

# Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education Dissertation Abstracts 2011

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**PATRICIA WOTILA CROOM, 2011**

**INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT: THE LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE**

**ABSTRACT**

Internationalization plays an increasingly important role in many universities today. Not only do institutions engage in efforts to inject an international component into the curriculum and to expand study abroad, but also undertake more complex partnerships and forms of cross-border education, in some cases with significant risk. The expanding scope of internationalization raises questions as to how such initiatives fit within the institution's mission and overall strategy. This qualitative case study examined how a large, public, research-extensive, land-grant university framed various forms of internationalization and who was involved in these decisions. This study also considered how this institution approached the opportunity to open a branch campus relative to other strategic international decisions.

Administrators at this university understood internationalization to be important for a land-grant institution in today's global world. Traditional forms of internationalization, such as study abroad, tended to have more bottom-up participation, whereas larger, cross-unit initiatives evidenced significant senior leadership involvement. The findings highlight the critical role of leadership in furthering a strategic international agenda. Ensuring sustainability of strategic international initiatives was also important. In addition, the study revealed the institution approached the opportunity to open an international branch campus differently than many other initiatives, in a nearly confidential manner. Although the institution did not proceed with the international branch campus, the institution's approach to that opportunity raised questions about whom leaders involve in such decisions and when.

The institution's leadership emphasized creating a "global presence," which many understood to imply raising rankings and creating an international brand. This focus on international image and ratings versus more traditional internationalization and capacity building calls into question the tie of such efforts to institutional mission and the implications for global higher education more generally.

**NETTAVIA DOREEN CURRY, 2011**

**MENTORING AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE DOCTORAL STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the impact mentoring relationships, between African American women doctoral students and faculty members, has on the students' professional identity development. Of particular interest is an examination of whether matched mentoring relationships between African American women doctoral students and African American female faculty members impact the professional identity of African American graduate students. The theoretical frameworks guiding this study are critical race theory and black feminist thought. Critical race theory and black feminist thought establish the foundation for this study. This examination of African American women doctoral students' mentoring experiences and perceptions of their professional identity development allows these women to tell their story in their own words. Sixteen African American female doctoral students across various academic disciplines in the social sciences, humanities and education participated in this qualitative investigation. Semi-structured interviews were employed with African American female doctoral students to gain this insight and understanding on their mentoring experiences, professional identity development and satisfaction with their doctoral education experience. Findings indicate that African American female doctoral students involved in mentoring relationships are more engaged in professional development activities that address their professional identity or feel more supported in their efforts to explore and solidify their professional identity and career trajectory. Implications and recommendations for doctoral programs and faculty are discussed.

**BERNADETTE J. FRIEDRICH, 2011**

**FACTORS RELATING TO FACULTY ENGAGEMENT IN COOPERATIVE ENGINEERING EDUCATION**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that may relate to engineering faculty engagement in Cooperative Education (Co-op). My intent was to identify specific personal attributes and environmental conditions that relate to faculty engagement in cooperative education. I compared the engagement level of engineering faculty from programs with similar characteristics. A web-based instrument was used to survey faculty from ten universities. Follow-up interviews were completed with select faculty survey respondents. The selection process guaranteed a blend of faculty representing two institutions, one high in faculty engagement, and one low in faculty engagement. The faculty from each institution represented both high and low levels of engagement.

Findings from this study indicated some significant factors that relate to faculty engagement in co-op. The statistical analysis showed a positive relationship between the faculty co-op engagement score and the respondents' engineering (industry-related, outside of higher education) work experience. The other personal attributes or experiences examined, major/engineering discipline, academic rank, or years of teaching had no statistically significant relationship to level of co-op engagement.

The analysis indicated a positive relationship between level of engagement and the perceived level of environmental support for co-op from the department, college, and the institution. The research did indicate that faculty who feel that they are adequately compensated for engaging in co-op are actually less likely to be involved, and as the faculty level of engagement increases, faculty are more likely to perceive that compensation is not adequate. Overall, co-op is valued by the survey respondents. A majority of the faculty surveyed indicated that: (1) students benefit from cooperative education; (2) co-op enhances the quality of the interaction between students and faculty; (3) classroom learning is enhanced by cooperative education; and (4) co-op helps students to understand engineering concepts. However, the findings show that valuing co-op does not necessarily translate into faculty engaging in co-op activities. Finally, the research tells us that faculty engagement in co-op is not an indicator of student participation in co-op.

