## Retention by Design:

Understand undergraduate persistence through multiple ways of knowing

Retention Committee, Office of the Provost  
(contact: rkorn@Lesley.edu)

In May 2015, a cross college committee was appointed to examine the retention and graduation rates of Lesley University undergraduates. The process was guided by the principles of Design Thinking.

### Design Thinking: Combining the art of knowing with the science of knowing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline/Knowledge Branch</th>
<th>Ways of Knowing/Epistemology</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Application to Retention Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Evidence Based Traditions** | Empirical, Objective, Rational, Facts, Truth, Concrete | Data Analysis, Measurement, Objective, Value Free Inquiry, Classification | Withdrawal and persistence data over 5 years  
Study of grades in General Ed courses  
Surveys: Noel Levitz, NSSE, LU 101 |
| **Logical Based Decisions** | Social & Cultural perspectives, Solutions are unique to situation, Fluid, Subjective, Context centered, Reflective | Case study/Ethnography, Interviews, Observation, Synthesis, Reflection | Student focus groups  
Faculty, student and administrator interviews  
Event observation  
Class observation  
Cultural Analysis |
| **Constructivist Traditions** | Person centered, Empathy for client, positive regard, Social justice perspective, Role of choice | Case study, Individual interviews, Emotional connection, Lived experience, Reflection | “What If” brainstorming  
Team meetings about needs: college, schools, curricula, students |
| **Humanist Traditions** | Political, social and cultural frames, Satisficing, Environmental constraints, Wicked problems, complexity | Analysis and Synthesis, Framing, Modeling, Symbolizing, Resource analysis | Analysis and synthesis of resources: human, schools and programs |
| **Systems Based Traditions** | Emergent, Metaphor, storytelling, sketching, Intuition, ambiguity, symbols, Creativity | Analysis and synthesis through creating stories, metaphor, Prototyping and testing, Iterative: design and redesign, Critique | Idea generation  
Storyboards  
Prototyping pilots- EX: LU 101/CWRIT Link; SI/Math; CLAS major declaration; Uprising & Penultimate, SAGE |

- A combination of scientific and humanistic exploration
- Produces an effective, empathetic way of understanding phenomena
- Generates a way of knowing that is interstitially artful and scientific
- Leads designers to develop innovative solutions to complex or “wicked problems”