

# EFOP 2140: Higher Education Capstone Seminar

## Spring 2024-2025

### Instructor Information

*Name:* Filipe Recch

*Office:* 5309 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

*Email:* recch@pitt.edu

*Office Hours:* By appointment – please arrange via email with at least 48 hours notice.

### Class Information

*Dates:* Tuesdays 01/08/2025 to 04/30/2025

*Time:* 6:00 – 8:30pm

*Classroom:* 5404 Posvar

### Course Description

This course serves as the culminating experience for Higher Education MEd students. As the capstone for the program, this course provides students with the opportunity to consider and apply theoretical and conceptual knowledge from this course as well as all Higher Education courses to practical situations. Through course content, classroom discussions, and the capstone project, students will advance their development of essential higher education competencies gained throughout the curriculum.

### Learning Objectives

1. To reflect on and apply theoretical and conceptual knowledge gained through the higher education program to practical experiences
2. To understand general guidelines for analyzing and synthesizing scholarly literature and professional knowledge
3. To design an intervention based on theory and literature to address an issue or concern in higher education, student affairs, or student organization/group
4. To think critically about empirical research, scholarly work, and professional knowledge
5. To learn how to respond productively to feedback and advance graduate-level writing

### Required Materials

Textbook: Kerr, K. G., Edwards, K. E., Tweedy, J. F., Lichterman, H., & Knerr, A. R. (2020). *The curricular approach to student affairs: A revolutionary shift for learning beyond the classroom*. Routledge.

Machi, L. A., & McEvoy, B. T. (2022). *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success (Fourth edition)*. Corwin Press.

Additional readings available through Canvas or PittCat

## Deadlines and Scaffolding

The course is designed to help students develop the capstone project in sections (referred to as “scaffolding”), creating a comprehensive document by the end of the course. Various sections of the document will be submitted to the instructor for feedback throughout the term.

In order to receive timely feedback, it is essential to meet the deadlines indicated in the syllabus to stay on track and incorporate feedback received. **Students are required to submit all assignments in Word format and use the Track Changes function when addressing the instructor’s feedback. All assignments should be submitted via Canvas.** Students must not delete comments; instead, they should respond to each comment, clearly indicating what was changed and providing a rationale if no changes were made. This ensures transparency in how comments are addressed and facilitates a constructive revision process.

The course schedule outlines when the sections are due. **Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due by 11:59 pm on the date indicated in this syllabus.** With each submission, students are required to:

- Address, revise, and respond to all comments and suggestions made by the instructor.
- Add the next section (e.g., submit the introduction, receive feedback, address all comments, add Section #1, then submit the revised introduction with Section #1 added).

This iterative process will continue until the final product for the course is completed. The instructor will focus feedback on the specific sections due at each deadline, while the revised sections will be evaluated comprehensively in the final document.

To complete your project on time, it is important to plan for several hours each week outside of class sessions. This time should include careful planning, critical reading and researching, scholarly writing, and self-editing before submitting a final product. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that you allocate your time accordingly and work ahead to meet course deadlines. **Falling behind on the due dates outlined in the syllabus may delay your progress in the course and may ultimately delay your graduation.**

## APA Style

Writing is an important part of professional practice and this class is an opportunity to refine your writing skills. All written assignments are to be of professional quality and free of spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors. Assignments must follow the grammar, formatting, and usage guidelines contained in the 7th edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). If you need assistance with APA, please do not hesitate to ask the instructor. The University Writing Center offers valuable services for graduate student writing and their services can be reviewed at <http://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/graduate-services>. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) also contains helpful web resources that may assist in better understanding APA style and can be located at: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>.

## SCHOOL OF EDUCATION POLICIES

### Departmental Grievance Procedures

The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in EFOP believes that a faculty member has not met their obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow the procedure described in the Guidelines by (1) first trying to resolve the matter with the faculty member directly; (2) then, if needed, attempting to resolve the matter

through conversations with the chair/associate chair of the department; (3) if needed, next talking to the associate dean of the school; and (4) if needed, filing a written statement of charges with the school-level academic integrity officer.

