh at al. – Chapters 4, 7
No Questions Due …
MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Session 7 - *Continuation of previous session*
Required Reading:
  • Moxley et al.—Chapters 1 thru 5
  • Kuh at al. – Chapters 8 and 10

Session 8 - *Practical advise and conclusions*
Required Reading:
  • Moxley et al.—Chapters 6 thru 11
  • Kuh et al.—Chapter 6 and 13
Draft #2 of your report (after submission to Turnitin.com)
Brief oral presentation on your Report
Balancing retention and attrition: An essay on a modern Sisyphus

Background

It is early in the summer and as the VP/Student Affairs you have planned to take care of a myriad of ‘Pending’ issues you were not able to comprehensively address this past year. The President, on the other hand, has clear plans on how she wants you to spend your summer. The Prexy has become very concerned with the dropout rate. Last week she called you into her office and quickly informed you of your appointment as chair of The Campus Taskforce on Retention. She has given you little instructions on how to proceed aside from wanting your report by August 1, discussing the typical profile of students who leave your institution (profiles which are very familiar to you!) and presenting the Retention Plans of several colleges. These are your notes from your meeting with President Kogan-Morales.

 ✓ Profile No. 1

Michael VanAdams was a model student in high school--president of his senior class, captain of the varsity tennis team, and a straight-A student. So when he received an academic scholarship to your university, nobody was surprised--especially not VanAdams. Having excelled both academically and socially at his small high school in rural Florida, VanAdams expected more of the same in college. He was wrong.

VanAdams did poorly on his first couple of exams and even received a failing grade on his first term paper. Instead of asking his professors or classmates for help, VanAdams began to isolate himself, spending hours alone in his dorm room where he would play video games or send e-mails to friends back home. To make matters worse, he became homesick during his first weeks of college, longing for his high school friends and sweetheart, who was attending a community college.

"I did all the wrong things," says VanAdams. "Instead of seeing my first couple of failures as wake-up calls, I became depressed and immediately started passing the blame onto others. I told my parents that the professors were awful and didn't like me; I told my girlfriend that the kids who went there were snobs and no fun at all. Basically, I blamed everyone but myself."

VanAdams also told himself that the college wasn't for him. He dropped out a couple of weeks before completing his first semester. "Frankly, I wasn't properly prepared for college," he says. "I didn't go into my freshman year with the right attitude. At age 18, I thought I had the world figured out; I thought I could ace my college classes like in high school. I couldn't have been more off. I was failing three classes, and I didn't see the point of sticking around."

 ✓ Profile No. 2

One of the biggest decisions Andy Blevins has ever made, and one of the few he now regrets, never seemed like much of a decision at all. It just felt like the natural thing to do.

In the summer of 2006, he was moving boxes of soup cans, paper towels and dog food across the floor of a supermarket warehouse, one of the biggest buildings here in southwest Florida. The heat was brutal. The job had sounded impossible when he arrived fresh off his first year of college, looking to make some summer money, still a skinny teenager with black hair and a narrow face.
But hard work done well was something he understood, even if he was the first college boy in his family. Soon he was making bonuses on top of his $6.75 an hour, more money than either of his parents made. His girlfriend was around, and so were his hometown buddies. Andy acted more outgoing with them, more relaxed.

It was just about the perfect summer. So the thought crossed his mind: maybe it did not have to end. Maybe he would take a break from college and keep working. He had been getting C's and D's, and college never felt like home, anyway.

"I enjoyed working hard, getting the job done, getting a paycheck," Mr. Blevins recalled. "I just knew I didn't want to quit work...so, I quit college."

✓ Retention plans of various colleges (Year 2001):

**College of Arts and Sciences**
- College will appoint an recruitment and retention facilitator
- Efforts will be made to improve advising through the office of the Director of Advising.
- The College will endeavor to eliminate bottleneck courses with initial efforts directed at Chemistry and Math courses with particular focus on Engineering students and issues.

**College of Business**
- There will be an extensive effort toward enhancing student “belongingness”.
- All faculty members who teach 1000-level course have been asked to identify and contact students who appear to be having academic problems. Faculty members are also encouraged to report the information to advising staff.

