

# Exploration 10: Mixed Methods

Code 123: Research and Systems Thinking



**Description:** Group research project with multiple milestones in weeks 13 & 14

## Deadlines:

- **Milestone 1 (Proposal)** Due: Apr 9
- **Milestone 2 (Annotated Bibliography)** Due: Apr 14
- **Final Submission** Due: Apr 28
- **Reflection:** Due Apr 31

## Overview

Throughout the semester, you have collected data using different “lenses”: Institutional datasets, historical archives, ethnographic observations, surveys, and interviews.

In research, the “truth” is rarely found in one place. Instead, we use triangulation, combining multiple methods to see where these stories align, and more importantly, where they conflict. This project is your chance to synthesize these layers to tell a story about the SIUE System.

## Milestone 1: Research Narrative

**Goal:** Document your journey from a “plan” to reality.

**Due:** Apr 9

Submit approximately 1-page (double spaced) description that answers the following:

- Describe your initial research topic and how it evolved as you encountered different constraints (like the survey results, realities of your observation, or the available archival data).
- Identify one **thematic “umbrella”** that can connect your findings across the multiple explorations we completed.
  - *Example:* If you studied mental health but your archival documents were about sports, or different events that happened on campus maybe your umbrella is “the student experience at SIUE over time”

## Milestone 2: Annotated Bibliography

**Due:** Apr 14

**Goal:** Connect your local SIUE findings to the wider research world.

- Locate **three secondary sources** (scholarly articles, reputable news, or university reports)

- **What to write for each annotation:** For each source, write one paragraph summarizing the main argument, and explaining how it relates to your project (e.g., this news article is about common student frustrations regarding limited parking on a commuter campus. This supports our finding that students at SIUE feel.....).

## Milestone 3: Final System Report (800-1,000 words)

Due: **Apr 28**

Structure your final report into logical layers of knowledge.

- I. Introduction: Campus ecosystem:
  - Introduce SIUE as the “system” you’ve been studying this semester
  - State your final research question that connects your data, even the random pieces, together. Think of this as a starting place if you were to conduct a study of SIUE in the future using your new toolkit of methods.
- II. Methods
  - Explain how you collected data across the semester, use your explorations and summarize the journey.
  - Be honest about any limitations. Did you want to find answers or data that were unavailable? How did that shape your project?
- III. Findings (Layers of Knowledge)
  - **Institutional Layer** (IPEDS Data): Using exploration 5 as a guide, describe that the “official” numerical data you examined says about SIUE.
  - **Historical/Physical Layer** (Archives and Observation): What did the archives record as “important” in the past, and how do you see students using the physical spaces of the past today?
  - **Contemporary Human Layer** (Class survey, interviews): What did you learn from the voices of your peers that the official records missed?
- IV. Triangulation (Analyze the gaps or disagreement)
  - What did the IPEDS dataset and the archival data tell you about what SIUE values as a system?
  - What did the surveys and interviews tell you about what students actually feel or do?
  - Where did the stories you were telling, or the research you ended up doing disagree? (example: I started out wanting to know more about X topic, and the survey showed Y finding, but the institutional and archival data showed me about Z).
- V. Discussion and Recommendations
  - Reflect upon what you have learned throughout this process
  - Based on what you found, what is one concrete piece of knowledge you’d like people to know about SIUE.

## Part 4: Individual Reflection (200-250 words)

Due: Apr 31

- What was the most challenging part of combining data that didn't always fit together?
- How did looking at SIUE and your research questions from multiple angles change your perspective on how research is done?
- Would you do anything differently next time?

## Grading Rubric

Criteria	A Proficient Exploration Will...	A Developing Exploration Will...	An Exploration Still in Need of Work...
<b>Milestone 1: Narrative</b>	Clearly details the transition from initial research goal to reality; provides logical thematic umbrella to connect the data points.	States a research goal but provides vague or forced umbrella; narrative is a summary of the steps taken..	Does not provide research narrative or connecting narrative; fails to acknowledge shift in research focus
<b>Milestone 2: Annotated Bibliography</b>	Includes 3 credible sources with summaries explaining how the wider world supports or complicates SIUE specific findings	Include 3 sources with vague or surface level summaries; connection to SIUE project is weak or unclear	Missing sources or uses non-credible or irrelevant citations; no summaries are provided
<b>Milestone 3: Methods &amp; Findings</b>	Defines a clear thematic umbrella connecting the original project goal to the data collected. Honestly analyzes the constraints and limitations of the methods used.	Provides a broad or weak connection between the different data types; mentions limitations but lacks detail on how they shaped the project	No clear thematic connection or bridge is provided; fails to acknowledge research limitations or constraints.

<p><b>Milestone 3:</b> <b>Triangulation &amp; Findings</b></p>	<p>Successfully integrates institutional, historical/physical, and human layers into a cohesive narrative. Analyzes where data layers disagree; explains what the tension reveals about SIUE as a system.</p>	<p>Addresses the layers but treats them as separate sections with no narrative flow; data is presented without context. Identifies differences in data but does not analyze why those differences exist or what they mean for the system.</p>	<p>Fails to address one or more layers of knowledge, does not use data collected from previous explorations. Does not attempt to reconcile or explain differences between archival, survey, and institutional data.</p>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p>	<p>Critically analyze the challenges of mixed-methods research; describe in detail changes to perspective, lessons learned, and/or future actions, projects, and goals; meets word count requirement.</p>	<p>Summarizes the steps followed but does not reflect on the value of multiple angles or reflect on the process; fall below word count requirement.</p>	<p>Does not include a reflection, or includes very vague and simplified responses.</p>