College and university administrators need to evaluate their orientation procedures and promotion and tenure practices in relation to their support of cooperative education activities. Co-op program administrators also have opportunities to enhance faculty engagement in cooperative education through several additional actions. One strategy for increasing faculty engagement in co-op is through educating faculty regarding their co-op program, student experiences in co-op, and benefits to students, the college, and the faculty.

There has not been any published research related to the visibility of the co-op program within the colleges and the influence that may have on student participation. We may also need to consider the reputation of the co-op program among students and employers and the availability of co-op positions within the region, just to name a few of the factors that may contribute to strong student participation in co-op, with or without strong faculty engagement in cooperative education activities.

**SCOTT HIRKO, 2011**

**USING SANCTIONED ATHLETICS PROGRAMS TO UNDERSTAND STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEIVED INFLUENCE IN DECISIONS AT MAJOR RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES**

**ABSTRACT**

This study set out to learn more about the perceived influence of stakeholders on academic decisions affecting intercollegiate athletics, with the intent that such knowledge would help provide useful implications for future leaders making decisions that impact unique student populations. As an area of research, the semi-autonomous unit of intercollegiate athletics provided insight into how individual stakeholders interacted, particularly around certain policies, programs, or procedures. Estler and Nelson (2005) stated that, "an understanding of the nature and role of forces influencing intercollegiate athletics allows new strategies for planning and prioritizing sports within the college or university" (p. xi). Notably, in 2010, the situation around American intercollegiate athletics was one in which many believed that the decision-makers at higher education institutions were placing a greater emphasis on athletic success at a cost to academic success. This tension between athletics and academics on campus provided a useful context to investigate perceived influence of stakeholders.

A framework for the study was created to learn about those individuals who have a stake in, and perceived they could influence, academic decisions in intercollegiate athletics. The framework focused on the theories of power and influence, as well as a consideration of the loosely-coupled system of athletics within higher education and also the shared governance structure of higher education. Research focused on academic performance, admissions policies, and course selection practices within intercollegiate athletics to understand who, how, and why certain stakeholders may be, or may perceive themselves to be, influential in decision-making.

Interviews of 18 stakeholders were conducted at three major research institutions recently sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) for having poor academic performance of several of their athletic teams. Using a constant comparative and cross-case analysis of the data, several themes emerged from the interviews. Analyzing the themes from the conceptual framework led to several implications for higher education stakeholders, including faculty and administrative leaders. Implications contributed to the knowledge in higher education about strategies stakeholders used to make decisions, particularly when situations were most urgent. Three major implications were derived from this study: (1) Using urgency as a management strategy can provide leaders with an opportunity to adapt and respond quickly to situations, create greater stakeholder understanding of the rationale behind decisions, and enhance institutional pride through shared values and symbolism; (2) The interactive nature of situational leadership is an important implication, as stakeholders can realize their leadership also depends on how their engagement with others is impacted by the situation and by the environment; and, (3) Building and using cross-campus relationships is a critical tool for stakeholders to influence academic decisions.



**JUSTIN MICOMONACO, 2011**

**LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITIES AS AN INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE DISCIPLINARY RETENTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ENGINEERING EDUCATION**

**ABSTRACT**

The challenge and impetus to increase both the quantity and quality of engineers in the United States is well-documented (Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2007; National Academy of Engineering, 2004; NSB, 2008). There have been considerable efforts to recruit students to engineering, yielding modest results (Seymour, 2002; NSB, 2008). However, the increase in enrollment has not coincided with a parallel increase in engineering graduates, indicating that retention is the core issue.

At the same time, the field of engineering has been responding to calls for educational reform from within the discipline and industry (Prados et al., 2005). An increasingly complex economy demands a broadening of the intended learning outcomes and a move toward outcomes-based assessment of engineering programs (ABET, 1995; 1997; Kastenbergh, et al., 2006; National Academy of Engineering, 2004). As a result, the accrediting body ABET issued a new set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that subsequently spurred innovation in engineering education.

