

# **EDP 381: SEMINAR IN ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (unique #-10539) SPRING- 2015**

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Office Hours: Wed. 3pm to 4pm  
Thu. Noon to 1pm  
By appointment

Classroom- SZB-268

THURSDAYS 1 to 4 p.m.

## **Course Overview**

This graduate seminar has as its purpose the exploration and understanding of a broad spectrum of contemporary issues and challenges confronting the U.S. higher education system. Students enrolling in higher education programs are increasingly facing higher tuition costs as colleges receive less revenue from governmental sources and generate less interest from endowments. As a result, a higher percentage of students are leaving higher education programs with greater debt and finding it hard to secure an appropriate job in difficult economic times. Other critical issues such as low completion rates for students who enroll in higher education programs, underrepresentation of students from lower economic and diverse backgrounds, and inadequate readiness for the academic demands encountered in higher education are just a few of the major challenges institutions of higher education are facing. Collectively, these issues are contributing to a call for colleges to improve access and affordability as well as become more accountable for facilitating higher student graduation rates and verifying the knowledge and skills acquired during the college experience. These and other forces (online distance learning programs, etc.) contribute to the need for institutions of higher education to examine their academic, student affairs and business practices to improve student engagement and performance, streamline administrative systems to produce greater efficiency and ease of usage, revamp programs and services to focus resources on eliminating or ameliorating impediments to academic success and engage in other changes important to stakeholders. These forces are creating a climate of change, and institutions are examining policies, curriculum, and organizational priorities to improve outcomes.

## **Seminar methodology**

Since this is a seminar, it will rely more on understanding and critical analysis of assigned readings via in-class discussions than traditional lectures. Since much of what we learn in this course will occur in class, it is vital that you attend, come fully prepared and be mentally present in class. Additionally since I emphasize a collaborative as opposed to individual, competitive learning style, much of your preparatory work for each class will occur in small work groups. Each small work group will routinely have responsibility for preparing an issue for a vibrant in-seminar discussion.

My role as the instructor is primarily as a course organizer, knowledge and skills consultant, and facilitator to the learning process. I believe that problem-based learning helps us understand abstract ideas and conceptual models more clearly than strictly reading or lecture based approaches. Further I believe that collaborative problem-solving learning opportunities produce superior results in terms of the learning process and acquired skill as well as knowledge. To ensure we get the most we can from this seminar, we will need to develop a healthy classroom environment characterized by mutual trust and respect so that ideas can be freely exchanged, confusion clarified, and beliefs examined.

## **Rationale for Course**

Institutions of higher education find themselves in a highly competitive, rapidly changing environment in which various stakeholders in the higher education enterprise are calling for greater accountability. To respond to such challenges, colleges are having to become more nimble, examine long-standing business and academic practices, better engage students in academic and college community experiences, and help students overcome impediments to completion of degree programs.

Those who are contemplating working in higher education will need to have the skills and temperament to work in an environment that is undergoing substantial change. In times of change people who are good at collaborating on tasks, problem-solving, resolving conflicts and understanding the dynamics of organizational change, often prosper by creating career advancement opportunities and helping their institution move in productive directions.

## **Seminar Aims and Objectives**

- To understand the history of higher education in the U.S. and become aware of how that history impacts current day practices
- To learn about key critical issues that will drive change in institutional policies and practices
- To develop a greater understanding of organizational change process and to help participate productively in change efforts
- To become more skillful in resolving conflicts and promoting effective problem-solving
- To learn how to promote student engagement with the academic mission, cultural and social life of the college community
- To understand how public policy, legislative powers, institutional policy and rule-making authority are used to create desirable changes
- To be aware of how changes in revenue sources impact access and affordability of higher education
- To be able to help institutions continue to successfully transition from mono-cultural to multicultural to diverse educational environments that promote equal opportunity for success for all
- To be aware of federal legislation and judicial rulings that impact how problems can or must be addressed
- To understand how budget processes and revenue streams impact academic and student life issues
- To begin acquisition of a broad and flexible, yet focused, set of intervention skills to enrich your impact as a practitioner.
- To expand your opportunities to work in a variety of the settings.
- To become more skillful in addressing ethical dilemmas and conceptual challenges often encountered in higher education settings

## **Attendance is Essential**

Since much of what we learn in this seminar will be sharpened by in-class discussion and analysis, it is vital that you attend and be mentally present in class. In addition since I plan to use guest

speakers as well as sub-groups of students who will have responsibility for shaping the quality and nature of our in-class discussions group, it is vital that you attend regularly.

If you miss a class, you will be expected to consult with your classmates to learn the material you missed and to review the material posted for that class on Blackboard. Should you miss more than one class, you will need to contact me to demonstrate that you are keeping up to date with the rest of your classmates. My intent with this policy is not to be punitive, but rather to reassure myself that you are on the right path to becoming a responsible professional practitioner. I do understand that religious holy days, family emergencies, and personal illnesses may contribute to your missing a class. However, missing class will not alter my expectations that you will turn in assignments by the date specified in the syllabus.

### **Being Prepared for Each Seminar is Essential**

All reading assignments are to be completed in advance of the dates assigned. You are expected to come to the seminar prepared to take part in a discussion about the information and concepts at the heart of the assigned readings.

Reading assignments for this course will originate from three sources: your instructor, guest seminar leaders/presenters, and student task force leaders.

