ELMP 9995 NA, Spring 2020
Financial Administration of Higher Education
Saturdays (1/25, 2/22, 3/28, 4/25) 9 AM-5 PM
Course Syllabus—Version 1.0 (last updated 12/17/19)

Contact Information

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Office Hours: By appointment (Monday and Wednesday afternoons are best)

Course Description

This course examines the foundations of higher education finance. We will discuss institutional revenue and expenditure patterns, students’ costs and benefits from higher education, and the public policy landscape regarding student and institutional funding as well as performance management. By the end of the semester, students will be expected to have a solid understanding of higher education finance and will write an original term paper on a topic of their choice within this field.

Course Expectations

Office hours: I hope that everyone in the class meets with me on a one-on-one basis at least once during the semester to discuss the class assignments and your goals for the class and graduate study. Please contact me to set up an appointment, which can be in person or via phone/video, as students without appointments may not always be able to see me.

Communications: I will use both Blackboard and e-mail to communicate important course messages. E-mails will be sent to your SHU account so I can guarantee that they are received. I typically respond to student e-mails within 48 hours; if the message is urgent and you have not received a response acknowledging receipt, please send your message again.

Attendance and class participation: Because this class only meets on four days and has in-class exercises and/or presentations on each day, attendance is essential. Students who know they have scheduling conflicts with any of the four days or the makeup day (March 14) should not take the course. (Missing one Saturday is like missing four weeknight classes.) In the case of illness or an unexpected family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible to develop an alternative plan.

Class format: Each of the four classes will be divided into four modules of roughly 90-120 minutes each. Two or three of the modules in each meeting will be focused on content (similar to
a regular weeknight class), while the other modules will be student-led presentations or activities. Please make sure to bring a laptop to each class so you can have the lecture notes and readings handy as well as being able to play with the various online resources that I will discuss in class. We will take a short break after the first and third modules, with a longer break after the second module for lunch.

A note on readings: This course has a rather high reading load, and this is magnified by meeting once a month instead of once a week. Please do not wait to start reading until the night—or even the week—before class! Give yourself enough time to do the readings, as class will have less value to you and your classmates if nobody reads the assigned content. If it becomes clear that few students are doing the reading, I may institute the Socratic method and call on students at random. Please don’t make me do that!

While I do expect you to consume the information in each reading, the art of skimming many of the readings (focusing on the key points) becomes crucial. This does not mean that you skip the methods sections and anything that looks technical every time, though—as being effective consumers of research is a key outcome of our programs. If you have any questions about how to read the articles in an effective way, please let me know as skimming is an acquired skill.

Services: Disability Support Services offers services to students with disabilities to facilitate their full participation in all campus activities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The office provides documentation review, reasonable accommodations, training groups, resource materials and referrals. For more information, see http://www.studentaffairs.shu.edu/dss/

Course Evaluation and Assignments

Analyzing a budget: The first assignment of the semester is to analyze a budget of a college or university of your choosing (do not choose your current employer, Seton Hall University, or The College of New Jersey—our in-class example). Make sure to choose an institution that has several years of budget documents publicly available. The assignment has the following components:

- **Revenues and expenditures.** For the most recent year available (which should be no earlier than Fiscal Year 2016), summarize the key revenue and expenditure types. For example, how much money comes from tuition revenue, state funding, donations, or sponsored research? How much money is spent on salaries, instruction, or facilities costs? Do any of the key revenue and expenditure categories surprise you, and why?

- **Budget trends.** Going back at least five years (but ideally at least ten years if data exist), what are the trends in revenues, expenditures, and endowments (if applicable)? Which categories have changed the most or least over time?
• **Fiscal stability.** Does your institution appear to be fiscally stable (consistently increasing revenues, ideally from multiple sources) or not? What could the institution do in order to place itself on a better financial footing, or are no actions necessary?

• **“Readability” of budget.** Is the institution’s budget easy to comprehend? Are additional documents or summaries provided to help with interpretation? Were there key questions that were not answered in either the budget or supporting materials, and do you have recommendations for improvement?

This assignment will be worth **35%** of your final grade and is due **March 13 at 5 PM** via Blackboard. The completed assignment should be between 10 and 15 pages (excluding tables and references) in standard APA format (12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with one-inch margins) and be well-written.

**Opinion piece and discussion on free college:** One of the key higher education finance debates occurring right now is whether college should be free. While the definitions of both “free” and “college” vary considerably across the wide range of policies that have been adopted in recent years, they are all designed to address concerns about college affordability and increase educational attainment levels. However, skeptics and opponents of these plans contend that these plans are at best poorly-targeted and at worst remove individuals’ incentives to put effort into their own education.

To better understand this important policy issue, we will devote one class module on March 28 having a structured discussion of the idea of free college and the various plans that have been proposed to this point. Before class, you will write a blog post of between 700 and 1000 words (with no exceptions) using one of the following three frameworks.

