**SCHEV Feedback on Course Descriptions**

**Fall 2022**

Background

When SCHEV staff members evaluate proposals for new degree programs, they rely on course descriptions to determine the substance of the proposed curriculum, and whether or not the curriculum is aligned with the stated purpose of the program, with the learning outcomes, and with the employment skills.

Course descriptions are particularly critical to proposals for new certificate programs as there are fewer elements in the proposal itself to illuminate the purpose of the certificate.

Often, SCHEV feedback will include questions about a proposal claiming that the program will develop a specific level of understanding, or a specific skill, when there is nothing discernable in the course descriptions to support that claim. Although that specificity and detail may be available in course syllabi, SCHEV staff have only the content of the course descriptions for curriculum assessment.

SCHEV Guidance

SCHEV staff have not provided a template or sample language for course descriptions. SCHEV staff understand that language in a course description needs to maintain latitude for how different faculty will approach the course. Providing the fundamental information of what students will learn is key. Here’s what SCHEV staff are looking for in the body of a course description:

* Is the course content clear to a lay audience?
* Is the main emphasis of the course evident?
* Will students be able to discern what the course will provide?
* Does the course description include actionable learning outcomes (what students will examine, study, explore, develop, analyze, etc.)?
* Are any innovative or unexpected elements of the course included in the description?

Next Steps

Curriculum Committees that have established guidelines specific to their academic unit regarding the development of course descriptions may wish to share these with Undergraduate/Graduate Council members.