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# Fostering an Inclusive Learning Environment Through Course Development: A Program Evaluation

## Abstract

This evaluation was chosen to address the desire of students to see themselves and their lived experiences in their coursework at University College, the location of this study. The purpose was to complete a utilization-focused evaluation that assessed first, the formal and informal practices involved in the course development process within an academic department at University College, University of Denver, and second to determine the extent to which the course development process contributes to an inclusive learning environment. Data were collected using qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews of key stakeholders in the course development process, observations of weekly course development meetings, and review of documents used throughout the process. The data were reviewed and coded for elements and themes relevant to the evaluation's purpose. Findings were analyzed in relation to the evaluation questions which centered on documenting the existing course development process including the formal and informal practices that are employed which contribute to an inclusive learning environment, and assessing the extent to which the course development process fosters and supports an inclusive learning environment. The findings highlighted the emphasis of informal over formal practices guided by the instructional designer, and that, while there is support for subject matter experts during the process, the focus on structural and temporal aspects of the course design process may be sidelining conversations and work toward inclusive practices. Recommendations that emerged from the evaluation included (a) creating a more equitable process for selecting subject matter experts; (b) leveraging a culture shift at University College to support ongoing improvement efforts; (c) creating opportunities to bring more perspectives and worldviews into the design and development process so that students can see themselves and their lived experiences reflected in the course content; and (d) centering inclusive practices in both the course development process itself as well as within the course content. Recommendations for future research and process improvement efforts focus on the connection to other elements of teaching and learning such as teaching practice, instructor engagement, and the development of a learning community among students, and creating processes and practices that allow students and their instructors to interrogate the white, eurocentric, cis-het, patriarchal structures that dominate the landscape of higher education.

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Fostering an Inclusive Learning Environment Through Course Development: A Program  
Evaluation

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A Dissertation in Practice

Presented to  
the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education  
University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by

Rachel K. Rogers

August 2023

Advisor: Michele Tyson, Ed.D.

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This evaluation was chosen to address the desire of students to see themselves and their lived experiences in their coursework at University College, the location of this study. The purpose was to complete a utilization-focused evaluation that assessed first, the formal and informal practices involved in the course development process within an academic department at University College, University of Denver, and second to determine the extent to which the course development process contributes to an inclusive learning environment. Data were collected using qualitative methods including semi-structured interviews of key stakeholders in the course development process, observations of weekly course development meetings, and review of documents used throughout the process. The data were reviewed and coded for elements and themes relevant to the evaluation's purpose. Findings were analyzed in relation to the evaluation questions which centered on documenting the existing course development process including the formal and informal practices that are employed which contribute to an inclusive learning environment, and assessing the extent to which the course development process fosters and supports an inclusive learning environment. The findings highlighted the emphasis of informal over formal practices guided by the instructional designer, and that, while there is support for subject matter experts during the process, the focus on structural and temporal aspects of the course design process may be sidelining

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

In the wake of high-profile, violent hate crimes, the fixation of parents and politicians on critical race theory in primary schools, and the silencing of teachers regarding the use of gender-affirming language, students in higher education are thinking more critically about how their courses reflect and respect their own identities and lived experiences (Casellas Connors & McCoy, 2022; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). These events and the subsequent reactions from students have brought to the forefront the need to interrogate how graduate-level courses are designed and developed to create a learning environment that allows students to see their own identities and lived experiences within the content of their courses. Although previous research on the retention of students from minoritized groups focused on personal factors like poor academic achievement, low test scores, and lack of self-confidence (Gardner, 2008; González, 2006), more recent research explores the institutional responsibility to attract and retain students (Noguera, 2001) and the complex individual and environmental factors that impact students' ability to persist and successfully complete their graduate studies (Trent et al., 2021). As institutions of higher learning grapple with the evolving needs and demands of their students, it is imperative that they prioritize those practices that foster and support the creation of inclusive learning spaces.

