



LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

## **ELRC 7890: Retention & Student Success Summer 2021 (May 24 – June 26, 2021)**

### **Monday & Wednesday, 4:30 – 8:00 p.m.**

In-Person Class Sessions on Mondays: 5/24, 6/7, 6/14, 6/21

- Room: 19 Allen Hall

Virtual Class Sessions on Wednesdays: 5/26, 6/2, 6/9, 6/16, 6/23

- Zoom link: <https://lsu.zoom.us/j/98254128136>

### **Instructor**

Ashley B. Clayton, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Higher Education

School of Education

Office: 223E Peabody Hall

Email: [aclayton@lsu.edu](mailto:aclayton@lsu.edu)

Virtual office hours: Tuesdays 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. <https://lsu.zoom.us/j/2414150460>

---

### **Course Description**

This course provides an overview of higher education strategies and policies used to promote student retention and success. A range of topics related to retention and success in higher education will be covered, including retention programs, retention theory, best practices of retention, the college completion agenda, and factors that impact retention and success of specific populations of students.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- Articulate the theoretical and conceptual models pertaining to student retention and success in college
- Understand the factors that impact retention and success for specific student populations
- Examine programs and policies focused on college student retention and success
- Identify and explore a research question relative to the study of college student retention, success, and/or graduation.

### **Course Website**

The course website is located on Moodle: <https://moodle.lsu.edu>. The course website includes the syllabus, course materials, and assignments. You will submit all assignments via Moodle, except when directed to do otherwise. For help with Moodle, contact the ITS Help Desk at 225-578-3375 or [helpdesk@lsu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@lsu.edu).

## Required Texts

Castleman, B. L., Schwartz, S., & Baum, S. (2015). *Decision making for student success: Behavioral insights to improve college access and persistence*. Routledge.

Feldman, R. (Ed.). (2017). *The first year of college: Research, theory, and practice on improving the student experience and increasing retention*. Cambridge University Press.

Perna, L. W., & Jones, A. P. (Eds.). (2013). *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups*. Routledge.

## Supplemental Texts

American Psychological Association (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Author.

## LSU E-Textbooks Initiative

“At the heart of LSU Libraries' mission is the goal of providing access to resources essential for teaching and learning. To that end, the e-textbook initiative provides students with quick access to course materials available for free through LSU Libraries. It also provides instructors with an easy-to-use search tool to identify e-books that the Libraries either already owns or can purchase for use in courses.” **Required textbooks for this course are available in e-textbook format and can be easily accessed through the Moodle site or at <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/ebooks>.**

## Online Resources

Several online resources are useful for class discussions and assignments:

- Chronicle of Higher Education: College Completion Rates  
<https://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/>
- Complete College America  
<https://completecollege.org/>
- Lumina Foundation – Goal 2025  
<https://www.luminafoundation.org/>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)  
<https://nces.ed.gov>
- NCES College Navigator  
<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>
- NCES Graduation Rates  
<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40>
- TRIO Programs  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>

## **LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community**

Louisiana State University adopted the Commitment to Community in 1995 to set forth guidelines for student behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. The Commitment to Community charges students to maintain high standards of academic and personal integrity. All students are expected to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found online at [www.lsu.edu/saa](http://www.lsu.edu/saa). It is your responsibility as a student at LSU to know and understand the academic standards for our community.

Students who are suspected of violating the Code of Conduct will be referred to the office of Student Advocacy & Accountability. For undergraduate students, a first academic violation could result in a zero grade on the assignment or failing the class and disciplinary probation until graduation. For a second academic violation, the result could be suspension from LSU. For graduate students, suspension is the appropriate outcome for the first offense.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Louisiana State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request.

Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to speak with Disability Services and the instructor, as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. This publication/material is available in alternative formats upon request. Please contact Disability Services in 115 Johnston Hall, 225-578-5919 or <https://www.lsu.edu/disability/>.

## **Attendance Policy**

As a courtesy to others, please arrive on time for class and let me know if you need to leave early or will be absent for any reason (e.g., illness, personal or family issue, or attendance at a professional conference). **If you miss more than one class, you will lose all 20 participation points (10% of your final grade).**

## **Laptops and Cell Phones**

Laptops may be used at the discretion of the instructor. Using social media, emailing, and other communications are not allowed during class. If I judge computer usage distracting or if I notice students doing things other than course-related activities, I will ban computers from class temporarily or for the rest of the semester.