The influential work of Seymour and Hewitt (1997) on students who switch out of STEM fields identified classroom experiences as the primary cause of disciplinary departure. As a result, reform efforts focused primarily on classroom interventions (e.g., Coward, Ailes & Bardone, 2000; Sheppard et al., 2009) because addressing deficiencies in pedagogy and curriculum could yield improvement not only in student learning but also in disciplinary retention. Despite research confirming the link between certain types of classroom innovations (e.g., active learning) and improved retention and learning gains (Felder, 1995; Felder, Felder & Dietz, 1998; Smith et al., 2004), inertia and the culture of faculty work has prevented widespread adoption of these practices. Accordingly, non-classroom interventions such as living-learning communities (LLCs) should be considered as part of the solution.

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of LLCs on disciplinary retention and learning outcomes in engineering. I identified the differences between LLC participants and nonparticipants in terms of (a) pre-college characteristics, (b) indirect measures of persistence, (c) direct measures of persistence, and (d) learning outcomes. I compared these groups using chisquare analyses, t-tests, and regression modeling, including measures of change over time.

The results of this study identified some differences between the two groups on precollege characteristics in terms of demographic representation, the process of choosing engineering as a major, and expectations for college. On indirect persistence measures, LLC participants reported stronger connections to other undergraduate engineers and greater commitment to engineering. Moreover LLC participants experienced more significant gains over time on three measures: (a) Commitment to Engineering, (b) Connection to Engineering College and (c) Connection to Engineering Peers. These results suggest that the LLC may have a differential impact on participants in these domains. On direct persistence measures, LLC participants differed from non-participants on only one measure: choice of major in sophomore year. The retention rate for LLC participants was 85.1% compared to 76.1% for non-participants. Finally LLC participants and non-participants did not differ on learning outcomes measures for the most part, although LLC participants reported more significant gains over time on the Leadership construct.



**EMILY R. MILLER, 2011**

**PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNING BOARDS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS**

**ABSTRACT**

A defining feature of American higher education is the provision for authority over the institution by an external governing board consisting of lay members of the public (Thelin, 2004). Studies of higher education governing boards typically focus on structure and performance (Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Kezar, 2006; McGuinness, 2003; Minor, 2006; Tierney, 2004b) as well as assume governing boards endorse institutional policies created under the leadership of the executive officer (Mintzberg, 1979). Research has yet to explore in any depth the impact of higher education governing board members as social actors.

Situated in the current financial crisis and a trend of declining public investment in higher education (Fairweather, 2009, 2006; NACUBO/NCSE, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2006; Zumeta, 2006), the current study examines the social network patterns of governing board members at public institutions and expands the knowledge of how governing boards work. The study sought to determine whether identifiable social networks for public higher education governing board members exist, to develop an overall picture of public higher education governing board networks, and to understand the internal and external factors impacting governing boards' social networks during times of fiscal crisis.

This study draws upon the technique of social network analysis as a means to understand how public governing boards work. As an analytical tool, social network analysis examines the relations and patterns of relations among actors by mapping interactions and relationships (Marin & Wellman, 2010; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Data collected from four public post-secondary governing boards from two states demonstrated that identifiable social networks did in fact exist for each governing board. Commonalities in the social networks were present across the four participating institutional governing boards. Additionally, governing board members' unanimously indicated that the recent financial crisis has created a unique period for higher education and is impacting institutional governance. Implications for research, practice, and policy are discussed.

**KRISTIN NICOLE MORETTO, 2011**

**SPIRITUALITY, MEANING AND WORK AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF COLLEGIATE PROGRAMS FOR THE THEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF VOCATION**

**ABSTRACT**

Developing purpose and preparing for a career are significant developmental processes that students experience in college (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Most students wrestle with questions of meaning and purpose in college, and many struggle with career indecision (Parks, 2000; Connor, 2008; Osipow, 1999). Recent studies show that spirituality, faith and religion play important roles in the lives of many students (HERI, 2004-2005). Current polls show that job satisfaction among workers in the United States is at an all time low (The Conference Board, 2010). Helping students to make connections between their beliefs and values (religious, spiritual or otherwise) and their vocational choices may set them up for a more fulfilling, stable career and a happier life. The purpose of this research was to examine Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV), designed to help students consider how personal values, spirituality and religious faith intersect with vocational choices and plans for college students.

