Meeting Notes
NSHE E-Learning Task Force
Wednesday, January 15, 2014

Attendees: Mark Fink, Dan Klaich, Erika Beck, Caroline Bruno, Cynthia Clark, Paul Davis, Darren Divine, Lisa Frazier, Christian Fritsen, Richard Kloes, Fred Lokken, Ed Nagelhout, Terry Norris, Alex Porter, Toni Scinta, Jeffrey Wong, Robert Wynegar

Other attendees: Crystal Abba, Renee Davis, Shari Sanchez

1. **Reports from Remedial Math and English Work Groups**
   Sheri Sanchez and Elaine Bunker reported on the progress of the two e-learning work groups. The Math group met on Jan. 8, discussed how they want their overall program to look, and assigned tasks. The group had an interesting discussion about AccuPlacer; they view it as a good starting point, but for remedial work the group wants to create something different -- perhaps a module system with a pre-test categorized by specific skills so students can go right where they need to go. Vendors and other topics will be discussed at future meetings, which are scheduled for every Monday at 2pm.

   Nancy Flagg reported on behalf of English work group lead Elaine Bunker. The group met on Jan. 13 and assigned tasks. Between now and Feb. 3 the members will break up into subgroups to look at what other state systems are doing and to review vendor products and services. The group discussed a wish list of electronic systems for remedial education that are not currently available in NSHE or are not well developed. Examples included a centralized repository for sharing placement scores and e-portfolios between and within institutions, an inventoried library of videos and other materials already created within NSHE, a better system for web conferencing among faculty, and reading modules tied to discipline-specific classes.

   The Task Force asked if Florida's experiment with remedial math and English is being examined. Sheri Sanchez said the group is looking at Florida, California, Tennessee, Texas, Georgia, Wisconsin, Ohio, Colorado, Montana, North Carolina, and North Dakota. These states were selected because their higher education institutions are actively participating in a statewide program.

   The Task Force asked if the work groups are looking at alternative placement methods. Both groups will be doing this.

2. **Discussion about Master Courses**
   The Task Force discussed the portion of its charge relating to the creation of master courses, how this might function in Nevada, and what guidance to give the e-Ncore work group about this topic. Mark Fink noted that he has heard feedback privately from Task Force members as well as faculty who are concerned with this concept. The generalized fear is that the state will want there to be one course offered to all students in the state. There are pros and cons to moving forward with modules/assets or full courses or both. Having available a variety of modules/assets/rich-learning media objects would benefit faculty by providing them with shared content and allow more flexibility to course design, while also providing faculty with

extra time to focus on outcomes. Ideally, this pathway could encourage more faculty to teach online overall.

Lisa Frazier added that that modules need to be focused on learning objectives and be assessment-based. An effective module has specific objectives, formative/summative assessments, rich multimedia activities, and conforms to Quality Matters standards. Assets are pieces of modules that should be donated to the repository.

Dan Klaich asked for clarification between a statewide repository and the concept of the e-Ncore. Mark Fink envisions that e-Ncore could facilitate the creation of a centralized repository, into which online faculty could submit modules, visual elements, content, etc. Buying or building assets are both real costs. Something like Google Analytics would make it easy to find what the faculty member is looking for.   There could be a master outline for online courses and shared marketing. Ideally, the course description could be differentiated at the section level and learning outcomes could be posted statewide. This approach could respect differential missions while still putting together a full-force effort at the state level.

Several Task Force members said that use of the term "master course" is a problem. If you present a skeletal outline that faculty can add to, it is more palatable and simply a different way of meeting the end. Asset development is the trend in online education. What would be the drawback to creating a NSHE website where all online courses taught at each institution are listed and students would then go there to choose whichever course they want to take? Fred Lokken said NSHE did this before, but it wasn't marketed and was highly problematic. Providing a long list of ENG 101 courses is not what will help students. If you look at other systems who offer statewide online courses, they are doing more than merely sharing their inventory.

Darren Divine also noted the community colleges have a mission to serve their own communities. He believes the Task Force needs to think about criteria for allocation of seats. Who gets priority to register when a course is only offered through one institution – e.g., can Southern Nevada students take up all the seats in a course taught through UNR or GBC? What if a course is the final degree requirement of a UNR or GBC student but there are no openings because students from other NSHE institutions have taken all the seats? Lisa Frazier said that GBC has a system for dealing with some of these issues.