All mobile devices should be turned on silent/vibrate during class sessions and should be put away. Do not use cellphones (including texting) during class time. I know that some of you have jobs, family responsibilities, and/or personal situations that require you to be “on call.” If you are in that situation, please put your phone on vibrate and leave the class if you receive a call.

## **Covid-19 Statement**

We remain under pandemic conditions and expect to be in this state for the entire semester. In order to consistently provide the highest quality LSU education, all students should follow current LSU guidelines. These include the following:

1. Complete the Daily Symptom Checker to determine whether or not you can attend the in-person class meetings.
2. In order to protect all campus community members, the University requires everyone to wear facemasks/cloths on campus. Failure to do so is a violation of the code of student conduct.
3. Wash hands with soap and water or clean with sanitizer frequently, and refrain from touching your face.
4. If you have to cough or sneeze, please be mindful of others nearby and cough or sneeze into your elbow or shield yourself the best you can.
5. If you have been exposed to others who have tested positive for Covid-19, self-quarantine consistent with current CDC guidelines.

If you cannot attend class due to Covid-19 concerns, contact the instructor immediately to coordinate your virtual attendance/makeup assignment.

## **Title IX and Sexual Misconduct**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the gender of students and employees of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance.

In accordance with Title IX and other applicable law, Louisiana State University (“LSU”) is committed to providing a learning, working, and living environment that promotes integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual misconduct which includes sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and retaliation. LSU prohibits sex discrimination and sexual misconduct. This policy applies to all persons without regard to sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

## Course Evaluation

Course assignments and their weight toward your final grade are below:

Assignment	Percentage	Points
1. Participation & Professionalism	10%	20 points
2. Retention and Success Policy Brief	15%	30 points
3. Quizzes (5 required)	25%	50 points
4. Mini-Reports (5 total)	25%	50 points
5. Institutional Retention Case Study	25%	50 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200 points</b>

## Expectations for Written Assignments

**All written work should adhere to APA style as described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.).** Use title pages in accordance with APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition format. Assignments should be double-spaced, use 12-point Times New Roman font, have 1-inch margins on all sides, and be carefully edited prior to submission. All papers and journal entries should include appropriate running head, page numbers, title page, and reference page. Please submit all written assignments in a Word doc format (PDFs are not accepted).

## Late Work

Late work will receive 10% off per day beyond the due date (one letter grade). Late work will not be accepted three days (72 hours) past the due date. Note: Quizzes will not be accepted late.

## Assignments

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due on Monday or Wednesday before class (4:30 p.m.) on the date specified. **Submit all assignments on Moodle.**

### 1. Participation and Professionalism (10%)

Self-Assessment Due: June 23

Participation and professionalism points are determined through individual class attendance, participation, active listening, preparation, and contribution. Our class will function best when everyone contributes to the conversation. Professionals in higher education value collaboration, civility, mutual assistance, and appreciation of differences, and students are expected to exhibit these characteristics. This includes paying attention when others are speaking or presenting, giving (& receiving) honest and appropriate feedback, and maintaining a positive attitude. To foster a meaningful learning environment and to develop habits that lead to success in the professional world of higher education administration, all students must engage in professional behavior. Please view this course as an opportunity to exercise and hone these skills and dispositions. Therefore, failure to adhere to class policies, excessive absences/tardiness, disruptive or distracting behavior, and failure to plan outside activities to avoid conflicts with the activities outlined in the syllabus will adversely impact your grade.

The instructor will assign participation and professionalism points at their discretion; however, each student will submit a self-assessment of their class participation and professionalism as well to help inform the final participation and professionalism score.

### 2. Retention and Success Policy Brief (15%)

Due: June 18 by midnight

Each of you enrolled in this course because of a particular connection to the topic through your background and experience and/or a genuine desire to learn more about current issues related to retention and success in higher education. Students will prepare an issue brief that integrates theory and practice, by exploring the background and context of a particular retention/success/completion issue and providing recommendations for how to respond to this issue through policy, practice, or research. All policy briefs should be 5-6 pages of content (excluding title page and references) and include *at least* 10 references.

A well-developed policy brief should include the following 3 sections:

1. Overview of the issue/inequity/problem (1.5 – 2 pages)
  - Provide context and importance of the issue/inequity/problem
2. Review of current policies/approaches to issue (1.5 – 2 pages)
3. Policy/Practice/Research recommendations (2 – 3 pages)
  - Include a subsection with a bulleted list of 5 recommended resources

### 3. Quizzes (25%)

Due: Weekly (5 quizzes)

There will be a quiz every week, which will include short-answer, multiple choice, matching, and true-false questions from the required weekly readings. All quizzes will have approximately 15 total questions (5 per reading). Quizzes will be available at least 1 week in advance and must be completed prior to class on the due date. You will have 1 hour to complete each quiz (except for Quiz 3 which you will have 2 hours to complete) and only are allowed 1 attempt. You can use your readings and notes during the quiz, but cannot work with other students. **There are 6 opportunities to take a quiz, and only 5 are required.** If you choose to take all 6 quizzes, your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Each quiz is worth 10 points.

