Oral Defense Announcement

University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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M.Ed., in Adult and Higher Education, May 2013, University of Missouri-St. Louis
M.A. in Communication, May 2012, University of Missouri-St. Louis
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Student Retention through Decision Making and Withdrawal: The Importance of Course Scheduling in Higher Education

Date: October 30, 2023
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Place: Remote

Abstract
Student retention is a fundamental issue in higher education, with student decision-making and withdrawal at the forefront of examining that issue. Researchers have studied the personal and academic factors influencing student retention but often overlook institutional factors, such as the course scheduling process. This research study examined how the course schedule can impact degree-seeking students at a state-funded, 4-year institution by exploring the correlation between class standing and the importance of how courses are scheduled, the correlation between class standing and the ability to register for a required course, and what factors predict a student’s decision to withdraw from the university. A cross-sectional electronic survey, developed using the institution’s prior class scheduling and parking survey, was modified following a pilot study to test the questions and yielded 496 responses. Longitudinal data from the institution’s Withdrawal Survey yielded over 3,540 responses. Using Pearson’s chi-square test and Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact test, significant relationships were found between class standing and scheduling courses around one’s work schedule, family obligations, and in a preferred format. Binomial logistic regression analysis determined which factors most predicted someone withdrawing and not returning or withdrawing and transferring. The findings revealed the following factors as significant for withdrawing and not returning as well as withdrawing and transferring: a change in work schedule, relocating for a job, dissatisfaction with the major department, and a major course not being available. The findings indicate that course scheduling is crucial to student decision-making and withdrawal. Universities should focus on improving student retention by using an intentional, student-centric model of course scheduling as the foundation of their institutional scheduling process.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
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Dr. Gwendolyn Turner, Ed.D.
Dr. Kathleen Haywood, Ph.D.