

**[Course prefix and catalog number]**  
**“Inside the Ivory Tower: Triumph and Dysfunction in Higher Education”**  
**1-credit course**  
**Fall Semester 2018**

**Instructors:**

- Scott Cowen, President Emeritus and Distinguished University Chair (co-instructor)
- Heide Winston, Director, Communications and Civic Engagement, Office of the President Emeritus (co-instructor)
- Betsy Seifter (visiting scholar)

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**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

Voices questioning the value of a college education and proclaiming that American higher education is in crisis have been getting louder amid ever-increasing tuition, common mission creep, and an arms race for resources and prestige that works against efforts to make college more accessible and inclusive. Organized around Tulane President Emeritus Scott Cowen’s new book, *Winnebagos on Wednesdays: How Visionary Leadership Can Transform Higher Education*, this course will explore the most puzzling conundrums facing the higher education sector and how the right leadership and mission can provide solutions. Students will learn what works and what doesn’t in higher education and examine cases of remarkable leaders (and those who failed). A discussion-based format with guest speakers and personal accounts by Dr. Cowen will help students gain a comprehensive understanding of our country’s diverse higher education landscape—whose top colleges and universities are still the envy of the world—and the power of leadership.

**LEARNING GOALS**

Students will grapple with the complexity of American higher education and learn about major challenges facing U.S. colleges and universities with a focus on Tulane University. Moreover, students will be introduced to the concept of leadership in the context of higher education and learn about fundamentals of effective and transformative leadership. A group project will further foster their teamwork, personal leadership, and presentation skills.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

After completing this course, students will be able to understand and discuss major challenges facing American higher education. They will know how different leaders have successfully addressed a variety of problems and why some change efforts fail despite good intentions. In particular, students will be able to put themselves in the shoes of leaders across the Tulane campus and have a greater appreciation of what it takes to make an institution of higher education thrive. They will demonstrate familiarity with the characteristics of effective leadership and be able to make connections between leadership, context, and outcomes. Last but not least, students will be able to see their own institution in its historical context, specifically Tulane’s transformation after Katrina, and be empowered to become change agents on the Tulane campus.

**PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

This course promotes desired TIDES outcomes by allowing students to take an up-close behind-the-scenes look at American higher education with a focus on Tulane that will deepen their understanding and appreciation of the inner workings of their own university. In addition to learning in an intimate, collaborative setting with fellow students and interacting with leaders across campus, they will have the opportunity to participate in insightful in-depth discussions with Tulane’s former president, who has been named one of the top college presidents in the nation by *TIME* magazine and led the university through the most trying time in its history. This course will also put the public service requirement into context and foster students’ sense of shared identity.

### **REQUIRED STUDENT RESOURCES**

Scott Cowen with Betsy Seifter. Winnebagos on Wednesdays: How Visionary Leadership Can Transform Higher Education. Princeton University Press, 2018.

### **EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND GRADING CRITERIA**

Active participation is crucial in this discussion-based course and significant weight is put on students' attendance and contribution to class discussions. Students are expected to come to class informed on the topic of the week and ready to engage in a dynamic discourse with the professor, other students, and guest speakers. There will also be two assignments over the course of the semester that combined will make up 60% of the final grade.

Attendance & Participation	40%
Group Project	30%
Reflection Paper	30%
Total	100%

Grading scale:

A = 94-100	A- = 90-93	
B+ = 87-89	B = 84 -86	B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79	C = 74-76	C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69	D = 64-66	D- = 60-63
F = <60		

### **ATTENDANCE STATEMENT**

Students are expected to attend all classes unless they are ill or prevented from attending by exceptional circumstances. Instructors may establish policies for attendance and making up missed work in their classes, which are announced at the beginning of the semester. Students who find it necessary to miss class are responsible for obtaining notes on material covered in lectures or other class sessions.

Students are responsible for notifying instructors about absences that result from serious illnesses, injuries, or critical personal problems. Medical excuses are issued by the Student Health Center in the following instances: illnesses or injuries that involve hospitalization, a partial or complete withdrawal due to medical reasons, or a missed final examination for a medical condition being treated by the Student Health Center. In all of these instances, medical information will be released only with the student's written permission.

Instructors are authorized to lower the grades of students who are absent excessively without a satisfactory excuse or do not make up work missed because of absences. Instructors are authorized to lower the grades of students who are absent excessively without a satisfactory excuse or do not make up work missed because of absences. With the approval of the Newcomb-Tulane College dean, an instructor may have a student who has excessive absences involuntarily dropped from a course with a WF grade after written warning at any time during the semester.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any students with disabilities or other needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact Goldman Center for Student Accessibility:

<http://accessibility.tulane.edu> or 504.862.8433

### **CODE OF ACADEMIC CONDUCT**

The Code of Academic Conduct applies to all undergraduate students, full-time, and part-time, in Tulane University. Tulane University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations (i.e., Code of Academic Conduct:

<https://college.tulane.edu/code-of-academic-conduct>, Code of Student Conduct:

<http://www2.tulane.edu/studentaffairs/support/conduct/students/code-of-student-conduct.cfm>) and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

## COURSE SCHEDULE/OUTLINE

### **Week I – Impact of Higher Education**

What does higher education mean to you? What impact do colleges and universities have on individual lives, communities, and society at large? How can we measure this impact? We will reflect on the purpose and promise of higher education and discuss rankings (and why they are misleading) as well as other ways to evaluate our colleges and universities.