### 4. Mini-Reports (25%)

Due: Weekly (5 mini-reports)

You will be asked to work on 5 short assignments related to college student retention and completion. These assignments will help you have a better understanding of current statistics and factors related to student retention. **All 5 mini-reports are required.** The reports vary from 1-2 pages in length. Each mini-report is worth 10 points.

### 5. Institutional Retention Case Study [IRCS] (25%)

Due: On June 21 or 23

You will enrich your understanding of retention and completion issues by frequently making connections between principles discussed in class and real-world situations. For this assignment, you will be assigned to a group of 3-5 students. Each group will select a specific college (e.g., community college, 4-year public, 4-year private, etc.) to present as a retention and completion case. The core of this assignment is to understand how an institution is addressing retention and completion, and relate this to the course readings (from any week). In other words, you will not present or summarize the readings; you will apply the readings to a current retention problem, issue, or concern at the selected institution. It is important that you identify a specific program or policy that addresses retention and completion. You are encouraged to set up an informational interview or email an administrator at the institution to better inform your understanding of the case. Your presentation should be approximately 30 minutes.

Your presentation should include the following (more instructions will be provided):

1. A brief description of the college or university.
2. Critical issues facing this institution in regards to student retention, success, and/or completion. The likely source of these current issues would be a news article from the popular press (e.g., Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed).
3. Description of a specific and current strategy, practice, program, or policy to address college retention or completion problem.
4. Insights the course readings provide into the problem/issue.
5. Concluding thoughts, applications, and implications.

## Grading Scale

A+	98-100%
A	93-97.9%
A-	90-92.9%
B+	87-89.9%
B	83-86.9%
B-	80-82.9%
C+	77-79.9%
C	73-76.9%
C-	70-72.9%
D	65-69.9%
F	below 65%
IN	incomplete

## Grading Rubric

Each assignment will be given a letter grade and an associated point value in accordance with the quality it reflects:

- A+** Outstanding. Work at this level is extraordinary and exceeds expectations for the assignment. **Work is without error.**
- A** Excellent. Impressive work for a graduate student. Work at this level is thorough, well-reasoned, and creative. Work is of exceptional quality and has minimal errors.
- A-** Very Good. Strong work for a graduate student that shows signs of creativity and is generally thorough and well-reasoned but evidences a few errors and/or minor conceptual weaknesses.
- B+** Good. Sound work for a graduate student that meets the basic objectives of the assignment and demonstrates a general understanding of and application of concepts. Work has some errors and/or conceptual weaknesses.
- B** Adequate. Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates most of the basic objectives of the assignment but indicates that understanding of some concepts is less than complete. Work evidences strengths in some areas, but these are offset by errors or conceptual weaknesses in other areas.
- B-** Borderline. Weak work for a graduate student. Work meets the minimal expectations for the assignment, but understanding of salient concepts is somewhat incomplete and work evidences errors in several areas.
- C** Inadequate. Work does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important concepts.

## Anticipated Course Schedule

*The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviation announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*

Week	Dates	Location	Topic	Assignments Due
1	May 24	19 Allen	Course Introduction	APA Template Mini-Report 1
	May 26	Zoom	Challenges in Retention & Success	Quiz 1
2	May 31		<i>No Class – Memorial Day</i>	<i>Get ahead on Quizzes and Mini-Reports</i>
	June 2	Zoom	Retention & Success Theories	Quiz 2 Mini-Report 2
3	June 7	19 Allen	Student Populations	Quiz 3 (essay format) Mini-Report 3
	June 9	Zoom	First-Year Experience & Transition	Quiz 4 Mini-Report 4
4	June 14	19 Allen	Institutional Action	Quiz 5 Mini-Report 5
	June 16	Zoom	Student Success Solutions	Quiz 6 Retention Brief (Due 6/18)
5	June 21	19 Allen	Next Steps in Retention & Success	Case Study Presentations
	June 23	Zoom	Course Wrap-up	Case Study Presentations Participation Self- Assessment

## Detailed Course Schedule

### Week 1 – Introduction

---

**May 24**  
Week 1

#### **Course Introduction**

Required readings:

