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INTRODUCTION

The University of Southern California (USC) is spread across three campuses located in different areas of Los Angeles: the University Park Campus (UPC), the Health Sciences Campus (HSC), and Children's Hospital of Los Angeles (CHLA). There are shuttle bus connections to each location.

The Narrative Medicine MS degree offered by the USC Keck School of Medicine integrates narrative theory, practical experience and research methods to focus on the ethical implications of storytelling for individual/community wellness and the healthcare system. Students will be trained in narrative medicine methods of close reading, attentive listening and reflective writing in the service of community outreach and professional development. Training in this field will enhance the work of practicing and future clinicians (physicians, social workers, nurses, physician assistants, psychotherapists, occupational and physical therapists, speech pathologists, etc.), and provide support for mid-career professionals seeking to transition into teaching or service. Individuals pursuing careers in journalism, film, the non-profit sector, humanitarian leadership, social justice and community organizing, as well as those planning to apply to PhD programs in the humanities and social sciences, will develop the tools for creating boundary-crossing initiatives that address real-world problems in community health care. A cornerstone of this unique programming is USC's partnership with local non-profit outreach groups. Students in the Narrative Medicine MS program will have the opportunity to teach and learn from community partners about the relationship between health and narrative, and will become more adept at offering solutions that recognize the intersection between the biomedical, behavioral and health system sciences, and issues of healthcare equity and social justice.

Online Access

Website of the University: https://www.usc.edu/

Academic Calendar: http://academics.usc.edu/calendar/

Website of the M.S. in Narrative Medicine Program: https://keck.usc.edu/narrative-medicine-ms-program

Website of the HEAL (Humanities, Ethics, Art, and Law) Program: https://sites.usc.edu/heal/
REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPLETION OF M.S. IN NARRATIVE MEDICINE DEGREE

1. The student must complete a total of 32 units of coursework and research units that are 500 level or higher.

2. Of the required 32 units of coursework, at least 24 must be letter-graded courses. Up to 10 units may be from credit/non-credit (CR/NC) courses. Credit from coursework that is pass/non-pass (P/NP) is not acceptable, as it cannot be applied toward a graduate degree.

3. A graduate GPA of at least 3.0 is required at all times. Any student whose graduate GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation who do not raise their GPA to 3.0 after two semesters of written notification of academic probation will be academically disqualified.

4. To be eligible for graduation, the student must have a GPA of ≥3.00.

➔ To be considered a full-time student, enrollment in at least 8 units per semester is required.

➔ For international students, 8 units is the minimum requirement to maintain legal visa status.

➔ Exceptions:

(i) No course enrollment is required for the summer semester. If students decide to enroll in coursework over the summer, they may elect less than 8 units. It can be 0 units.

(ii) Under exceptional circumstances, a student can submit a request for “reduced course load” (but this can be done only one time while in the program). If approved, the student may enroll in less than 8 units for that semester.

(iii) The final semester may require less than 8 units to fulfill all graduation requirements.
DESCRIPTION OF COURSEWORK

A. Required Coursework

MDED 501 Narrative Medicine I: Witnessing, Listening, Reflecting (4 Units) - FALL Only

Associate Professor, Pamela Schaff, MD, PhD (Literature and Creative Writing)
Assistant Professor, Erika Wright, PhD (Literature) and author of Reading for Health: Medical Narratives in the Nineteenth-Century Novel

Course Description

Inspired by the work of literary scholars and philosophers, Rita Charon, MD and PhD, articulated the need for narrative competence in medical practice almost twenty years ago. While Charon was not the first to put literature and medicine together, her formulation of Narrative Medicine has provided a clear and lasting framework for understanding how stories work in the clinical encounter, a setting where individuals are often at their most vulnerable, seeking the right word and hoping to be heard. This call for narrative competence has put close reading at the center of patient care and medical training, as more practitioners and institutions have come to value this kind of knowledge and to realize that diagnosis and healing often begin with a word, a look, a silence—a story waiting to be read.

This course is an introduction to the field of Narrative Medicine and is a pre-requisite for the Narrative Medicine Methods for Teaching course offered in the Spring. In addition to studying the origins and evolution of the health humanities and narrative medicine’s relationship to this history, we will examine key theories about narrative and genre, trauma and witnessing, gender and identity (texts include work by J. Bruner, R. Charon, S. DasGupta, A. Frank, J. Gallop, T. Jones, D. Laub, P. Ricoeur). We will apply these theories to our close reading of a range of texts—novels, films, short stories, memoir, and poetry—in order to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between literature and medicine and its role in patient care. In order to understand how stories are put together and why that matters, we will consider how literary concepts open up our thinking about the human condition: What do metaphors teach us about complexity? How do repetitions compete with silences and create meaning? How do point of view and tone shape our expectations? We will consider what’s at stake in telling and listening to stories, our responsibility to a given text, and the real-world social, political, and ethical ramifications of close reading.