Four programs at four different liberal arts colleges or universities were included in this original qualitative case study. Data were collected through document analysis and interviews during campus visits with PTEV staff, faculty, and students at all four institutions. Forty total interviews were included in the data analysis. Research questions were designed to uncover the methods of PTEV programs, as well as the meaning and impact on students. The goal of this research was to discover how participation in PTEV programs impacted students' identity, values, and future vocational plans. An additional goal was to gain insight on how secular institutions can help students make career choices that are in alignment with their beliefs and values in order to prepare them for a fulfilling career.

This study produced findings that provide insight into the impact of these programs and the process of vocational discernment for PTEV students. A visual representation of the vocational discernment process for students in PTEV programs, which can be used as a means to guide students in the process of vocational discernment, is also presented. Exploring vocation and calling in the context of spirituality and community, gaining exposure to experiences that shed light on future career options, along with reflection and discussion were helpful to PTEV students who were on a journey of vocational discernment. Exploration of vocation and calling, in and out-of-class experiences, facilitated by reflection and discussion in a community and spiritual context lead to growth in self awareness (being) and knowledge of values (meaning) which, in turn, produced a greater sense of purpose and knowledge of future plans (doing) in most PTEV students.

**MICHAEL W. RISHELL, 2011**

**BECOMING THE UNIVERSITY: EARLY PRESIDENTIAL DISCOURSES OF GORDON GEE**

**ABSTRACT**

The author explores Gordon Gee's career as a university president. There is a special focus on the journey Gee made between 1990, when he first became president of The Ohio State University, to 2007, when he returned to Ohio State for another term as university president ten years later. During this time away from Ohio State, he served as the president (or chancellor) of both Brown University and Vanderbilt University. Data are reviewed from these presidencies, as well.

Individual discourse, professional discourse, and organizational discourse were examined through a variety of data, including discourse analyses of the speeches given by Gee in the early days of each of these four presidencies.

The dissertation provides a model, The Triangle of Leadership Discourse, which serves to illustrate the necessary balance of discourses which must remain in harmony with one another for the tenure of leadership to be successful.

**SARAH M. SINGER, 2011**

**THE IMPACT OF MACRO-LEVEL FACTORS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDY ABROAD IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the current study was to explore the impact of macro-level factors on the development of study abroad in community colleges. In order to investigate the impact of multiple factors, the following research question was explored: What are the macro-level factors that influence the development and deployment of study abroad programs at community colleges? This study used two electronic surveys to answer this question. The first survey was designed to collect data from community colleges regarding background/demographic information, international activities on campus, and their experiences with the development of study abroad programs. In developing this survey, I modified and built upon the American Council of Education survey which has been the basis for much of the work on community college internationalization to date (Green, 2007; Green et al., 2008; Green & Siaya, 2005; Hult & Motz, 2008; Siaya & Hayward, 2003). The survey was then administered electronically to directors of institutional research at 751 community colleges accredited by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

The second survey was designed to better understand the connections community colleges have forged with external constituencies within the community and the ways in which these constituencies have influenced study abroad program development, or the lack thereof. This study was administered to senior administrators, including deans, vice presidents, presidents, and chancellors, at institutions that indicated whether or not they administered study abroad programs in the first survey.

Results suggested that several factors impact the development of study abroad programs, the single largest of which is financial: the wealth of institution, the student body, and the surrounding community all have a major impact on the development of study abroad programs. Beyond wealth, this study indicates that the makeup of the community, its employment base, connections to other countries or regions (such as through immigration), and overall support are all key factors that impact the development of study abroad and the locations where the programs occur. The findings also indicate that institutions that administer study abroad programs have higher levels of internationalization (such as international student enrollments and foreign language offerings), stronger relationships with external stakeholders, and are larger and more urban than their counterparts that do not administer study abroad.