- Lumina Foundation (2021). Louisiana's report 2021. In *A Stronger Nation: Learning Beyond High School Builds American Talent*. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/2021/#state/LA>
- Lumina Foundation (2021). National report 2019. In *A Stronger Nation: Learning Beyond High School Builds American Talent*. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/2021/#nation>
- National Student Clearinghouse: Research Center. (2020). First year persistence and retention 2018 beginning cohort. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/PersistenceRetention2020.pdf>

Due:

- APA Template (not graded)
- Mini-Report 1: Retention & Graduation Rates

**May 26**  
Week 1

#### **Challenges in Retention and Success**

Required readings:

- Andrews, C., & Schulze, R. (2018). Challenges in retention and access. In J. L. Blanchard (Ed.), *Controversies on campus: Debating the issues confronting American universities in the 21st Century* (pp. 44-63). Praeger.
- Berger, J. B., Ramírez, G. B., & Lyons, S. (2012). Past to present: A historical look at retention. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success* (pp. 7-34). Rowan and Littlefield Publishers.
- Hossler, D., Dundar, A., & Shapiro, D. (2013). Longitudinal pathways to college persistence and completion: Student, institutional, and public policy perspectives. In L.W. Perna & A.P. Jones (Eds.), *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups* (pp. 140-165). Routledge.

Due:

- Quiz 1

## Week 2

---

**May 31**

Week 2

### **No Class – Memorial Day**

Suggestion:

- Get ahead on Mini-Reports and Journals/Quizzes

**June 2**

Week 2

### **Retention and Success Theories**

Required readings:

- Braxton, J. M., Doyle, W. R., Hartley III, H. V., Hirschy, A. S., Jones, W. A., & McLendon, M. K. (2013). *Rethinking College Student Retention*. Jossey-Bass. [read Chapter 4]
- Melguizo, T. (2011). A review of the theories developed to describe the process of persistence and attainment. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 24, pp. 321-358). Springer Publishing.
- Morrison, L., & Silverman, L. (2012). Retention theories, models, and concepts. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success* (pp. 61-80). Rowan and Littlefield Publishers.

Due:

- Quiz 2
- Mini-Report 2: College Completion by State & Sector

## Week 3

---

**June 7**

Week 3

### **Student Populations**

\*3 total readings (1 required plus 2 of your choice)

Required Reading:

- Barbera, S. A., Berkshire, S. D., Boronat, C. B., & Kennedy, M. H. (2020). Review of undergraduate student retention and graduation since 2010: Patterns, predictions, and recommendations for 2020. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 22(2), 227-250.

Read **ONE** of the following:

- Clayton, A. B., Means, D. R., Breeden, R., Bostick, D., & Jackson, P. "Safety net" for college students experiencing food and housing insecurity: A campus-based resource case study [Paper presentation]. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2021, Virtual.
- Griffin, K. A., & Gilbert, C. K. (2015). Better transitions for troops: An application of Schlossberg's transition framework to analyses of barriers and institutional support structures for student veterans. *Journal of Higher Education*, 86(1), 71-97.

- Sack, A. L., Park, E., & Thiel, R. (2011). Watch the gap: Explaining retention gaps between FBS football players and the general student body. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 4, 55-73.
- Toutkoushian, R. K., May-Trifiletti, J. A., & Clayton, A. B. (2021). From “first in family” to “first to finish”: Does college graduation vary by how first-generation college status is defined? *Educational Policy*, 35(3), 481-521.
- Tucker, K., Sharp, G., Qingmin, S., Scinta, T., & Thanki, S. (2020). Fostering historically underserved students’ success: An embedded peer support model that merges non-cognitive principles with proven academic support practices. *The Review of Higher Education*, 43(3), 861-885.

Read **ONE** of the following:

- Duran, A., Grace, E., & Molinar, G. (2021). Advancing asset-based practices for Latinx/a/o college students: The application of community cultural wealth theory. In N. M. Garcia, C. Salinas Jr., & J. Cisneros (Eds.), *Studying Latinx/a/o students in higher education: A critical analysis of concepts, theory, and methodologies* (pp. 56-67). Routledge.
- Lopez, J. D. (2018). Factors influencing American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary persistence: AI/AN millennium falcon persistence model. *Research in Higher Education*, 59(3), 4-23.
- Palmer, R.T., & Maramba, D.C. (2015). The impact of social capital on the access, adjustment, and success of southeast Asian American college students. *Journal of College Student Development* 56(1), 45-60.
- Quaye, S. J., Griffin, K. A., & Museus, S. D. (2015). Engaging students of color. In S. R. Harper & S. J. Quaye (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (pp. 15-35). Routledge.