Course Goals—This course will:

• Introduce the tenets of Narrative Medicine and the of history Health/Medical Humanities;
• Demonstrate the value of close reading for health care and other professional endeavors related to the wellbeing of self and others;
• Explain how to apply narrative theory to a range of personal and professional situations;
• Provide opportunities for students to collaborate effectively with peers through seminar discussions, class presentations, and online modes of sharing knowledge.
MDED 502 Narrative Medicine II: Methods and Pedagogy (6 Units) – Spring Only

Associate Professor, Pamela Schaff, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor, Erika Wright, PhD

Course Description

By offering a deep dive into key theories about the ways stories are told, interpreted, and acted upon, this course in Narrative Medicine: Methods and Pedagogy models techniques for teaching close reading and reflective writing in narrative medicine workshops. We will build on the study of narrative introduced in the Fall semester, focusing on elements that may broadly be categorized as people, places, time, and things. These topics of close reading allow us to conceptualize the multiple ways a story’s form reinforces or challenges its content and how that knowledge translates into clinical practice: How do temporal (time) ordering and point of view (people) intersect with setting (place) to shape individual identity? What can the study of diverse genres and types of creative expression teach us about our assumptions and expectations about what stories get privileged in society? How does meaning collect around objects (“things”) in a given text? Asking these types of questions of various texts forces us to slow down as we think about what a patient, client, or partner needs us to understand when they seek our care. The close reading will be enhanced by reflective writing, as this course seeks to develop each student’s ability recognize and, more importantly, to teach others to recognize how these aspects of story allow for a more efficient and empathetic engagement (collaboration) between listener and teller.

This is a course in teaching methods, which will prepare students for their practicum. In addition to studying literary theory, we will read current scholarship on teaching in medical education, the health humanities, and narrative medicine. Students will collaborate with their peers as they develop a research and teaching agenda that serves our community partners (Special Services for Groups) as well as their own professional goals.

Course Goals

- Provide opportunities for students to develop writing/discussion prompts and lesson plans for narrative medicine workshops in a community outreach setting;
- Study literature and related theory in order to develop narrative competence and serve community health partners;
- Demonstrate the relationship among narrative medicine, social justice, and health care.

MDED 503 Creative Writing and its Applications in Narrative Medicine (4 Units)

Abigail Rasminsky, MFA

Course Description

As Nellie Hermann explains in Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine, creating and sharing writing “mimics in a small, controlled way the vulnerability of a patient asked to put her most delicate self in the hands of strangers” (The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine 217). Thus, creative writing has played an integral role in Narrative Medicine. In this class, we will write and we will listen, exploring the act of writing by looking closely at how it is done, what it is for, how it works on our minds and bodies, and how it can be used to engender meaningful change in the clinical context. Through in-class reading and writing exercises (in fiction, nonfiction and poetry), students
will explore issues of craft—narrative, perspective, point of view, imagery and dialogue—and discuss how the act of writing and reading can open up unexpected storylines, outcomes, possibilities, and develop a deeper understanding of themselves, their colleagues and their patients in a clinical context. At the end of the course, students should have a deeper understanding of how story can feed their clinical work.

This is a hybrid seminar/workshop, but the primary focus of this course is to introduce students to the craft of writing, and to help them develop as both writers and close readers. How do we say what we want to say? Why this way and not that? How do we hear what others are trying to say? Through what lens are we reading?

The semester will be divided into four distinct sections: Nonfiction/Journalism, Memoir, Fiction, and Poetry. During each section, we will explore readings within that genre and you will be given writing exercises that will allow you to play with form, content, and style. Your peers and the instructor will respond to some, but not all, of your work during the workshop session. You will invariably be more or less interested (or agile) in some forms over others, but you are expected to try your hand at writing and handing in one piece of each form. This is a vital exercise in working outside your comfort zones, taking risks, facing fear, transforming so-called “mistakes,” and seeing yourself and your world in a new way. You will have the chance to revise all your work at the end of the semester to submit in a final portfolio.

Course Goals
- To explore four writing forms—nonfiction & journalism, memoir, fiction and poetry—through weekly reading and writing exercises.
- To introduce the numerous ways of telling a story, both in clinical and creative contexts.
- To examine peers’ writing in an effort to think critically and thoughtfully as an editor.
- To explore the ways in which storytelling can allow us to imagine alternate outcomes when working in clinical practice.
- To discuss how relevant literary concepts (such as metaphor, narrative, and point of view) can help students reflect on their own actions and reactions in clinical practice.