(1) Arguing for or against a particular policy that has been proposed and/or implemented.
(2) Proposing your own free college system based on other systems and prior research.
(3) Making the case for why students should have to pay for a substantial portion of their own education.

Here are some good examples of what scholarly blog posts can look like. (Note how they hyperlink sources instead of using APA format—that is what you want to do here.)

- Brookings Institution’s Brown Center Chalkboard blog: [https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/)

The blog post will be due on **Monday, March 23 at 5 PM** so I have time to read them and to share them with your classmates. I expect you to read your classmates’ posts before class that Saturday. The blog post will be worth **10% of your grade** and will be graded based on the quality of your analyses and writing.
**Term paper:** The culminating assignment of the class is to write an original paper analyzing a policy of your choosing in the area of higher education finance. Your paper should take a position defending an existing policy or a policy of your own design and should focus on a segment of higher education. For example, you could focus on financial aid reforms and look at the effects from one of many different perspectives: students and their families, institutional financial aid and budget offices, state and federal governments, or the general public. (Do not use free college as a topic, as that is covered in another assignment.) In order to write a focused paper, please try to narrow your scope and audience as much as possible.

I am looking for the following components in the paper:

- **Introduction and literature review.** In this section, provide a brief overview of the importance of your topic as well as related literature in that area. You should also provide background data in addition to other studies’ findings, where applicable. This section should be fairly concise, as the goal of the paper is to analyze a policy within higher education finance instead of solely constructing a review of the literature.

- **Policy statement and details.** Discuss the policy that you would like to advance and its broad goals. Then explain how this policy would benefit your group of interest (students, colleges, taxpayers, the general public, etc.) If you are supporting a policy which has been enacted before, discuss how it has worked in practice. Next, provide more details about the policy and how you think it might work in the case you are examining.

- **Policy outcomes.** What are the intended outcomes of your proposed policy, and how would you like to see those outcomes measured? Think carefully about the unintended consequences of your policy and argue that they are small enough to merit advancing your policy. You should also pay close attention to who would be affected by the policy and whether you can actually measure the outcomes in the way you would like.

- **Costs and benefits.** Any decision in higher education finance results in both costs and benefits. Briefly discuss the potential monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits that might result from your proposed policy and who would be affected. Even if the focus of your paper is on institutions, think about the costs and benefits faced by other stakeholders in this section.

- **Alternative policies.** Briefly describe several alternatives to your proposed policy, one of which should typically be the status quo. This section should convince readers that your policy is likely to work better than the alternatives for your audience of interest, so some details about other policies should be provided here.
• **Analysis and conclusion.** By this point in the paper, you should have already convinced readers that your proposed policy is better than the alternatives for a certain group of stakeholders. In this section, consider how your proposed policy could actually be implemented. If the same or a similar policy has been implemented elsewhere, cite studies which examine that policy. If it is a new policy, think through how the policy could be implemented. Also consider which groups or political agents would be likely to support or oppose such a policy. It is perfectly fine to propose a policy with little chance of being adopted, but that should be acknowledged in this section.

There are three separate grading components to the term paper:

• **Paper proposal (5% of final grade, due April 3 at 5 PM):** You will be expected to submit a 1-2 page summary of the proposed topic, which will include a motivation for your topic, research question, potential data source(s), and a plan to complete the paper by the end of the semester. Full credit will be given to proposals which are submitted on time and address the criteria discussed above. Early submissions are encouraged, as are inquiries about potential topics. Students may change their topic at any time by contacting me and submitting a second paper proposal.

• **Presentation (10%, in class on April 25):** You will give a presentation of approximately 8 minutes (depending on final enrollment) summarizing the key points of your paper. Presentations must be uploaded by noon on April 24 to Blackboard so it can be loaded on the computer in advance of class. Grades will be assigned based on the quality of the presentation.

• **Final paper (40%, due May 11 at 5 PM):** The final paper must be submitted by this time and should meet all of the criteria discussed above. It should be between 10 and 15 double-spaced pages in length (excluding tables and references) in standard APA format and 12-point Times New Roman font.

**Paper guidelines:** Your papers will be graded in part based on the quality of writing, which includes clarity, proper APA formatting and citations, and correct spelling and grammar. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the Writing Center (http://www.shu.edu/academics/artsci/writing-center/) as soon as a draft paper is complete in order to receive feedback. I am also happy to look at a draft paper to provide general feedback, as long as you give me at least one week to read the paper. All assignments should be submitted via Blackboard; please let me know immediately if you encounter any problems uploading papers.

**Presentation guidelines:** Learning how to give an effective presentation is one of the most important skills that you can learn in graduate school. The effectiveness of a presentation is strongly correlated with the amount of preparation, so take time to practice your presentation and make sure it is as clear as possible. I strongly recommend using simple slides with large font sizes that can be easily read in the back of the classroom.
There are three course-specific requirements for presentations. First, all slideshows must be submitted via Blackboard by noon the day prior to presentations so it can be loaded on the computer in advance of class. Second, I request that students not use Prezi for presentations and also avoid special graphics for transitions. (My eyes cannot handle the sudden zooms and transitions of Prezi, and they make some other people dizzy.) Finally, course presentation days are designed to be interactive. Grades will be assigned based on both the quality of the presentation and the feedback you provide to other students’ presentations.