Graduate programs are enrolling an increasingly diverse student body with regard to race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, culture, social class, dis/ability, and age

(Espinosa et al., 2019; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018; O'Neill & Conron et al, 2022; Reber & Sinclair, 2020). As a result of this shift, educators are being encouraged to explore how classroom environments, course content and designs, and curriculum structures foster the creation of inclusive spaces, both physical and virtual, for students to discuss the pressing social issues of the day and confront systems of oppression (Penner, 2018; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020; Williams et al., 2020). Despite the increasing diversity among graduate students, appointed faculty continue to be predominantly white, middle-aged men while adjunct instructors and lecturers are mostly white, middle-aged women. (House Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021; U.S Government Accountability Office, 2017). This diversity gap creates a disconnect between the backgrounds and experiences of students and their instructors (Williams et al., 2020). A largely white faculty impacts what gets taught, whose voices are amplified, and which cultures and perspectives are included in course content and in the classroom (Bonilla-Silva & Baiocchi, 2001; Stout et al., 2018).

One of the ways higher education institutions have been addressing the aforementioned issues is by implementing strategies to create an inclusive learning environment. The concept of an inclusive learning environment has been prevalent in the literature for decades (Collett & Serrano, 1992; Dewsbury & Brame, 2019; Dowling et al., 2021; Penner, 2018; Williams et al., 2005). What makes for this type of environment, and how does it contribute to confronting issues of racism, sexism and genderism, nativism, classism, ableism, ageism, and other discriminatory acts? It is clear in the

literature that relying on compositional diversity alone as a strategy to increase cultural understanding is not enough (Cabrera et al., 1998; Hurtado et al., 1998; Slay et al., 2019). Brownell and Swaner (2009) reported that a positive learning community enables all members to participate at their level of ability and comfort in an environment that supports a safe place for questioning and making mistakes. When students feel comfortable enough to bring their true and authentic selves to learning, to question what they are learning, from whom they are learning, and what they are learning, they are more likely to be engaged and successful (Cabrera et al., 1998; Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). An inclusive learning environment doesn't just feel good to students and instructors. In fact, it is well documented that when students express feeling welcomed, included, seen, and respected in their classes, they are more likely to do well in those classes and persist in their programs (Gurin et al., 2009; Sathy & Hogan, 2019). An inclusive learning environment recognizes that students come to their programs and courses with multiple, intersecting identities, steeped in historical and current social context, and diverse personal experiences that will influence how they engage in the higher education environment (Morgan & Houghton, 2011).

While instructor engagement, teaching practices, and the class atmosphere or climate, all play important roles in contributing to an inclusive learning environment (Armstrong, 2011; Loya, 2020), if the content of the course itself does not reflect the lived experiences of its students it prompts the question of, "inclusion into what?" (A Harvard Educational Review forum with Alim et al., 2017, p23). How a course is developed to include content and perspectives beyond the white, eurocentric, patriarchal narrative is vital in supporting



teaching practices and the climate within the learning community (Cabrera et al., 1998; Penner, 2018; Williams et al., 2005). An important factor in fostering and supporting an inclusive learning environment is the content being delivered to students in the physical or virtual classroom (McLoughlin, 2001; Williams et al., 2020). Elements that may be considered as part of course content can include expected outcomes, learning materials and readings, discussion prompts, assignments, and assessment tools. These elements are present in most every course no matter the modality of delivery; online, in-person; or a combination of the two.

In recent years, there has been a heightened awareness among students in higher education regarding the need for courses that reflect and respect their identities and lived experiences. This awareness, driven by increasing numbers of hate crimes, political interference in education (Casellas Connors & McCoy, 2022; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016), and a growing body of research on institutional responsibility for student success (Noguera, 2001; Trent, et al., 2021), has spurred a growing recognition of the importance of designing and developing graduate-level courses that create a learning environment where students can see themselves represented. Given the increasing diversity among graduate students, there is a need to address the gap between the backgrounds and experiences of students and their instructors. To address these issues, higher education institutions have implemented strategies to create inclusive learning environments that confront various forms of discrimination and systems of oppression (Penner, 2018; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020; Williams et al., 2020). An inclusive learning environment that recognizes the intersecting identities of its participants not only benefits students and

instructors emotionally but also contributes to better academic performance and program persistence (Gurin et al., 2009; Sathy & Hogan, 2019). In addition to instructor engagement and teaching practices, the content of the courses themselves plays a vital role in creating an inclusive learning environment (McLoughlin, 2001; Williams et al., 2020). It is essential to include diverse perspectives and narratives within course content so that students may bring their authentic selves to their coursework (Cabrera et al., 1998; Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011).