## **Academic Integrity**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

## **Disability Services**

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call (412) 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Disability Resources and Services office is located at 140 William Pitt Union on the Oakland campus.

## **Statement on Classroom Recording**

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussions and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance may be used solely for the student's own private use.

## **Teaching Surveys**

Students in this class will be asked to complete a Student Opinion of Teaching Survey. Surveys will be sent via Pitt email and appear on your Canvas landing near the end of the term. Responses are confidential and I do not see the results until after final grades are posted. Please take time to thoughtfully respond; your feedback is important to me.

## **GRADES & ASSIGNMENTS**

Letter grades are assigned in this class. Written work is graded on demonstrated insight, completion of expectations of the assignment, coherence of organization, style, grammar, and spelling. Letter grades are feedback and have the following meaning (+ and – are also assigned):

- “A” signifies work that exceeds expectations. Written work falling into this category will demonstrate clarity of purpose, organization, and communication. It will also demonstrate masterful and original interpretation of course material. “A” level denotes a student who prepares for class and consistently indicates having thought critically about the material by advancing the quality of the discussion and by submitting thoughtful online contributions.
- “B” signifies work that meets expectations, meaning that all aspects of the assignment are completed, but it lacks some of the aspects of “A” work, particularly inconsistent preparation for class, infrequent contributions to class discussions, or written work that demonstrates less significant insight into the material or frequent grammatical errors or technical issues.

- “C” signifies work that is below expectations because all aspects of the assignment may not have been completed, work demonstrates little preparation or participation in class, work demonstrates little insight into the material, or grammatical issues in written work mar the assignment significantly.
- “F” is assigned for incomplete work or work that breaches University standards of academic integrity.

## **Course Engagement (15%)**

The course employs a variety of instructional approaches, including small and large group discussions, activities, lectures, and writing/consultation sessions. Active engagement in discussions and learning activities is essential for the successful completion of the course.

It is expected that you:

- Provide thoughtful peer review feedback.
- Share intentional references and resources that contribute to peer development and conceptualization of the inquiry area.
- Build upon peers’ contributions, make meaningful connections to the readings, and enhance the depth and complexity of discussions.

The instructor’s role is that of a facilitator, and you are responsible for your own learning and development. If you need additional support, please reach out, and I will be happy to meet with you.

Class engagement will be graded on a complete/partial complete/incomplete basis.

## **Visioning Your Ideal Impact (5%)**

**Due Date:** Week 3

**Objective:** This assignment invites you to envision the most incredible impact you could achieve within your current or aspirational work scenario. The goal is to help you think expansively and reflect on the transformative possibilities within your professional context.

## **Instructions**

### **1. Describe Your Work Scenario (about half a page):**

- Provide an overview of your current or aspirational work scenario in higher education, student affairs, or your chosen area of focus.
- Include details such as your role, responsibilities, and the context (e.g., an internship, current job, or hypothetical future role).

### **2. Envision Your Ideal Impact (about one and a half pages):**

- Imagine the most incredible, transformative impact you could have in this scenario.
- Be ambitious! Describe your ideal outcome vividly, even if it feels unachievable. Consider:
  - What changes would you make?
  - Who would benefit, and how?
  - Why does this impact matter to you personally and professionally?

## Class Presentation (10%)

Near the end of the term (Weeks 14 and 15), each student will deliver a class presentation based on a strong draft of their paper, refined through peer review and instructor feedback. Presenters will share time equally to present their work, respond to questions, and engage in constructive dialogue with their colleagues.

### 1. Presentation Guidelines:

- Prepare **3 to 4 accessible, well-designed slides** to organize your points and highlight your main ideas. Slides should be clear, visually engaging, and concise.
- Rehearse your presentation to ensure it stays within the strict time limit and allows time for questions.
- Anticipate and prepare for questions that demonstrate your mastery of the material and its connection to concepts learned throughout the program.

2. **Feedback Expectations:** Peers will ask questions and provide constructive feedback aimed at refining and enhancing the proposal. Feedback should build on the presenter's ideas rather than overhauling or discrediting them. Adopt a "**yes, and**" approach to encourage collaboration and positive reinforcement.

