CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION (CSHPE)

CONCENTRATION OVERVIEW

Students in the Institutional Research (IR) concentration develop the conceptual, technical, and practical skills necessary to conduct applied research in or pertaining to postsecondary institutions and system offices. The skills developed in the program are wide ranging, including factual knowledge about postsecondary institutions and systems, research methods used by IR professionals, knowledge of the processes and issues affecting institutions, and an understanding of the context and culture of the institutions in which you will work and study.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

This program of study prepares students for a wide range of professional positions related to improving the understanding, planning, management, and performance of postsecondary institutions and the systems in which these institutions are organized. These positions include research appointments in institutional research offices, as well as research and policy appointments in federal and state agencies of higher education, higher education associations, policy institutes, and policy advocacy organizations. Students also pursue careers as faculty or researchers within higher education programs or centers.

This concentration is distinctive in several ways:

- Students enrolled in this concentration will be able to employ a variety of methods and techniques and apply them appropriately to the type of research undertaken.
- The Institutional Research curriculum enables students to understand how to integrate research into useful academic, managerial, or policy initiatives designed to improve decision-making in, and the functioning of, postsecondary institutions.
- In addition to the formal coursework, students will obtain real-world institutional research experience through a program-approved internship. In this internship students will be exposed to institutional research practices and work directly with professionals in the field.

ACADEMIC FOCUS

Graduate study in this concentration includes the development and framing of research questions; the design and execution of empirical research pertaining to postsecondary education; the collection, preparation, and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data; the communication of research findings to varied audiences; and the connections between research, policy, and practice. Upon completion of their formal and practice-based education, students will have the technical competence and knowledge of the nature of postsecondary institutions that will position them well for careers in the exciting field of institutional research.

The selection of specific courses and complementary activities (including cognate courses and experiential activities) will be determined by the student and academic advisor, depending on the student’s selected area of focus.
PLAN OF STUDY

Students are required to take:

EDUC 561 - Introduction to Higher Education; and
EDUC 863 - Institutional Research in Higher Education.

HEIR students must elect six (6) credits in CSHPE courses that provide an understanding of the context of institutional research. Courses previously offered that exemplify this focus include:

- EDUC 563 – The Community College
- EDUC 761 – Higher Education Institutions as Complex Organizations
- EDUC 764 – Public Policy in Postsecondary Education
- EDUC 768 – Economics of Education
- EDUC 874 – Law and Higher Education
- EDUC xxx - Other CSHPE courses as approved by the advisor

Chosen in consultation with an advisor, students are required to enroll and complete six credits of cognate coursework that enhance research or evaluation competencies.

EDUC 695 – Research Methods in Educational Research
EDUC 792 – Qualitative Methods in Educational Research
EDUC 793 – Introduction to Quantitative Methods in Educational Research
EDUC 795 – Quantitative Methods for Non-Experimental Research
EDUC 799 – Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables

EDUC 777 – Administrative Practicum

Students can fulfill the experiential component of this concentration by completing an approved internship experience in a setting that focuses on institutional research. Requests to substitute other experiential learning opportunities that fall outside CSHPE internship settings may be made to the advisor. Approval for these internships and alternate experiences will be made by the MA Program Coordinator.

Examples of internships that address institutional research include:

- Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP)
- Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)