### **Problem Statement**

Students identifying as members of traditionally marginalized populations at University College, University of Denver, the institution at the center of the evaluation, have expressed their frustrations with the lack of representation in learning materials and the lack of agency in selecting topics that allow for the integration of their lived experiences. Although University College has the most diverse population at the University of Denver, students identifying as members of minoritized groups continue to be small in number (University of Denver, 2022). These students have reported experiencing stereotyping and being used as the sole source of diversity in the classroom. This phenomenon, known as tokenism, occurs when students from minoritized groups are encouraged, even required, to recount potentially painful and traumatizing events in their lives for the benefit of the rest of the, predominantly white, class (Kanter, 1977; Niemann, 2016).

University College retains the services of adjunct instructors who are experts in their industries but may or may not have formal teaching experience. For this reason, as well

as for the ability to deliver a consistent, high-quality curriculum for students, instructors are provided with a curated set of course materials including expected outcomes, learning materials and readings, discussion prompts, and assignments within the learning management system (LMS), Canvas. This organizational practice presents the need to evaluate course development at the academic department and college level as it pertains to supporting the promotion of an inclusive learning environment. Research shows that course materials and assignments that do not allow students to see themselves reflected in the course curriculum or to learn about topics that directly impact their lives may be a deterrent to engagement in a course, retention in the program, and satisfaction with their learning experience (Faulkner et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2014).

The problem to be addressed in this evaluation is to understand the practices, both formal and informal, within course development that foster an inclusive learning environment exclusive of the course modality and with the knowledge that there will inevitably be variations in the compositional diversity of students and instructors within any given class. It is necessary to understand the course development process and its contribution to a learning environment that is able to support adjunct instructors in their inclusive practice and resolve the frustrations felt by students in their classes.

### **Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this evaluation encompasses two distinct aspects. First, the evaluation aimed to investigate the formal and informal practices involved in the course development process within a specific academic department at University College. Second, the evaluation focused on assessing the extent to which the course development

process contributes to fostering an inclusive learning environment. The data and insights obtained through this evaluation were subsequently utilized to generate recommendations to inform decision-making regarding the implementation of a program aimed at continuous improvement of the course development process, with the ultimate goal of creating a more inclusive learning environment for all students, particularly those belonging to marginalized groups.

Why is this evaluation needed now, here at University College? Student feedback, particularly regarding the lack of representation of people of color in course content, and the desires of some staff and faculty members to challenge the dominant, white, euro-centric, hetero-normative, patriarchal narrative within courses at University College has fueled the support to update major curricular elements across academic programs through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This initiative to create a more inclusive learning environment began several years ago, before the COVID-19 pandemic, but was paused due to competing priorities. Most recently, with a return to an increased capacity for project work, the dean and leadership team have expressed support for, and have agreed to provide resources for, a committee to address issues of DEI including equitable hiring practices, inclusive curriculum development and teaching practices, as well as internal staff and faculty development. This evaluation was embedded into the committee work on inclusive curriculum development to ensure the programs and processes that emerge from this work are in fact beneficial for students and meet the intended goal of creating a more inclusive learning environment.

Action to change often comes as a reaction to crisis rather than a proactive plan for continuous improvement (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). University College is no exception. This has led to problems with moving initiatives forward, with the implementation and adoption of new processes, and with program sustainability. Projects at University College have historically had loosely defined goals and metrics that were sometimes chosen to confirm solutions favored by leadership. Programs have rarely gone through any type of formal evaluation unless directly tied to issues of accreditation. Over the past two years, with the addition of an assistant dean charged with developing more data-informed processes, there has been a shift to collecting, analyzing, sharing, and using more robust data about the student experience, about adjunct faculty performance, and about operations within the department.

### **Evaluation Questions**

This program evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

Q1. What is the current course development process within a selected department at University College?

- a. What are the formal and informal practices for creating an inclusive learning environment within this process?

Q2. To what degree does the course development process within that department support an inclusive learning environment?

As I prepared to evaluate the course development process, I selected a set of questions to guide my assessment. My objective was to achieve several goals through this evaluation. Firstly, I aimed to document the roles, responsibilities, and relationships

among the team members involved in the process. Secondly, I wanted to identify the documents and artifacts used in the development process. Additionally, I sought to clarify both the formal and informal practices of those involved in the process. Finally, I intended to evaluate the existing process and its associated artifacts to determine their effectiveness in promoting and supporting an inclusive learning environment. By focusing on these key areas, I hoped to gain a comprehensive understanding of the course development process and make recommendations for improvement where necessary.