## DESIGNING FOR LEARNING CAPSTONE PROJECT (70%)

Throughout the Higher Education MEd curriculum, you have received training related to building your expertise in the ACPA/NASPA Competencies in ways that enable you to serve as a reflective, ethical scholar-practitioner with a social justice orientation. The capstone project serves as your culminating experience in the Higher Education MEd program and also serves as your comprehensive examination. Earning a pass on the capstone project/comprehensive exam is needed to graduate.

Understanding how to design effective educational interventions, programs, policies, and/or services that maximize student learning and development is foundational across the core competencies for student affairs educators and higher education professionals. The overall premise of this project is to identify an issue or inquiry area related to higher education or student affairs and to develop a scholarly-informed proposal for an innovative and cocurricular-based program, intervention, or strategy that addresses the area you have identified. Your thinking in this area might come from something you have noticed in your internship or professional role, or it could be situated in a functional area you wish to pursue in the future. Meetings with the instructional team at the beginning of the term will help you crystalize your thinking.

We will build knowledge through course materials and community learning to discuss and share articles, book chapters, and other sources of knowledge. Through our sharing, these resources offer a number of points of departure and inspiration for conceptualizing cutting-edge programs.

**Final Paper:** Throughout the semester, you will be working toward the development of a **15-17 page, double-spaced designing for learning proposal** (excluding title page, references, and appendices) related to an inquiry area of your choosing (e.g. student access, student outcomes, student experiences, campus structures, etc.). As detailed above, you will build this final paper through scaffolding and completing the paper section by section across the course of the term. You will submit a draft of each section, and the instructor will provide feedback. At the end of the semester, you will incorporate the feedback from the instructor and submit a final designing for learning proposal. Successful capstone projects will be based on theory, meet APA guidelines, utilize appropriate references from this course and courses

taken throughout your time in the MED program, and aptly detail the following:

***Part 1: Describing the Background and Context***

- *Title Page (does not count toward page limit)*
  - o **Week 5: 11-February** (This can be revised throughout the term)
  - o Develop a creative title that captures the essence of your project. Avoid titles like “Final Paper” or “Capstone Project.”
- *Inquiry Area Overview (about 1-2 pages - 5%)*
  - o **Week 5: 11-February**
  - o An inquiry area is the broad overarching area that a persistent issue or inequity in higher education manifests itself. An issue may span several inquiry areas because of the ways it is embedded within practice. For this course, you will focus on one inquiry area. The introduction should articulate the inquiry area and the significance of the area. In other words, why is this inquiry area important? Does this inquiry area affect a particular population(s) of students in inequitable ways? This section should end with a paragraph that offers a brief foreshadowing of what the purpose of the paper is and what sections the readers can expect to follow.
- *Description of Setting (about 1-2 pages - 5%)*
  - o **Week 6: 18-February**
  - o This section provides an opportunity to situate the inquiry within a particular functional area or frame. You may opt to think of the issue within a localized context (e.g. Office of New Student Programming) or more broadly (e.g. a Division of Student Affairs). Why is this functional area the best one to address your inquiry area from? What is your personal interest in considering the problem from this setting?
- *Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations (about 4-5 pages - 8%)*
  - o **Week 7: 25-February**
  - o You should examine an ample body of relevant literature and professional knowledge (at least 10-15 sources, including peer-reviewed research articles as well as professional knowledge) that will help frame your inquiry area. The review should be succinct, comprehensive, and integrated and demonstrate a clear path of your understanding of the inquiry area and how it is framing your understanding of the specific problem. It should not be a series of annotations or a paragraph-by-paragraph summary of individual articles or chapters. The review should demonstrate a clear path of your understanding of the problem area and how it is framing your understanding of the specific problem. Identify **two themes** within the literature and develop those themes into the key sections of this part of the paper. You should also include at least **one theoretical foundation** (think student development) and consider how this theory, foundation, or framework informs the inquiry. While your review in this section may include interventions or approaches to addressing the problem, this should not be the main focus because interventions will be addressed in Part 2 of the project.