**College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be by Andrew Delbanco is the textbook for the course.**

### **Evaluation Schema**

Your performance in this seminar and subsequent letter grade will be determined by how well you do in meeting the standards associated with the four major performance elements outlined below. The four performance areas are as follows:

- Seminar Participation and engagement (30%)
  - Active and thoughtful participation in seminar discussions along with prior preparation for each seminar topic will account for 20% of your grade. You are to read and think carefully about all assigned documents prior to coming to each seminar meeting

and come prepared to raise a question, issue or dilemma stimulated by what you have read. Periodically through out the semester, I will use the last five minutes of the seminar meeting to have you write a three-paragraph document giving your point-of-view on the questions, issues and/or dilemmas that were discussed during the seminar meeting.

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- Mid-term paper (10%)
  - For this paper you are to choose what you believe to be a critical unresolved issue in higher education. Your paper should describe the potential consequences should the issue remain unaddressed for the foreseeable future. The paper should also describe the history and current status of the issue as well as how higher education stakeholder groups are currently impacted and how they will benefit from its resolution. In addition, describe the forces/factors/constraints that contribute to making the issue difficult to resolve. Cite relevant sources as necessary to buttress your point-of-view. Limit your paper to no more than 5 double-spaced typed pages.
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- Task Force Performance and participation (40%)
  - A significant emphasis is placed on collaboration and teamwork in this seminar. During the semester you will be a member of two task forces, each of which will be assigned a salient and unresolved issue whose resolution is critical to the future of higher education. Your task force will have responsibility for the following: identifying and assigning documents that seminar participants are required to read and come prepared to discuss in class; focusing and structuring robust in-seminar discussions on the issue; and presenting information on the forces and factors that contribute to making this issue difficult to resolve.
  - Since much of the work of the task forces will occur outside the view of the seminar instructor, peer evaluations of task force member performance will be an important part of determining your performance in this area.
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- Critical Issue Final Paper (20%)

- On April 9<sup>th</sup> I will give you the topic for your final term project. The purpose of this project is to provide you an opportunity to synthesize and integrate the knowledge and competencies you have developed during the semester and apply them to an important contemporary issue in higher education. The paper cannot exceed 10 double-spaced typewritten pages including references and is due no later than midnight on the May 7, 2015.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE-2015**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT</b>
1-22-15	Overview of seminar structure, establishment of task forces (TF) dealing with contemporary/critical issues in HE, TF preparation time	No assignment
1-29-15	Guest presenter Steven Mintz Executive Director of the Institute for Transformational Learning, UT System Task Force time to prepare to lead seminar discussions	Read chapters 1, 2 and 3 in College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be
2-5-15	Task Force preparation time , Prepare seminar facilitation outline (due 2/9)	Read chapters 4, 5, and 6 in College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be
2-12-15	Guest presenter David Spight Assistant Dean, School of Undergraduate Studies, TF time to prepare for seminar discussions	Documents to be read by class to be determined by guest presenter
2-19-15	Guest presenter Gage Payne Vice-President for Student Affairs TF time to prepare for seminar discussions	Documents to be read by class to be determined by guest presenter
2-26-15	Guest presenter Charles Roeckle Deputy to the President Task Force #1 facilitates seminar discussion	To be supplied by guest presenter
3-5-15	Guest presenters Lara Harlan and Laura Weingarten, School of Undergraduate Studies, Task Force #2 facilitates seminar	Readings to prepare for task force facilitated discussion will be determined and indicated

	discussion	at least 1 week before the discussion
3-12-15	Task Forces # 3 & 4 facilitate seminar discussions	Readings to be determined by TF and indicated at least 1 week before class discussion
3-19-15	SPRING BREAK	
3-26-15	Suzanne Schwartz, UT Law School presents on mediation and conflict resolution, Task force preparation time	Documents to be supplied by guest presenter
4-2-15	Guest presenter Tom Melecki Director, Student Financial Services Task force preparation time	Documents to be read by class to be determined by guest presenter
4-9-15	Guest presenter Task force # 4 leads seminar discussion	Documents to be read by class to be determined by TFs 1 week before class
4-16-15	Guest presenter Task force # 3 leads seminar discussion	Documents to be read by class to be determined by TFs 1 week before class
4-23-15	Floyd Hoelting, Hemlata Jhavari, & Gloria Allen, Office of Residential Life (3pm) Task forces # 1 & 2 lead seminar discussions	TBD by guest presenters/discussants
4-30-15	Critical skill #2- Understanding organizational change, management and leadership	Documents to be supplied by professor
5-7-15	Continued discussion of organizational change, management and leadership Course wrap-up	TERM PROJECTS DUE

## **Important Statements**

### **The University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### **University Electronic Mail Notification Policy**

#### **(Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence to Students)**

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to

changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html>.

In this course e-mail will be used as a means of communication with students. You will be responsible for checking your e-mail regularly for class work and announcements. Note: If you are an employee of the University, your e-mail address in Blackboard is your employee address.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

In compliance with the UT Austin policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

### **Documented Disability Statement for Syllabus**

Students who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259- voice or 471-4641 – TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed. See Web site below for more information: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php>

### **Use of Blackboard in Classes**

This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. (Student enrollments in each course are updated each evening.) Blackboard can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to take online quizzes and surveys.

You will be responsible for checking the Blackboard course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Blackboard login page. Scheduled downtimes are **not** an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime

for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date.

Blackboard is available at <http://courses.utexas.edu>. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.

### **Religious Holidays**

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time **after** the absence. It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that **you must notify each of your instructors at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent** to observe a religious holy day.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is an important part of any learning. Without feedback on how well you understand the material or your proficiency in a skill, it is more difficult to make significant progress. During this course I will be asking you to give me feedback on your learning in informal as well as formal ways. Please let me know when something we discuss is not clear. It will enable me to provide additional information when needed or to explain a concept in different terms.