MDED 504 Research Methods in Narrative Medicine (4 Units)*

Assistant Professor, Ronan Hallowell, MA (Philosophy and Religion), EdD

Course Description

This course explores qualitative research methods within the social science tradition. Narrative-based, inductive approaches that include sitting with, querying, and reflecting upon the lived experiences of people in naturalistic settings are the hallmarks of qualitative research. This orientation resonates with a number of concerns addressed in the humanities, such as the human condition and the relationship of the individual to society. Since narrative medicine sits at the intersection of biomedicine, humanities, and social science, qualitative research methods serve as an important methodological bridge between these disciplines. Qualitative methods provide researchers with the concrete steps needed to develop rigorous research projects within the field of narrative medicine. We will explore the philosophical underpinnings of the qualitative approach, its use in health research, specific methodologies for data collection, and various analytic traditions that offer methodological and interpretive frameworks for making sense of qualitative research. We will discuss how qualitative research can inform and complement narrative medicine’s focus on exploring intersubjectivity, relationality, personhood, and embodiment in relationship to social
justice issues in medicine and society. Students will learn about ethnography, interviewing, focus groups, and other techniques for acquiring qualitative data to answer research questions and produce transformative scholarship that can inform the field of narrative medicine.

Course Goals

- Students will complete CITI training and code a transcript using qualitative software (Dedoose). Reading and writing assignments support the students’ ability to:
- Match research questions to data collection and strategies of analysis
- Identify appropriate sampling techniques;
- Generate sound results with substantive meaning;
- Assess and critique the credibility of findings from qualitative data analysis in other people’s research

Students will read approximately 150-200 pages per week and complete a range of writing assignments that contribute to a final research project.

*The Qualitative Research Methods course may be satisfied by an equivalent graduate-level course taken elsewhere.

MDED 505 Intersubjectivity: Lived Bodies/Relational Selves (4 Units)

Professor, Cheryl Mattingly, PhD (Anthropology)

Course Description

What does it mean to think of experience as something relational – created in and through our interactions with others? Considerations of intersubjectivity, or what it means to live and experience the world as a relational being, have been taken up across a wide range of disciplines. This class draws upon several: philosophy, anthropology, sociology, classical works in social psychology, and feminist and postcolonial theory. The course opens with some key philosophical considerations of intersubjectivity as the core of all human experience. Throughout the course, special emphasis is given to the vulnerabilities of our dependence upon others as these arise in situations of physical, social or emotional precariousness and marginalization. We consider how people’s lives, hopes and fragilities are shaped by the experience of chronic illness or disability. How might we think about the clinical encounter as an intersubjective practice that is not merely directed simply to a “broken” or “diseased” body but to a body that is lived in and lived through – the body as a “lived experience.” Texts include works by Husserl, Levinas, Goffman, Simmel, Schutz, Ricoeur, Carr, Foucault, and Kruks.

Course Goals

The objectives of this course are to use tools of cultural and social analysis in sociology, anthropology, philosophy, feminist theory, and social psychology to examine the following questions:

- How is experience relational – created in and through our interactions with others?
- Why has narrative provided such an important avenue for exploring the intersubjective qualities of experience?
- How can we understand illness and disability as intersubjective as well as personal, bodily experiences? How is stigma socially created? What are the processes at work?
• Why has care been such a central concept in relational ethics? What is empathy and why is it linked to an ethics of care?
• How do social institutions and structural power shape intersubjective life and personal experience?

**MDED 593 Narrative Medicine Capstone** (2 Units)

**Course Description**

The Narrative Medicine MS requires a Capstone that demonstrates the student’s summative experience in the program. This may take the form of research/creative capstone project, thesis, or clinical practicum. Each student will select and design a Capstone that integrates narrative theory, practical experience, and research methods to focus on the ethical implications of storytelling for individual/community wellness and the health care system. Students work individually, under the supervision of a regular member of faculty, and submit a single sustained project at the end of the semester. Some students benefit from bi-weekly encounter with peers who are also working on Capstones and are more stimulated by a series of individual projects in response to themes or problems. This Capstone offers a combination of in-class discussion and individual advisement. This Capstone course provides a way to fulfill the required individual capstone in the context of a seminar. Students will present materials throughout the course in a manner deemed appropriate and relevant to each Capstone.
B. Electives