Due:

- Quiz 3
- Mini-Report 3: UT Austin Case Study

June 9  
Week 3

### First-Year Experience and Transition

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Jennifer Keup, Exec. Director, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, UofSC**

Required readings:

- Koch, A., & Gardner, J. (2017). Transforming the “real” first-year experience: The case for and approaches to improving gateway courses. In Feldman, R. (Ed.), *The first year of college: Research, theory, and practice on improving the student experience and increasing retention* (pp. 126-154). Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, M. M., & Clayton, A. B. (2021). An open-admissions summer bridge program: The impact on first-year student success. *Journal of The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition*, 33(1), 75-97.
- Skipper, T. L. (2017). *What makes the first-year seminar high impact? An exploration of effective educational practices*. (Research Reports No. 7). University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition.
  - Read Introduction (pp. 7-22) & one case study of your choice

Optional readings on FYS:

- Culver, K. C., & Bowman, N. A. (2020). Is What Glitters Really Gold? A Quasi-Experimental Study of First-Year Seminars and College Student Success. *Research in Higher Education*, 61(2), 167-196.
- Keup, J., & Young, D. (2017). Investigating the first-year seminar as a high-impact practice. In R. Feldman (Ed.), *The first year of college: Research, theory, and practice on improving the student experience and increasing retention* (pp. 93-125). Cambridge University Press.

Due:

- Quiz 4
- Mini-Report 4: High-Impact Practices

### Week 4

---

June 14  
Week 4

### Institutional Action

**Guest Speaker: Becca Hubbard, Director, Retention & Student Success**

Required readings:

- Braxton, J. M., Doyle, W. R., Hartley III, H. V., Hirschy, A. S., Jones, W. A., & McLendon, M. K. (2013). *Rethinking College Student Retention*. Jossey-Bass. [read Chapter 3]
- Tinto, V. (2012). *Completing college: Rethinking institutional action*. University of Chicago Press. [read Chapters 1 & 7]
- Tinto, V. (2012). Moving from theory to action: A model for institutional action for student success. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success* (pp. 251-266). Rowan and Littlefield Publishers.

Due:

- Quiz 5
- Mini-Report 5: Retention Plan

**June 16**  
Week 4

### **Student Success Solutions**

Required readings:

- Castleman, B., & Meyer, K. (2017). Nudges, norms, and navigation: Behavioral insights to improve student success. In R. Feldman (Ed.), *The first year of college: Research, theory, and practice on improving the student experience and increasing retention* (pp. 249- 276). Cambridge University Press.
- Frankfort, J., O'Hara, R. E., & Salim, K. (2015). Behavioral nudges for college success: Research, impact, and possibilities. In B. L. Castleman, S. Schwartz, & S. Baum (Eds.), *Decision making for student success: Behavioral insights to improve college access and persistence* (pp. 143-161). Routledge.

Read **ONE** of the following:

- Melguizo, T., Kienzl, G., & Kosiewicz, H. (2013). The potential of community colleges to increase bachelor's degree attainment rates. In L.W. Perna & A.P. Jones (Eds.), *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups* (pp. 115-139). Routledge.
- Museus, S. D., Yi, V., & Saelua, N. (2017). The impact of culturally engaging campus environments on sense of belonging. *The Review of Higher Education*, 40(2), 187-215.
- Schudde, L. T. (2011). The causal effect of campus residency on college student retention. *The Review of Higher Education*, 34(4), 581-610.
- Shireman, R. M., & Price, J. A. (2015). Prepare for class, attend, and participate! Incentives and student success in college. In B. L. Castleman, S. Schwartz, & S. Baum (Eds.), *Decision making for student success: Behavioral insights to improve college access and persistence* (pp. 124-142). Routledge.

Due:

- Quiz 6
- Issues in Retention Brief (due Friday June 18 at midnight)

## Week 5

---

**June 21**

Week 5

### **Next Steps in Retention and Success**

Required readings:

- Perna, L. W. (2013). Improving college access, persistence, and completion: Lessons learned. In L.W. Perna & A.P. Jones (Eds.), *The state of college access and completion: Improving college success for students from underrepresented groups* (pp. 208- 224). Routledge.
- More readings TBD

Due:

- Case Study Presentations

**June 23**

Week 5

### **Course Wrap-Up**

Due:

- Case Study Presentations
- Participation & Professionalism Self-Assessment