## **Part 2: Envisioning Solutions**

- *Description of the Proposed Interventions (about 3-5 pages - 8%)*

- o **Week 10: 18-March**

- o This is the part of the paper where you get to be creative, innovative, and practical. Using the knowledge that you have gained from the literature related to your inquiry area as well as across the Higher Education MEd program, what would be a co-curricular innovation (program, policy, strategy, etc.) that you would institute following the curricular approach that would work to improve the issues present in your inquiry area? How does the literature and the theoretical foundation frame your thinking and justify taking this particular course of action you are proposing? What is the overarching goal of the program? Who is the program for (and who is it not for)? Is the initiative in collaboration or competition with other programs offered within the institution and/or functional area? What's the name of the program? How long will it last—a day, a week, five weeks, a summer? Is this going to be a residential, commuter, or virtual program? What is the size of the program in terms of minimum and maximum number of participants reached? Who will staff the program? What would the success of the program look like and how will you consider measuring it?
    - o Remember that this part of the paper should still be supported by literature and citations even though it offers you the chance to think critically and innovatively.
    - o As you frame your thinking, it is recommended that you stick to framing your plan to span a timeframe between a month and a full academic year. Focusing on a longer or shorter period of time will be either beyond the scope of the project or not provide enough depth for this project. Be thorough in the description. For example, if you mention holding a speaker workshop series, be intentional and direct about what each workshop will touch upon, how the audience will be engaged, why these topics are the best ones to address, etc. Due to the creative nature of this aspect of the project, visuals (charts, tables, illustrations, etc.), may be incorporated into this section of the proposal.

- *Learning Aims (up to 1 page - 2%)*

- o **Week 11: 25-March**

- o Thinking along the lines of a curricular approach, what 3-5 learning aims do you expect participants of your program, strategy, or intervention to achieve? This section should give the reader a brief paragraph to introduce the section and indicate the overarching goal of the program, but the actual learning aims may be presented as full-sentence bullet points. Remember that the learning aims need to directly relate to the proposed interventions being described in the earlier sections as well as the overall program goal.

- *Equity and Justice Considerations (about 1-2 pages - 5%)*

- o **Week 12: 1-April**

- o In this section, detail how you have specifically considered issues related to equity and justice in the framing of your proposed intervention. Consider the following question as you approach this section: What systems of marginalization and oppression may be at work that this intervention works to disrupt or overcome? Who is the program for (and who is it not for)? What assumptions or biases are present in the planning stage and what work has been done to reduce and eliminate these?

- *Assessment Considerations (up to 1 page - 2%)*
  - o **Week 13: 8-April**
  - o In this section, describe some of the basic methods (quantitative survey, focus group, interviews, photovoice, etc.), populations (e.g. students, staff, etc.), and timelines, you would employ to determine whether learning aims were achieved. Also, be sure to justify why these assessment considerations are warranted for this specific project.
- *Conclusion (up to one page)*
  - o **Week 13: 8-April**
  - o You should write a paragraph that brings closure to your proposal. The paragraph should provide a brief recap of your proposal and then end with any final key takeaways.
- *References (does not count toward page limit)*
  - o **Week 13: 8-April**
  - o You should examine an ample body of relevant literature, meaning at least 10-15 sources.

### ***Part 3: Bringing it Together and the Final Capstone Project (35%)***

- *Final Designing for Learning Proposal (15-17 pages)*
  - o **April 29**
  - o For the final capstone project, you will submit the following in order:
    1. Title Page (does not count toward page limit): Develop a creative title that captures the essence of your project. Avoid titles like “Final Paper” or “Capstone Project.”
    2. The revised sections in the following order:
      - (a) Inquiry Area Overview
      - (b) Description of the Setting
      - (c) Literature Review
      - (d) Theoretical Considerations
      - (e) Description of the Proposed Intervention
      - (f) Learning Aims
      - (g) Equity and Justice Considerations
      - (h) Assessment Considerations
      - (i) Conclusion
      - (j) References (Use APA-7th Edition format)



