

# UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

## Dissertation DEFENSE

Exploring Middle Managers' Experiences During Disengagement from an Online Program Manager (OPM) to Support Online Program Growth in Higher Education

**February 24, 2026**

11 AM - 12 PM EST

Microsoft Teams

<https://tinyurl.com/yc4u9tb3>

**Presented by Erica L. Brillhart**

Doctoral Candidate

Educational Leadership for Social Justice

College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions

University of Hartford

### Research Study:

This study examined the experiences of middle managers with Online Program Manager (OPM) disengagement in U.S. higher education institutions. Guided by Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, this study examined how psychological constructs, including competence, relatedness, and autonomy, were impacted during the planning and separation phases of OPM disengagement. The study was conducted from the perspective of a scholar-practitioner in enrollment management, with professional institutional experience in online program administration and direct experience as a middle manager involved in OPM disengagement.



### More about the Researcher:

Erica L. Brillhart, M.S., M.Ed., currently serves as the Executive Director of Graduate and Professional Studies and is a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership for Social Justice program at the University of Hartford.

### Join the Presentation:

Tuesday, February 24, 2026, from 11 AM – 12 PM via [Microsoft Teams](#).