### **Evaluation Design**

This evaluation is being conducted to determine how well the course development process in one academic department at University College is supporting an inclusive learning environment. To carry out this evaluation, the pragmatic paradigm is being employed because of its focus on identifying what is or is not working toward defined goals. Michael Patton's utilization focused approach was chosen for its ability to generate findings that are relevant, credible, and useful for program stakeholders, primary intended users (PIU), and beneficiaries, and to promote program improvement and decision-making based on those findings (Patton, 2012). By involving stakeholders in the evaluation process and tailoring the evaluation to meet specific needs, the Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach aims to ensure that the findings are useful and actionable.

### **Researcher Positionality**

It is common in qualitative research in particular to include context around the researcher's epistemological, axiological, and ontological frameworks. Creswell &

Creswell (2018) discuss this in relationship to positionality, “Inquirers explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status (SES) that shape their interpretations formed during a study.”

Michael Patton, creator of the evaluation approach used in this study, also notes that there must be a constant mindfulness toward potential bias throughout an evaluation (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). There is no doubt that through this evaluation process, I have bumped up against my own limitations, my own misperceptions, and my own lack of knowledge surrounding the experiences of the (dis)inclusion of students of minoritized populations in learning spaces both physical and virtual.

In this situation, I am not only an evaluator but also the Academic Director of the program being studied. I would consider myself skilled in the development and maintenance of the Healthcare Management curriculum. I have been a course development subject matter expert (SME), and instructor, and have partnered with the instructional design (ID) team to learn many of the skills and tools used at University College in the course design process. I have a vested interest in the success of the program itself, my department, and University College. As the Academic Director, I have been invited into spaces with significant power and authority. I have seen mostly white leadership teams present to mostly white advisory boards a plan for a community of folks of different backgrounds, none of whom were at the table. I learned that education works differently for white people than it does for People of Color and people from other marginalized groups.

I came to the position of Academic Director for the Healthcare Management program through my training and work as a nurse. Being a nurse will always be one of the most important ways I identify myself. I chose to work at a safety net hospital for the experience of feeling like I was actually having an impact on “the system.” Health equity was a common motivator for me as I saw first-hand how, depending on what you had or didn’t have, what you looked like, or where you came from, the healthcare system treated you differently. As a clinician in organizations that served predominantly racially minoritized populations, I have seen massive disparities in healthcare that have origins in settler colonialism, that maintain oppressive systems and policies steeped in racism, and that continue to put profit over people. “Systemic racism and sexism interact synergistically with systemic oppressions in government and health care systems. These systemic oppressions cannot be decomposed into subsystems...they are inextricably enmeshed.” (McGibbon & McPherson, 2011). Like healthcare, higher education wasn’t built to embrace ways of knowing, learning, and being outside of the white, eurocentric, patriarchal worldview.

The theoretical models of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and UFE used in this study provide the foundation for breaking into and dismantling systems of oppression. Young (2018) states that “Oppression is embedded in the unquestioned habits we follow every day that unknowingly reflect the social order we have created by our institutions. Oppression is the consequence of following that unquestioned social order.” As evaluator, director, and intended user of this evaluation, it will be important that I



continuously reflect on my positionality, especially my whiteness and the privilege it affords me. Peggy McIntosh (2019) describes white privilege as:

“...an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks.”

I first became aware of both the power and the invisibility of my racial identity when I moved from an overwhelmingly white suburb of Baltimore into a more racially diverse neighborhood within the boundaries of Baltimore City. I moved from a place where my whiteness was invisible and every space had people who looked like me. My new school challenged what I had been socialized to see as the norm. I was in classrooms with mostly Black students and many Black teachers. This school itself was a privileged place within the school system. We were a magnet school that required a certain grade point average to attend; there were well-prepared, well-resourced teachers, and honors courses in “the classics” including Latin and Philosophy. Our graduation rate was higher than any other school in the city and many students went off to prestigious colleges including both Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Ivy League Schools. A few things strike me as I look back at those times. My admission to that school was a given. As a white student coming from a middle school in an affluent neighborhood, there was little question that I would gain admittance to the school. My grandfather and great-grandfather had also attended this school (when only men were allowed), so I was also a legacy. Even with a majority of Black students, this school and the system it sits in was, and still is, built for white students to succeed. White students were offered more opportunities to take higher-level courses. Black students were assumed aggressors in

altercations between students, and they were more likely to be harshly disciplined. As I neared graduation and was considering my own college plans, I pondered whether an HBCU would be a good choice for me. Morgan State University had a top-notch music program, I knew the band director, and I assumed I would be welcome. It wasn't until many years later that I realized how I was using "ontological expansiveness," in assuming that all spaces both literal and figurative were accessible to me (Sullivan, 2004).