**College of Education**
- The College has established specific and measurable retention goals for the current and next year. They aspire to increase retention of students in all graduate and undergraduate programs to 75% by Fall 2002.
- The College proposed that in September 2002 it was to begin collecting and distribute retention data within specific programs.

**College of Engineering**
- The College has established two goals for their retention initiatives: The freshman to sophomore retention rate will grow over the next four years to 75% retained within the college and 85% retained in the university; and six-year graduation rate will grow to 50%.
- Place students in the correct initial math course. Offer math, chemistry and physics sequences that assure students are competent in the needed math knowledge for them to be successful in the subsequent engineering science and engineering courses.
The Campus Taskforce on Retention:

XXX University/College Five-Year Retention Plan

Part One: The research and scholarship on retention efforts
- The historical and political basis of dropouts
- The names of at least two theorists in retention research and a brief summary of their assumptions, ideas or concepts
- Summary of 4 journal articles arguing (pro or con) some of the notions discussed by the two theorists you selected.

Part Two: Facts on XXX University/College
- Brief description of you institution
  - History
  - Mission Statement
  - Enrollment Data (Undergraduate and graduate, if applicable)
    - First time to college and transfer data
    - Average SAT/ACT; average high school GPA; number of Merit Scholars
  - Student to faculty ratio
  - Total number of degree programs and colleges
  - Total number of degree conferred
  - Total number of employees
    - Faculty: Full time/Part time
    - Executive/Administrative
    - Support Staff
    - Hourly Employees
  - Library Holdings

Part Three: Background and History of the Retention Efforts at XXX University/College
- Present three case scenarios of the typical student who dropouts at your institution. That is, you are to develop a profile of Jane or Dick making special mention if s/he belongs to a special population or is ‘at-risk.’ This profile will serve to illustrate the current data available at your institution and a possible strategy or plan of attack.
- History of Retention Efforts
  - Critique past retention efforts in terms of fortitude (robustness) vs. ineptitude (inadequacy). What has resulted from this tension?
- Objectives of the Taskforce
- The Issues
  - What appears to be the issues (concerns, problems, challenges, or opportunities) and their significance?
- Membership of the Taskforce
  - You must be as inclusive as possible but also conservative in the number of committee members. Who will you select? Why?

Part Four: Action Plan and Recommendations
- Five Year Retention Plan for undergraduate students at a campus-wide level.
  - The final part of your report should include your recommendations for the Prexy. Every recommendation you make should be based on and supported by the data on XXX
University/College, class textbooks and other scholarly resources (a minimum of 5). There is no point marshalling a list of seven or ten possible reasons why your institution should do this or that without making it clear which one(s) are strongly supported by research and/or the scholarly literature on this topic! Finally, make sure you have considered the alternatives to your recommendations. There is hardly ever just one single option available. Make sure your have made it clear why the recommendations you have chosen are the best of the available alternatives and make sure you have examined the downside of your options.

- Five Year Retention Plan for **three** departments in **two** colleges.

Part Five: Appendices

- Retention Data
  - Table 1. Create a table showing the first-and second-year drop-out rates for the 1999 and 2000 cohorts (university-wide)
  - Table 2. Create a set of tables showing the attrition rate at **two** colleges for the 1999 and 2000 cohorts
  - Table 3. Create a table showing the six-year graduation rate comparison at **seven** peer institutions.

**Sources used in the creation of the scenario for your report:**

Whitbourne, J. (2002). The dropout dilemma: One in four college freshmen drop out. What is going on here? What does it take to stay in? - Special Report. Careers and Colleges, from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0BTR/is_4_22/ai_84599442](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0BTR/is_4_22/ai_84599442)


**Structure of the Taskforce Report**

The report should have the following sections in this order:

1. Title page
2. Table of contents
3. Abstract or executive summary
4. Part One: The research and scholarship on retention efforts
5. Part Two: Facts on XXX University/College
6. Part Three: Background and History of the Retention Efforts at XXX University/College
7. Part Four: Action Plan and Recommendations
8. References: Your report should include a minimum of 9 citations (4 in Part One; 5 in Part Four). These citations will be appropriately listed, following APA Formatting and Style Guide (5th edition). ‘References.’
9. Appendices (a total of 3 tables)