**Late assignments:** There will be a 10% penalty assessed per day for late paper proposals, draft papers, or final papers unless an emergency exists. Late assignments will also receive minimal feedback.

**Grading scale:** The grading scale for assignments and the overall class is as follows:

- 93-100 pts - A
- 90-92 pts - A-
- 86-89 pts - B+
- 82-85 pts - B
- 78-81 pts - B-
- 73-77 pts - C+
- 70-72 pts - C
- Below 70 pts - F

**Academic integrity:** All students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity. All completed assignments must be original work for this course, must consist of original ideas and writing, and must include appropriate citations of others’ ideas. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. As a student in this course, you are responsible for knowing and adhering to the spirit of University and ELMP policies regarding academic integrity and student conduct.

**Department of ELMP – Cheating and Dishonesty**

**I. Statement** — The Department of ELMP will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Infractions will be appropriately penalized; students should understand that suspension or expulsion from the University is a possible result.

**II. Definitions** — “Academic Dishonesty” shall be understood to encompass at least the following:

*Cheating* — whether on tests or on other course assignments, whether by the giving, receiving or taking of information.
Plagiarism — stealing and/or passing off as one’s own the ideas or words of another; using without crediting the source. It includes: (1) copying of text/research/assignments; (2) using someone else’s papers/research/assignments without permission and citation; (3) representing as one’s own work what is really the work of another person. This includes downloading from WEB sources.

III. Penalties:

1. A student determined to be cheating on any test or who plagiarizes on a course assignment will be appropriately penalized at the discretion of the instructor. This may include receiving a zero on the assignment or “F” for the course.

2. Notice that a student has cheated or plagiarized will be sent to the department chair. All cases of plagiarism resulting in an “F” for the course will be reported to the Dean. This can result in a recommendation to the Dean for suspension or expulsion from the university.

3. If the chair of the ELMP department finds that a student has been found to have committed acts of academic dishonesty in more than one ELMP course, the student is expelled from the ELMP program after due notice of the discovery. After one year, the department may rescind the expulsion upon the application of the student provided the student evidences a genuine, informed, and vigorous commitment to academic integrity to the satisfaction of the department’s faculty as a whole.

4. All department or instructor actions resulting from suspected violations of this policy will be taken in accordance with the students’ due process rights. Nothing in this policy statement shall be construed to preclude the department from taking appropriate disciplinary action against forms of academic dishonesty not stipulated here.
Schedule (subject to change)

**January 25: Introduction to higher education finance and budgeting**

**Module 1: The higher education finance landscape and data sources**

Lumina Foundation video on how the federal government distributes financial aid to students: [https://www.luminafoundation.org/looking-back-to-move-forward-4](https://www.luminafoundation.org/looking-back-to-move-forward-4)


Recommended data sources:


IPEDS: [https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data](https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data)

NCES Data Lab: [https://nces.ed.gov/datalab/index.aspx](https://nces.ed.gov/datalab/index.aspx)

ProPublica’s Nonprofit Explorer: [https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/](https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/)

Urban Institute’s Data Explorer: [https://educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer/colleges/](https://educationdata.urban.org/data-explorer/colleges/)

**Module 2: Institutional budgeting**


Seton Hall’s FY 2018 Forms 990 and 990-T to the Internal Revenue Service: https://www.shu.edu/finance-division/index.cfm


Credit rating reports for The College of New Jersey: https://treasurer.tcnj.edu/reports/rating-agency-reports/ (focus on Moody’s)


Module 3: In-class exercise on institutional budgeting

Module 4: Policy analysis and higher education finance


February 22: Revenues and expenditures

Module 1: Federal sources of revenue


**Module 2: State sources of revenue**


**Module 3: Budget presentations**

**Module 4: Higher education expenditures**


**March 13:** Budget analysis due at 5 PM

**March 14:** Makeup day (if either of the first two classes is postponed)

**March 23:** Free college blog post due at 5 PM

**March 28:** College affordability

**Module 1:** College pricing, tuition revenue, and endowments


Module 2: Financial aid policies, practices, and impacts


Module 3: Discussion on free college


Map of college promise/free college programs: [https://ahead-penn.org/creating-knowledge/college-promise](https://ahead-penn.org/creating-knowledge/college-promise)

Module 4: Student debt and financing college


**April 25: Returns to education and the financial viability of higher education**

**Module 1: Returns to education**


Module 2: Final paper presentations (part 1)

Module 3: The financial viability of higher education


Module 4: Final paper presentations (part 2)

May 11, 5 PM: Final paper due