As a graduate student, I have been witness to how students of color are often asked to represent their racial groups and have seen students from minoritized groups encouraged to share their traumatic and hurtful instances of discrimination. These requests are quite obviously encouraged for the benefit of white, cishet, students. I am aware that course materials and reading lists in existing classes do not reflect the lived experiences of minoritized students. I know this because I, myself, have approved courses without a moment's consideration of the experiences of students in the department. Despite this ignorance, I have called myself an ally, I have stepped out of line for the sake of using a privileged place to speak out for others but until entering this degree program, I haven't truly used a critical lens to look inward to "...connect personal discourses to dominant societal discourses to better understand the power at play..." (Norton & Sliep, 2018), and the ways that my actions perpetuate systems of oppression.

It was important to check my privilege through critical reflexivity, and engagement with faculty, students, and colleagues from minoritized populations to better appreciate their experiences. I approached this project with humility and worked to authentically

decenter the perspective of the white, christian, heteronormative patriarchy and amplify the voices of those historically marginalized and excluded from higher education spaces. In continuing to interrogate my understanding of racist, patriarchal, hegemonic structures and policies that perpetuate white supremacy as the dominant narrative, my ideas surrounding whiteness and race will evolve and change. I hope to channel this evolution to challenge assumptions, invite critique, and initiate action to embrace inclusivity within the course development process at University College.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The evaluation process was conceptualized and executed through the utilization of multiple theoretical frameworks. The approach of UFE was deliberately chosen due to its emphasis on fostering a meaningful connection between the evaluator and the various stakeholders involved in the program being assessed. This approach was also favored for its adaptable nature, allowing for a diverse range of methods and methodologies to be employed (Patton, 2008). To structure the literature review, findings, and recommendations, a lean systems improvement tool called "People, Process, Product" was modified and implemented (Coletta, 2012). This tool served as an effective means of organizing and synthesizing the information gathered throughout the evaluation process. Finally, UDL and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) together were employed as a scaffold to ensure that the resulting recommendations were centered on inclusivity and cultural relevance. These three interconnected concepts formed the foundational framework upon which this evaluation was built, providing a comprehensive and rigorous approach to examining the program.

## List of Terms

***Academic Department:*** At University College, there are sixteen degree programs each of which falls into an academic department. Each department is led by an Academic Director who reports directly to the dean of the college.

***Adjunct Instructor:*** Also called adjunct faculty or contingent faculty, these instructors are hired on a contractual basis to teach courses. At University College, adjunct instructors are most often working professionals with a specific area of expertise related to their assigned course.

***Asset-Based Pedagogies:*** These are the theories of learning that view differences among students including language, race and ethnicity, culture, SES, age, gender and sexuality, and dis/ability as adding value and strengthening a learning community. Asset-based pedagogies include Funds of Knowledge, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and CSP. These pedagogies are in direct opposition to deficit thinking, where differences are viewed as obstacles for the student to overcome (California Department of Education, 2021).

***Asynchronous:*** As it relates to course modality, defined below, this means there is no required face-to-face interaction between students and instructors or among students. Students are not required to engage, physically or virtually, at a specified time.

***Beneficiaries:*** In UFE, beneficiaries are the people who are intended to benefit from the program or intervention being evaluated (Patton, 2012).

***Course Container:*** The course container is the collection of weekly topics, readings, course materials, assignments, and rubrics digitally stored in the LMS. This collection is

accessed by instructors and students during the academic term as the foundational content for a given course.

***Course Design:*** this is the process to create the structural elements of a given course. This process is directed by an instructional designer (ID) and includes the uploading of information into the course container, ensuring accessibility of the content using tools such as closed captioning, screen readers, and alternate text for images. The ID may also assist in the construction of rubrics to assess student mastery of course content. This process is done collaboratively with course development.

***Course Development:*** This is the process directed by the SME to select learning materials, reading, assignments, and opportunities for instructor engagement. The deliverables for this process are provided to the ID by the SME to be uploaded to the course container. This is done collaboratively with course design.