**MDED 510 Narrative Ethics: Illness, Disability, Equity, and Community** (4 Units)

Lyn Boyd-Judson, PhD (International Relations), MSt (International Human Rights Law, Univ. of Oxford 2020) Co-Chair, Oxford Initiative for Global Ethics and Human Rights; Director, [Global Women's Narratives Project](#)

**Course Description**

This course is about recognizing the philosophical as well as practical embodiment of ideas of illness, disability, equity and community. As humans, we are constantly reimagining our worlds, our places within spaces of possibilities—our families, our work, our social structures and ideas of justice. Hilde Lindeman Nelson writes, “In a narrative approach, the social contexts are important, not because they guide the selections of the principles that will be used to resolve the case, but because of what they reveal about the identities of the participants: the religious, ethnic, gender and other contexts in which a person lives her life contribute to her own and others’ sense of who she is” (Charon and Montello, Chapter 4, pg. 39.). What are both ethical potentials and risks of storytelling? How do we live by stories? What constitutes a good response to illness? A good death? How do cultures trade in canonical narrative? What can Aristotle’s peripeteia and Spinoza’s ethics tell us about the crafting of moral stories of health and illness? How does narrative relate to the embodied self, to self-identity, to virtue or character traits? What do these themes mean to our stories of health and illness? Further, what are the interests of institutions and individuals—both material and moral—and who can be considered responsible for change? The juxtaposition of moral values—what we ought to do, ought to value, ought to feel—with stories of who we are, reveal the patient as both the ethicist and the moral agent—and so the patient is the ultimate subject of the course. As part of this course, students will draft, edit, and publish a completed interview to be published on the Global Women’s Narratives Project website.

**Course Goals**

- To examine the relationship between illness and disability narratives and their familial, social, and institutional contexts;
- To introduce ethical paradigms for approaching the use of health narratives;
- To encourage critical reflection on health care equity and social justice;
- To deepen the connections of the personal and the political to the medical through an exploration of community and activism;
- To develop the ability to acknowledge, absorb, interpret, and act on the stories and plights of others.

**MDED 511 Immigrants, Illness, and Narrative Medicine** (4 Units)

Assistant Professor, Kairos Llobrera, PhD (English and Comparative Literature)

**Course Description**

This course examines immigrant experiences in the United States through the lens of narrative medicine, a field that emerges from the intersection of the humanities, literature and literary theory, and the study and practice of medicine. Through the study of immigration literature (novels, poetry, auto/biographies, etc.), complemented by history and social science texts, this course aims
not only to deepen students’ understanding of critical issues affecting immigrants in the United States, but also to develop the skills that will, as Charon and others argue, help them “recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved to action by the stories of others,” thus enabling them to better serve immigrant communities and populations within the arena of healthcare and other social services. While in-class activities will focus on honing the skills necessary to gain narrative competence through close and careful examination of texts, and through the practice of narrative and reflective writing, the course will also provide students opportunities for experiential learning via the Narrative Medicine Program’s partnership with Special Service Groups, Inc., through which students will be able to engage and work directly with immigrant communities in Los Angeles.

**Course Goals**

- Develop a critical understanding of the issues affecting immigrants in the United States.
- Examine the ways in which the immigrant experience and the experience of illness intersect and impact each other.
- Develop narrative competence by learning close reading and other literary analytical skills, and by practicing narrative and reflective writing.
- Explore the ways in which the principles and practice of narrative medicine can be utilized to advocate for and effect social justice, especially with regard to the concerns and issues faced by immigrant communities in Los Angeles and in the United States.

**MDED 590 Directed Research (1-2 Units)**

Individual research, reading, and writing project.

**Other Elective Opportunities**

A complete listing of all USC classes can be found online at the USC Schedule of Classes:

- Go to the website: [http://classes.usc.edu/](http://classes.usc.edu/)
- Click on the semester you are considering
- Click on Approved Departments (English, Anthropology, History, Sociology, Gender Studies, Medical Education)
- Click on a course name to see further details
- Many courses (but not all) list their respective syllabus, which provides further details about the course.
- If a syllabus is unavailable online, contact the respective department (or course director) to request a copy by email.
- Upon request, Program Directors may approve other relevant courses.
SAMPLE CLASS SCHEDULE

Fall 2020
• MDED 501 Narrative Medicine I: Witnessing, Listening, Reflecting
• MDED 503 Creative Writing and its Applications in Narrative Medicine
• MDED 510 Narrative Ethics: Illness, Disability, Equity, and Community
• MDED 504 Research Methods in Narrative Medicine

Spring 2021
• MDED 502 Narrative Medicine II: Methods and Pedagogy
• MDED 505 Intersubjectivity: Lived Bodies/Relational Selves
• MDED 511 Immigrants, Illness, and Narrative Medicine
• MDED 593 Narrative Medicine Capstone

