Ivy Tech Discipline Dialogues

**Background:** Ivy Tech faculty rarely have the opportunity to collaborate with each other outside of regions. When large numbers of faculty are gathered in places like curriculum committee meetings or the Program Chair Summit, the agenda is often both rigid and filled with business items, limiting opportunities to have conversations that are focused on teaching and learning. These kinds of conversations build faculty morale, facilitate thinking and action on academic quality, student engagement, and student success, enhance collaboration between faculty, and add to faculty sense of ownership of the curriculum.

For more than fifteen years, the state of Utah has been engaging in the practice of annual “Majors Meetings.” The meetings gather faculty from all public 2 and 4 year institutions in the state to discuss important curricular matters. These meetings are organized by discipline, meaning that all historians meet as a group, all engineers, etc. The unifying element of these meetings is the academic discipline of the faculty, not geography, campus, type of school, or faculty rank.

**Proposed:** Ivy Tech, under the umbrella of faculty professional development, should convene annual Discipline Dialogues, gathering all full-time faculty from across the state, by academic discipline, to engage in discussions about teaching, learning, and assessment.

**Agenda Items:** For the initial meetings in fall ’15, the following are potential items for discussion:

Statewide transfer pathways, student engagement practices, defining academic quality (revised ASOM 6.12), service learning options (ASOM 6.17), alignment of curricular pathways, program review data, student performance data, teaching critical thinking, mapping program outcomes to courses, improving student success and outcomes, “Top 14” courses (where applicable), courses that have been “globalized”

For subsequent annual meetings, the following are potential items for discussion, with the flexibility to add items as circumstances warrant:

Alignment of curricular pathways, alternative pathways employer engagement, program review data, student performance data, best practices in assessment, teaching “employable skills” (critical thinking, problem solving, communication, teamwork, etc.), legislative developments with implications for faculty, scholarship of teaching, learning, and assessment, TGEC

**Logistics:** For fall ’15 the meeting will be held on Thursday, August 13 and the Central Indiana region will host, utilizing space at Fall Creek and Lawrence to convene faculty. Roughly 60 groups will be gathered, some with dozens of participants and others with a single full-time faculty member.

Subsequent meetings could be done with rotating host campuses that have sufficient capacity and/or with the option for teleconferencing to manage costs.

Meetings will be organized through the Office of the Provost and will include suggested topics. These meetings will allow for significant customization per academic discipline so that faculty can discuss the issues they find most pressing.

Meetings for fall ’15 will be led by the statewide program lead chair. They will serve as timekeeper and move the group through the agenda. Leads will be prepared to facilitate through a series of mid-
summer teleconferences that will briefly outline logistics and expectations of the meetings. Central Office staff, VCAA’s, and deans could serve as rotating contributors, stepping into multiple meetings throughout the day to consult on particular questions or simply observe.

Subsequent meetings may see a rotation of leadership, freeing the lead chair to be a more traditional participant. Leadership could move from region to region, with Ft Wayne program chairs (or designated faculty) serving as meeting leaders one year and Bloomington the next, for example. Preparation for leading the meetings could be done as part of the Program Chair Summit each spring.

**Meeting outcomes:** With an eye on preventing these meetings from becoming an extension of curriculum committee meetings, expectations for “deliverables” should be kept minimal. While specific activities may require some products, the standard product of these meetings should be detailed notes of the conversation, including identification of any projects undertaken and any workgroups or committees formed (and membership), appropriate timelines for work completion, action steps to be undertaken, and budget implications. These notes should be submitted to the Division VP’s and the Assistant VP for Assessment and Academic Policy for review before classes begin in the fall semester.