

Minutes – Special Meeting of the Discovery Committee – Dec 16, 2020

Present (Zoom): Nicky Gullace (chair), Kathrine Aydelott (vice chair), Sajay Arthanat, Norma Bazylnski, Jay Colbert, Andy Colby, Roger Grinde, Jenny Hargenrader, Lisa MacFarlane, Greg McMahon, Alicia Medros, Catherine Peebles

Absent: Subhash Minocha, Sarah Prescott (*sent notes*), Charles Vannette

Guest: Barb White, CHHS Faculty, UNH Accreditation Liaison Officer – NECHE

I. **Welcome and Announcements** – Nicky welcomed Barb White, UNH Accreditation Liaison Officer – NECHE, for discussion of Discovery course syllabi, assessment, and accreditation.

II. Discussion

Barb White started the discussion by presenting what types(s) of evidence NECHE will be looking for regarding the Discovery Program as part of the 2023 accreditation review. This includes: critical information about the Discovery Program posted (website) and easy to find (“Aunt Miriam Rule” – nothing should be more than three clicks away); whether Discovery syllabi are reflective of the 3 or 4 credits a student will earn, include how students are judged within a course, and if the course learning outcomes and the Discovery Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are stated in the syllabus. The DC should also be reviewing syllabi for adherence to the SLOs.

For program assessment, what NECHE will want to see is evidence of how we assess the Discovery Program, including how our program is delivering on what we promise, how we judge this, and how we know a student has moved from the first assignment to the last assignment.

Discovery syllabi

Nicky commented that going forward we could require SLOs, credit hours, etc., on Discovery syllabi, but we could not go back and ask faculty to revise syllabi already approved and asked if this is going to be acceptable to NECHE. Barb responded that as long we can show good faith in these efforts, for ex, motions passed, and have documentation from that point to point of review, yes. She pointed out that NECHE understands these things take time at mid-to-large institutions. What is expected is best effort and evidence of that effort.

The group discussed whether having a Discovery syllabi template or checklist of what is expected on a Discovery course syllabus for faculty would be a good idea. It was agreed this would be a good idea as long as any guiding template allowed room for personalization (academic freedom).

A DC member commented that they were in favor generally of a syllabus template to provide a consistent delivery of important standard course info to students. They suggested, in addition, that sample statements be provided as well, with faculty being able to adapt or adopt as is, but for the DC to all agree on sections that must be included on all syllabi so that every course is compliant and students know where to look for information and can have clear and consistent expectations. Whatever faculty wish to add to syllabi after these standard sections would be up to each faculty member.

Assessment

It was suggested that we could add a question (or questions) related to Discovery category SLOs to course evaluations (Blue or Qualtrics). The question (or questions) would be related to the course and SLOs and would not be an evaluation of the instructor. (e.g., like the INQ course supplementary evaluation questions.)

Lisa MacFarlane informed the DC that the Academic Policies Committee of the Faculty Senate is charged with bringing a “roadmap” to the senate for how students move through their 4-year career at UNH and that they would like to eventually add one question per Discovery category course evaluation.

It was pointed out that evaluation questions are not a bad idea but give us subjective data and for assessment we need objective data.

Another idea for assessing the Discovery Program included whether, with permission of faculty, there could be review of student artifact to see how students progressed from first assignment to last assignment. For ex, did the student learn required elements, show progress in what they learned? (Student artifact would be anonymous.)

As there are hundreds of Discovery courses, it was suggested that a representative sample of 20% of courses per category could be measured against a rubric. For ex, for a Physical Science (PS) with DLAB course – measure lab report assignments against a rubric that asks if students are using hypothesis testing and other requirements of a DLAB course.

Other assessment ideas discussed included: a quiz at the beginning of the semester and a quiz at the end of the semester for assessment, then have a DC sub-committee review quiz results. In response to that idea, concerns about faculty panels for Discovery assessment were raised and it was suggested it may be better if we could find willing faculty who would do assessment of their own Discovery course that would be better. For ex, an exam that includes questions tied to the Discovery SLOs.

Further discussion included the question of how much flexibility we have as an institution as to how we conduct assessment. For ex, faculty in the Humanities may feel the assessment tools are unfriendly to the Humanities. It was noted that as the institution systematizes assessment, there has to be variability across disciplines. Barb commented that we are asked to measure the tangibles we can. For ex, writing, math skills, science knowledge. For the Humanities, the recommendation would be to pick one outcome to deliver on.

The question of how the Discovery assessment information will be shared with departments came up.

It was commented that we need to be sure these Discovery assessment activities are sustainable. Our comparators have assessment offices that assist with these efforts. Asking the DC members to do this work seems like too much.

The DC thanked Barb for attending the meeting and talking through ideas for Discovery Program and course assessment, as well as their concerns and questions. Barb thanked the group for their time and commitment to this work.

Next Steps –

- There will be a NECHE SLO Assessment Planning workshop at the end of January. Information/invites will be sent by email.
- The DC syllabus sub-committee will have its first meeting in mid-Feb to begin work on developing a template or checklist of what is expected on Discovery course syllabi. Nicky thanked Kathrine Aydelott, Sajay Arthanat, Roger Grinde and Alicia Medros for agreeing to serve on the sub-committee.

Happy Holidays, everyone!

Meeting adjourned 2:05pm.

Submitted by Amy M. Oliva