FACULTY AND STAFF OF THE M.S. IN NARRATIVE MEDICINE PROGRAM

Director: Pamela Schaff, MD, PhD (Professor, Medical Education)
Associate Director: Erika Wright, PhD (Assistant Professor, Medical Education and Lecturer, English)
Program Coordinator: Michael Richards

A list of all faculty members and staff can be found on the Master of Science in Narrative Medicine website at: https://keck.usc.edu/narrative-medicine-ms-program
DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURES

E-Mail

It is important that students check their USC email account (your.name@usc.edu) on a regular basis. All USC-relevant information, including course-related messages and departmental announcements, will be sent to students’ USC email accounts.

The USC email system features a USC-branded Gmail account, along with Google Calendar and a Google Drive account. Google Apps at USC provides students with access to web-based word processing and spreadsheet programs, unlimited online storage, chat, and more. See details at: https://itservices.usc.edu/email/

Appointments

Students making appointments with faculty members may contact them directly. All faculty e-mail addresses are available on the Department website at:

https://keck.usc.edu/narrative-medicine-ms-program

Signatures

Please send items requiring departmental or faculty signatures to the Narrative Medicine email, nmed@usc.edu.
USC INFORMATION SOURCES

University website: https://www.usc.edu

Click on “Popular Links” (top right of website) to find general information, such as academic calendar, schedule of classes, maps, directories, etc.

Covid-19 Resource Center: https://coronavirus.usc.edu/

Registration Instructions: http://arr.usc.edu/services/registration/webregistration.html

USC Catalogue: http://catalogue.usc.edu/

Contains: General information about USC (including long-term calendars and student life information), University regulations, course offerings and requirements for every department in the University, academic policies, tuition and fees, and limited map. Published yearly.

SCampus: A Guidebook for USC Student Conduct Code and Policies

Contains: General policies; student conduct code; academic policies; free expression and dissent; policies regarding discrimination, sexual misconduct, dating violence and related issues; student organizations; safety.

Online: http://scampus.usc.edu/

The USC Graduate School: http://graduateschool.usc.edu/

USC Schedule of Classes: http://classes.usc.edu/

E-Mail Services at USC: https://itservices.usc.edu/email/

Features: The USC email system features a USC-branded Gmail account, along with Google Calendar and a Google Drive account. Google Apps at USC provides students with access to web-based word processing and spreadsheet programs, unlimited online storage, chat, and more.

Other Resources: https://sites.google.com/usc.edu/ms-scrm-2020-2021-resources/home/usc-student-services
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STANDARDS

The University prides itself in maintaining high academic integrity standards. The entire academic community benefits from the adherence to such standards. An academic integrity overview, including descriptions of dishonest acts and consequences for students found responsible, is available online at: https://sjacs.usc.edu/students/academic-integrity/.

Further information, including a number of tutorials for students, can be found online at: https://libraries.usc.edu/research/reference-tutorials. This website has tutorials such as: how to avoid plagiarism, how to prevent academic dishonesty, how to manage your research, and other useful how-to tools and tutorials.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in Section 11 of the SCampus publication (online at: https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus).

Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, ASSAULT

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://dps.usc.edu/. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Services at https://studenthealth.usc.edu/ provide 24/7 confidential support, and the Sexual Assault Resource Center webpage https://sarc.usc.edu/ describes reporting options and other resources.

OTHER SUPPORT SYSTEMS

A number of USC schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.
SPECIAL NEEDS

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the Course Director as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS-120 (University Park Campus) and is open 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Website: http://dsp.usc.edu.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Health Center on this campus (the Health Sciences Campus, HSC). The phone number is (323) 442-5631 and the website is https://studenthealth.usc.edu/. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

STUDENT COUNSELING SERVICES

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. Tel: (213) 740-9355 (WELL) – 24/7 on call. Website: https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Tel: 1-800-273-8255. Website: http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

BEYOND ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

Balancing course work, midterms, finals, and laboratory research presents a challenge and at times can feel overwhelming. On top of that, many students are far away from home and family, perhaps even their country and their native language, which can feel quite depressing. Sometimes, relationship problems come up and make life miserable. But no matter the problem, USC offers resources to help students deal with frustration, depression, anxiety, and other types of distress. USC’s services are not only geared toward helping students with academic challenges, but also with personal problems. Students in need should not hesitate to take advantage of the services that are listed above; there is no need to feel embarrassed or ashamed. USC is offering these services and resources so that students are in the best position to meet their academic and personal goals.