Chris Fritsen supports the idea of a repository and sees red flags with master courses but asked from a consumer's perspective, what about a blended model with master courses plus a repository? Mark Fink noted that ENG 101 is already articulated across the state. Perhaps the approach is to have these faculty agree on statewide learning objectives/goals for ENG 101. Then individual courses could still be offered by faculty but students could be assured that any of them will meet degree requirements.

Dan Klaich thought the charge was to develop master courses and have them in a central place and make them more accessible to students statewide. Focusing solely on a repository feels like something different. The concept of e-Ncore is to develop online courses for general availability to students, with the focus on students' needs.

Kevin Carman used the example that biology departments currently teach multiple sections of BIO 101, whereby the faculty agreed on the textbook, learning outcomes, visual aids, etc.

Faculty then put their own stamp on the content within that structure. Why can't this work for online courses without it being controversial?

Lisa Frazier pointed out that vendors already offer e-course packs and some are really good quality. Yet faculty are still choosing to develop their own courses. Even if you develop master courses of high quality, the faculty may still choose to develop their own content because that is what they are comfortable with.

Kevin Carman said that UNR is hosting a workshop where it has solicited applications from the academic colleges to identify faculty to teach courses of critical importance to the curriculum and convert those courses into an online format. Faculty can put their own stamp on the course, but the basic materials would be commonly provided. Faculty selected for the workshop will then have an obligation to offer the course in an online format the following year. Through this method, UNR hopes to create a cadre of these faculty. Dr. Carman suggested bringing together faculty from NSHE campuses to start developing modules for an ENG 101 and basic math course with content available to other faculty teaching the same course with the same defined outcomes.

Tony Scinta asked if the task force is operating under the assumption that students at any NSHE institution have similar needs and characteristics. How to you design a master course that meets different needs? Kevin replied that the point of e-learning is to make available core curriculum classes to students who might not be able to take the courses on a physical campus and make them more broadly accessible. From this perspective, the assumption is that students are more or less the same. It doesn't mean advisors cannot steer them to take a different course or in a different format based on the student's individual needs, characteristics and abilities, but the goal is to provide a different mode of delivery that supplements what is already offered.

Dan Klaich said he would like to focus on one word Kevin mentioned –creating an option for students. The goal is not to direct anybody to do anything. It is realizing that different students learn in different ways and creating an optional path for them to learn. No one is saying this is the only way for it to be done. We have to agree that the content of the master course meets agreed-upon learning outcomes and is sufficient to move on to the next course in the sequence, while allowing the professor to add individualized content as desired. The focus needs to be on student progression to success. While somewhat related to faculty development, they are distinct. Students are already choosing ways to learn from competitors, and the reason is that the classes are not available through NSHE.

Dan added that he hopes the Task Force gets to the discussion about third-party vendors. Are we inventing the wheel or buying someone else's wheel? Mark Fink noted the work groups are looking at vendors, and the Task Force will invite recommended vendors to present what they offer.

Mark Fink attempted to summarize a potential pathway: Define a master course (possibly calling it something different) as an offering that is available through a central repository as an option for students in addition to other options already provided by NSHE institutions. It would be Quality Matters certified, portable, modular, accepted by all NSHE institutions, and could be peer-reviewed.   We still would need to determine: Who will be on the team to develop the

course? Would faculty have to submit proposals for general education courses developed for online instruction? Do we start with just math and English and establish a template to expand upon?

3. **Discussion about Business Plans and Budgets**
   The Task Force began a discussion about how to proceed with providing a business plan and budget for remedial courses and e-Ncore to fulfill that portion of the chancellor's charge to the committee. Mark Fink asked if Task Force member Jeffrey Wong would be interested in spearheading this for remedial math and English only? Jeff said the budget is just the manifestation of the recommendations that come forward from the work groups and is somewhat sequential. Two months lead time will be needed, although some of the pieces can be started ahead of time as the work group begins to develop recommendations. Jeff thinks the basic elements and deliverables in-house can be done in-house and then hire an outside consultant for a final business plan. Mark and Jeff will follow up on this.

4. **Logistical Obstacles to Online Education in NSHE**
   Because of time constraints, this item was tabled.

5. **New Business**
   The task force may discuss any new business that should be addressed.
   a. Status of e-Ncore Work Group
      Nancy Flagg reported that she still needs representatives from NSC, WNC, and UNR.