## Course Schedule

Week Date	Course content	Readings & Assignments
Week 1: 14-January	<p>Introductions, Scholarly Practice, and Finding References</p> <p>Format: In person</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>ACPA NASPA (2015). Professional competency areas for student affairs educators.  <a href="https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/ACPA_NASPA_Professional_Competencies_FINAL.pdf">https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/ACPA_NASPA_Professional_Competencies_FINAL.pdf</a></p> <p>Wilson, M. E., Hirschy, A. S. (2017). Models for applying scholarship to practice. <i>New Directions for Higher Education</i>, 178, 35-46.</p>
Week 2: 21-January	<p>Part 1:</p> <p>Describing the Back-ground and Context</p> <p>Format: In person</p>	<p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>French, A. (2020). Utilization of theory, research, and assessment to enhance multiculturalism, diversity, social justice, and inclusion. In N. Zhang M. F. Howard-Hamilton (Eds.). <i>Multicultural and diversity issues in student affairs practice: A professional competency-based approach</i>. Charles C. Thomas Publisher. (pp. 230-255).</p> <p>Kerr et al., (2020). Chapters 1 and 2</p>
Week 3: 28-January	<p>Part 1:</p> <p>Describing the Back-ground and Context</p> <p>Format: In person</p>	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b></p> <p>Visioning Your Ideal Impact (Attention: due before class starts)</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <p>Machi, L. A., &amp; McEvoy, B. T. (2022): Introduction and Chapter 1 (Step 1)</p> <p>Mintrop, R. (2016). <i>Design-based school improvement: A practical guide for education leaders</i>. Harvard Education Press. [Chapter 2: Defining and framing problems of practice]</p> <p>Read at least 1 source related to your inquiry area (building up to literature review and theoretical foundations)</p>

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Week Date	Course content	Readings & Assignments
Week 4: 4-February	Part 1:  Describing the Back-ground and Context  Format: In person	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Sign up for office hours: Defining inquiry area and potential issues  <b>Readings:</b> Machi, L. A., & McEvoy, B. T. (2022): Chapters 2 and 3  Read at least 1 source related to your inquiry area (building up to literature review and theoretical foundations)
Week 5: 11-February	Part 1:  Describing the Back-ground and Context  Format: In person	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Project Sections due: Title Page & Inquiry Area Overview  <b>Readings:</b> Machi, L. A., & McEvoy, B. T. (2022): Chapters 4, 5 and 6  Read at least 2 sources related to your inquiry area (building up to literature review and theoretical foundations)
Week 6: 18-February	Part 1:  Describing the Back-ground and Context  Format: In person	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Project Section due: Description of Setting  <b>Readings:</b> Read at least 3 sources related to your inquiry area preparing for the following week assignment
Week 7: 25-February	Part 1:  Describing the Back-ground and Context  Format: In person	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Project Section due: Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations  <b>Readings:</b> Read at least 3 sources related to your Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations section
Week 8: 4-March	Spring Break - No Class	
Week 9: 11-March	Part 2:  Envisioning Solutions	<b>Assignment:</b> Survey: class follow-up (Any time before the following class)  <b>Readings:</b> Kerr et al., (2020). Chapters 3 and 4

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Week Date	Course content	Readings & Assignments
Week 10: 18-March	Part 2:  Envisioning Solutions  Format: In person	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Project Section due: Description of the Proposed Interventions
Week 11: 25-March	Part 2:  Envisioning Solutions  Format: Independent writing and consults with instructor	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Project Section due: Learning Aims  <b>Readings:</b> Kerr et al., (2020). Chapters 5 and 6
Week 12: 1-April	Part 2:  Envisioning Solutions  Format: Independent writing and consults with instructor	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Project Section due: Equity and Justice Consideration
Week 13: 8-April	Part 2:  Envisioning Solutions  Format: Independent writing and consults with instructor	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Project Sections due: Assessment and Conclusion

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Week Date	Course content	Readings & Assignments
Week 14: 15-April	Part 3:  Bringing it Together  Format: In person	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Presentation slides  Prepare for final project - read, revise and edit
Week 15: 22-April	Part 3:  Bringing it Together  Format: In person	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Presentation slides  Prepare for final project - read, revise and edit
Week 16: 29-April	Part 3:  Bringing it Together  No Class	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Final Project