NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Engaging the Unengaged:
Helping Students Find their Purpose in College

Course Description:

There is growing evidence that today's college students are becoming less engaged in the college experience, leading to increased drop-out rates, and negatively affecting mental health, general well-being, and many other facets of students' lives. The central focus of this course is helping students identify and develop their own vision for their future, connecting purpose and personal meaning to academic persistence. To this end we will examine the disengagement phenomenon through current research and scholarship, institutional data analysis, and practical intervention design. Participants will explore intrinsic and extrinsic influences on engagement and discuss strategies for engaging students in Hi-Impact Practices (HIPs). We will use institutional data to identify risk patterns and apply tools—including AI—to design structured, evidence-based interventions and programming that support student purpose, persistence, and success. The course culminates in an AI-assisted engagement plan aligned to HIPs.

Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

1. Explain major research findings related to student engagement.

2. Analyze institutional data indicators associated with disengagement and attrition.

3. Apply motivational frameworks to support student purpose, agency, and persistence.

4. Design structured interventions using reflective practices and AI-supported tools.

5. Develop an institutional engagement framework aligned to recognized standards and success metrics.

Required Course Materials:

1. Access to an advanced AI tool - ChatGPT Plus, Gemini Advanced (via Google One AI Premium), CoPilot Pro, or something similar. They are usually around $20 a month and some may have a free trial version. The AI must be robust enough to help you develop a quality, academically informed intervention or program plan with an assessment component.

2. There is no required textbook. All readings will be included as PDF versions available through Blackboard or as links to publicly available sources.