Council Minutes
Executive Committee of the Department Heads Council
325 Burruss Hall
8-9:30am
November 3, 2015

Attending: Stephanie Adams (Engineering Education); Jackie Bixler (Foreign Languages & Lit.); Kevin Concannon (School of Visual Arts); David Cox (Chemical Engineering); Greg Daniel (Small Animal Clinical Sciences); Ron Fricker (Statistics); Matt Hulver (HNFE); Nancy McGehee (Hospitality and Tourism Management); Rick Rudd (Agriculture & Extension Education); Joel Snodgrass (Fish and Wildlife Conservation); Anisa Zvonkovic (Human Development); Peter Dolittle (Director of CIDER); Steve (Assistant Provost for Assessment and Evaluation)

Rapporteur: Maureen McCusker

8:30am Steve Culver, Peter Dolittle, and Maureen McCusker entered session.

Welcome by Stephanie Adams

This year the DHEC is asking senior university leaders to address issues and concerns, so the Committee has asked Steve Culver and Peter Dolittle to talk about some issues related to CIDER and assessment.

Discussion with Peter Dolittle and Steve Culver

Steve Culver review issues to be addressed in this meeting:

SPOT, WEAVE, AQI, program assessment

Steve Culver first discussed program assessment:

- Every year every degree program (undergraduate and graduate) needs to submit a report including degree outcomes, learning outcomes, and program outcomes.
  - This is good for assessment; accrediting bodies now need this report yearly.
- Academic program review: formerly known as AQI
  - This program is being overhauled. It formerly included assembling a 25 page document, but now it is only two pages. However, since this change, people have replied saying they prefer the six page document with more detail. The result is that this review can now be a 2-pager and 6-pager.
  - It must be completed every 5 years, but they are considering moving it to six years.
  - Right now, the focus is on limiting the number of reports faculty have to complete. For example, if they already are doing a review for accreditation, then
they are looking for ways to merge the accreditation report with the academic program review.

- **Steve Culver asked the Committee to help think about ways to collect data to inform the decision making regarding program review.**

- **DH Question:** You said you could do focus group for undergraduate assessment purposes, correct?
  - **Steve Culver Response:** we could do a focus group, a semi-small group where people could share suggestions.

- **DH Question:** Our Department is looking to do the same thing, but we are struggling because of confidentiality issues. Is that something we could use you for?
  - **Steve Culver Response:** Yes

- **DH Question:** One thing I’m finding myself doing is gathering data from all of these different points that I don’t even have time to sit down with the faculty to talk about the data. It would be a lot easier if the package came with the data that is distributed through the office of Institutional research and effectiveness and career services, etc. If that all came together, then we could spend more time talking about the data with the faculty.
  - **Steve Culver Response:** I’m glad to hear you say that, because that is exactly what we’re doing. The problem is, we’re hoping to do that next year.

- **Steve Culver Comment:** We are happy to come back and talk to your faculty about this personally if that would help.

- **DH question:** My Department, who has a bunch of faculty who teach assessment, have their own ideas as to how to collect data and assessment and some do not agree with the assessment practices that you use. Do you have any ideas how we can work with them?
  - **Peter Doolittle Response:** Given differences in SACCHs language, it is possible that your faculty are actually saying the same thing in a different way. We are trying to bend all the mandates to fit department work as much as possible, because if the you are not invested in this work and it doesn’t help you, then it does not make sense.
  - **DH response:** The moral of the story is that we really need to focus on how to get shared meaning.

**Steve Culver next discussed WEAVE:**

- **WEAVE is no longer a competitive player in the software world. As a result, Virginia Tech is now looking at TK20 and campuslabs, which allow faculty to enter student data, pull that data from the learning management system and pair them with outcomes. At the moment, Virginia Tech is still using WEAVE (mainly more as a repository), but is in the process of looking for better software quickly.**

**Steve Culver next discussed SPOT:**
• Steve Culver and Peter Doolittle both agree that SPOT is not very effective.
• There are several issues related to SPOT:
  o Is SPOT a teacher evaluation or course evaluation?
  o How do we handle the low response rate?
  o How we report SPOT results?
• The system is broken, and we are looking for ways to “de-couple” the teacher evaluation and the course evaluation, as they are both measured by SPOT.