Reading: Introduction and Chapter 1 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

### **Week II – Access and Diversity**

We will take a look at colleges and universities that are doing a remarkable job of educating low-income, first-generation, and minority students, while also considering the obstacles to building truly diverse campuses and why many institutions—Tulane included—can and need to do more to create upward mobility for all.

Reading: Chapter 2 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

Possible guest speakers: Earl Retif (former dean of admission), Monica Sylvain (director of Posse New Orleans)

### **Week III – Financial Sustainability**

Amid state funding cuts and escalating expenses, more and more colleges and universities—both public and private—are struggling to stay afloat. We will examine threats to financial sustainability and innovative strategies to generate revenue.

Reading: Chapter 3 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

❖ Movie Night: “Starving the Beast” (2016)

### **Week IV – Athletics**

College athletics isn’t all fun and games. Given the enormous cost of sports programs and frequent scandals involving corruption and academic fraud, we will weigh the pros and cons of making athletics part of the academic enterprise and explore what the future holds for intercollegiate athletics.

Reading: Chapter 4 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

Possible guest speaker: Troy Dannen (Tulane athletic director)

### **Week V – Medicine**

We will learn about the complexities and complications of medical education in the context of a new health-care system founded on principles of efficiency and economy that is at odds with the training and research programs associated with academic medical centers.

Reading: Chapter 5 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

Possible guest speakers: Betsy Seifter (writer/higher education expert), Julian Seifter (associate professor at Harvard Medical School), Lee Hamm (dean of Tulane School of Medicine)

### **Week VI – Innovation and Scholarship**

We will look at institutions of higher education as drivers of new knowledge and innovation with a particular focus on engaged scholarship that involves community members and addresses urgent social issues.

Reading: Chapter 6 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

Possible guest speaker: Barbara Moely (professor emerita of psychology)

### **Week VII – Shared Governance**

Can we all get along? We will learn about higher education’s shared governance model and how consensus can be reached—or at least actions taken—despite a multitude of stakeholders with often conflicting agendas.

Reading: Chapter 7 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

### **Week VIII – Tulane and Hurricane Katrina**

We will hear about Tulane’s transformation after Hurricane Katrina from the person who was at the helm when an existential crisis provided an impetus to strengthen the university’s commitment to community engagement and make Tulane the first major research university to incorporate public service into the core curriculum.

Readings:

Jennifer Reingold, “The Storm After the Storm,” *Fast Company*, April 1, 2006,  
<https://www.fastcompany.com/55701/storm-after-storm>.

Scott Cowen, “Life Lessons from Inside the Storm,” *Traumatology*, December 2008,  
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1534765608326180>.

- Reflection paper due

### **Week IX – Beyond the Ivory Tower**

We will look at cases of institutions of higher education that embrace their role as anchor institutions and have become deeply involved in their communities, including Tulane’s transformation from ivory tower to engaged anchor institution.

Reading: Chapter 8 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

### **Week X – Identity and Mission**

We will grapple with concepts such as identity, purpose, mission, and vision illustrated through stories of schools pursuing unique missions and schools that for lack of clear identity are heading toward failure.

Reading: Chapter 9 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

- ❖ Movie Night: “Ivory Tower” (2014)

### **Week XI – Presidential Leadership**

We will reflect on characteristics of transformative leadership in the context of the cases we discussed over the course of the semester to develop a clear understanding of the types of leaders we need at the helm to make our colleges and universities thrive against all odds.

Reading: Chapter 10 of *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*

### **Week XII – Dinner Dialogue**

We will end the semester over dinner at a restaurant where we’ll have the opportunity to speak with special guests who are higher education leaders and were profiled in *Winnebagos on Wednesdays* such as Norman Francis, president emeritus of Xavier University, Rev. Kevin Wildes, president emeritus of Loyola University, and Jordan Karubian, associate professor at Tulane’s Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, whose engaged scholarship was described in *Winnebagos on Wednesdays*.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

- 1) Group project: Students will work in groups of 3 and interview a Tulane University leader—such as department directors, vice presidents, and deans—on a topic covered in the course (accessibility and diversity, financial sustainability, athletics, medicine, or shared governance) and share insights and lessons learned during a brief class presentation
- 2) Reflection paper: 3-page paper on a higher education conundrum discussed in class and possible solutions (should incorporate what students have learned from the readings, guest speakers, and the interview group project, as well as additional ideas)

*“Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available: you can learn more at [titleix.tulane.edu](http://titleix.tulane.edu). Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either “Confidential” or “Private” as explained in the chart below. Please know that if you choose to confide in me I am mandated by the university to report to the Title IX Coordinator, as Tulane and I want to be sure you are connected with all the support the university can offer. You do not need to respond to outreach from the university if you do not want.”*

Confidential	Private
<i>Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one’s self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.</i>	<i>Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.</i>
<b>Counseling &amp; Psychological Services (CAPS)   (504) 314-2277 or The Line (24/7)   (504) 264-6074</b>	<b>Case Management &amp; Victim Support Services   (504) 314-2160 or <a href="mailto:srss@tulane.edu">srss@tulane.edu</a></b>
<b>Student Health Center   (504) 865-5255</b>	<b>Tulane University Police (TUPD)   Uptown - (504) 865-5911. Downtown – (504) 988-5531</b>
<b>Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE)   (504) 654-9543</b>	<b>Title IX Coordinator   (504) 314-2160 <a href="mailto:ormsmith76@tulane.edu">ormsmith76@tulane.edu</a></b>