**SUSAN TONS, 2011**

**THE EXPERIENCE OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG NON-TRADITIONAL AGED LEARNERS: THE ROLE OF POSSIBLE SELVES IN THE PERSISTENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS**

**ABSTRACT**

This study explored how non-traditional aged students in professional level occupational therapy programs persisted through their long and challenging academic curriculums despite facing obstacles. Non-traditional aged students are gravitating to majors in the professions and there are very few studies in which theoretical frameworks on student departure or persistence have been applied to students in the professions, such as the health care profession of occupational therapy. Most retention studies focus on students in non-specified majors. It was suspected that students majoring in a health care profession such as occupational therapy may have characteristics and needs that differ from students seeking degrees in other majors.

This qualitative study asked participants who successfully persisted despite obstacles to tell their story in the narrative inquiry tradition. Cross-case analysis was also done to discover common patterns of experience related to the phenomena being studied. Sixteen non-traditional aged students from four institutions with accredited occupational therapy academic programs were interviewed.

A distinctive finding was related to the motivation of the participants. The participants in this study expressed unique motivations for pursuing their degree, which are not explicitly mentioned in the education retention literature. Participants all spoke of a desire to become someone different or someone better, the majority stating that they wanted to be in a position to help others or contribute to society. Enrollment in their program was viewed as a way to enact this desire to become “a new possible self” and was intertwined with strong determination, what some participants described as “mindset.”

The findings also reflected that these occupational therapy students were similar to other non-traditional aged students in some ways. Their persistence was affected by the type and amount of support they received, and they also faced challenges balancing competing roles in their life such as employee, student, parent, and spouse. However, the majority of these participants faced an additional challenge to balance. Many were also struggling with a medical condition in themselves or had a close family member who faced significant health issues.

**NORSEHA UNIN, 2011**

**LEARNING TO LEAD AS LEARNING TO LEARN: EXPERIENCES OF MALAY WOMEN IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**ABSTRACT**

This study examined how Malay women learn to lead in institutions of higher education within a Malaysian socio-cultural context. The purpose of this study was to develop a deeper understanding of how Malay women learn to lead within institutions of Malaysian higher education. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with four deans and two directors from Malaysian public universities. The findings demonstrate the paradoxical contexts that these women faced in learning to lead in higher education, and how they learned to navigate the multiple tensions and contradictions they faced in assuming leadership positions within Malaysian society. For these women, learning to *lead* is about learning to *learn* from and through these tensions and contradictions.

The learning of these women was essentially self-directed, experience-based, and both intentional and unintentional. Tacit learning (Schugurensky, 2000) was clearly evident in their acknowledgement and acceptance of their society's traditions, and the ways in which they learned to navigate the values that placed more emphasis on their roles as mothers and wives, than it did on their roles as educational leaders. While considerable emphasis has been placed on the role of reflection within informal learning, their stories revealed limited instances of the explicit use of reflective learning.

Central to the processes by which these Malay women learn to *lead* was their commitment to learning to *learn*. The women in this study learn to *lead* by living through and learning about paradoxes that characterize their roles as leaders within the particular socio-cultural context in which they were living. The socio-cultural contexts in which they worked were described by the participants as largely patriarchal and quite hierarchical. While the women were not actively discouraged from assuming leadership positions, they experienced little explicit and direct support for their roles as leaders. Nonetheless, they still flourished as higher education leaders. Their stories reflected a process of learning to lead that involved powerful social and emotional processes.

These women learned to hold the blatant tensions and work around the contradictions surrounding their professional roles as leaders in higher education. Their accounts of emerging as mid-level leaders in higher education reflected a process of learning to *learn* from working through these tensions and contradictions rather than a process of learning about what constitutes good and effective leaders. This emphasis on learning to *learn* contributed to their ability to navigate the complex social roles in which they found themselves as women leaders in a male-dominated and hierarchical society. While much research and theory regarding informal learning has been focused on explicit structures and functional processes, this study supports greater attention to the more tacit and paradoxical qualities of everyday experience, and the importance they play in our learning from and through these experiences.