Peter Doolittle discussed SPOT:

• Virginia Tech does not have a good measure of faculty performance relative to their teaching. Spot actually is trying to measure 2-3 things. So the goal is to work toward marking SPOT a survey that measures course performance only.
• The question that remains is how to measure faculty performance?
  o One idea is to conduct measure observations from peers and from experts from plus CIDER and/or the Office of Assessment of Evaluation.
    ▪ About 3 years ago, Virginia Tech conducted a survey measuring how departments conduct peer evaluations, and they found there’s no standard way of doing it.

Q & A with Steve Culver and Peter Doolittle:

• DH Comment: I, personally, do not think faculty will want to put in any criticisms in these evaluations, because they do not have access to the results. I do not know why Virginia Tech has decided not to provide SPOT results to students, but I think that if students were allowed access to the responses, then they would be more likely to respond to them.
  o Peter Doolittle Response: Yes, this is something Virginia Tech is considering.
• DH comment: We have found the mid-semester very helpful in increasing likelihood that students respond to SPOT.
• DH Comment: Virginia Tech is ultimately interested in learning outcomes, but none of these evaluations actually assess learning outcomes.
• DH Comment: Does anyone have any recommendations for what people can do about online class assessment?
  o Steve Culver Response: Response rates online are very much reflective of the sense of community for each of the classes. SO whatever you can do to build that community should increase response rates.
• DH Comment: I’m not so sure if people actually care about this evaluation. I’m more inclined to think that people should fix the systems in place instead of implementing the new one.
• DH Comment: There are no guidelines in the Promotion & Tenure packet for what a peer evaluation should be. That is why I think it is not people do not take peer evaluations very seriously here.
• **DH Comment:** I’m a little concerned about how this formative evaluation will be used. I’m concerned that it also be designed for multiple purposes.
  o **Steve Culver Response:** I agree, and this is something they are working on.
• **DH Comment:** Another issues to consider would be to conduct assessments at two time points. This is hard to make decisions based on so few time points.
  o **Response:** Yes, if this is the direction they want to go, then that number will need to be “upped.”
• **DH Question:** What is the plan for moving forward? I think there are a lot of issues (e.g. if we call it “peer evaluations” and CIDER runs it, then it’s not really peer; however, it might be good to have CIDER run it because they are really well trained).
• **DH Follow-up:** This will be good to bring up tomorrow at the forum. Perhaps this is a good issue address: to what degree is teaching important across campus?
• **DH Comment:** I am looking for some new evaluations in my department, and I am currently working with graduate students who are already looking at alternative assessment methods. Thus, I am volunteering to be a guinea pig for that.
• **DH Question:** How many more people do you think you’ll need to bring on board to run this initiative?
  o **Steve Culver Response:** At least 2 more, but I think we also can work on training the people are already have (i.e. making them better at what they already do).
• **DH Comment:** Like you said, with regard to faculty review, a response rate of 5/35 is not something that can be used in the review process.
• **DH Comment:** I also suggest gathering some information and data from faculty around this school as to what they are already doing, because that might help with buy-in.
• **Steve Culver Comment:** If the Department Heads have any information, suggestions and/or know who on campus is doing assessment, please let Peter know.
  o **Peter Doolittle follow-up:** We feel your pain and are hearing you.
• **DH Question:** So SPOT is not going anywhere soon?
  o **Peter Doolittle Response:** Part of what kick-started this SPOT conversation is the change in Scholar, because SPOT is so closely tied to Scholar. Even if SPOT does interface with the new Scholar, the issue lies with the process and the instrument. We the idea is to first address the process and the measure.
• **DH Question:** This is something that is happening everywhere, poor scales with bad response rates?
  o **Steve Culver Response:** Yes, this scale is not effective and it not taking place in class really hurts the response rates.

9:35 session ended.