***Compositional Diversity:*** This term refers to the numbers and proportions of different groups of people represented in a given setting (Milem et al., 2005). In this evaluation, compositional diversity is used to refer to the representation of different groups of students, instructors, and faculty in any given group or team at University College.

***Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP):*** An asset-based pedagogy that centers the perpetuation of “linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism” and requires divestment from white, eurocentric, heteronormative, dominant narratives (Paris, 2012, p. 93).

***Current-State:*** Often used in process improvement, this term refers to a process or workflow as it exists in the present. Process improvement strategies use this term as the starting point where the endpoint is referred to as the future or target state (Jones, 2022).

***Formal Practices:*** These are standardized, structured, and documented practices that are used to create a consistent, replicable, and reliable outcome (vanTatenhove et al., 2010).

***Inclusive Learning Environment:*** an inclusive learning environment “ensures that diverse learners have equal opportunities to engage in meaningful learning experiences that maximize their participation and achievement” (Lawrie, et al., 2017).

***Informal Practices:*** These are the less structured, more flexible, unwritten rules within a process. These practices often rely on the collective wisdom of the participants in a process and are shaped by trust, knowledge-sharing, and agility that is created through the relationships between individuals and teams (vanTatenhove et al., 2010).

***Instructional Designer (ID):*** these are professionals trained in the creation of educational support systems for course delivery including expertise in educational technology tools, LMS, and teaching and learning strategies.

***Learning Management System (LMS):*** Educational platform used to digitally house course materials within a course container.

***Learning Outcomes:*** Learning outcomes are statements that describe what students will be able to do or know as a result of completing a learning experience. They are typically written in a measurable way, so that it is clear what students will be able to demonstrate.

***Minoritized:*** is used to describe groups of people who are marginalized or discriminated against because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other social identity. These groups are often underrepresented in positions of power and

influence, and they may face challenges in accessing resources and opportunities (American Medical Association & Association of American Medical Colleges, 2021).

***Modality:*** Course modality is defined by how a particular course is delivered to students. Modalities can include 100% online asynchronous delivery, 100% in-person delivery, 100% online synchronous where students and instructors meet on a video conferencing platform during defined times, and hybrid modalities that are some combination of the aforementioned options.

***Primary Intended User (PIU):*** The PIU in a UFE is the person or group who has a vested interest in the evaluation, be most directly affected by evaluation findings, and who will have the most responsibility for using the findings to make decisions (Patton, 2012).

***Stakeholder:*** In UFE, this term is used to identify anyone with a vested interest in the results of the evaluation. Stakeholders may also be beneficiaries or PIUs (Patton, 2012)

***Subject matter expert (SME):*** For the sake of this evaluation, the SME is the content expert hired to select, develop, or provide learning materials during a course development.

***Universal Design for Learning (UDL):*** is an educational framework or set of principles defined by The Center for Applied Special Technology that provides flexibility in the ways students access information, engage in learning, and demonstrate their understanding of concepts within a learning environment. UDL is based on the idea that all students learn differently and that providing multiple options for learning can help students succeed (Burgstahler, 2008).

***Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE)***: is a participatory and flexible approach to evaluation that is based on the idea that the evaluation should be useful to the people who need it most. By working closely with the people who will be using the evaluation findings, the evaluator can ensure that the evaluation is relevant, feasible, and useful (Mertens & Wilson, 2019).

### **Summary of Findings**

This evaluation assessed the formal and informal practices within the course development process and the extent to which the process supports and fosters an inclusive learning environment. A pragmatic, UFE approach using qualitative data collection and analysis methods was employed. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, observations, and document review. Data were analyzed using thematic coding. Findings, which have been shared with intended users of the evaluation, were used to generate a series of recommendations for process improvement.

An analysis of the formal and informal practices in the course development process identified that there is heavy reliance on specific individuals or roles within the process but that an emerging effort to create more community-building in the process could offer a more equitable distribution of responsibility. The evaluation also highlighted those certain structures rooted in white supremacist ideologies, including sense of urgency regarding timelines and deliverables may be hindering critical thinking and purposeful reflection on creating inclusive learning practices. However, the evaluation findings also indicate the presence of supportive relationships among



participants, a genuine desire to engage in the necessary work to enhance inclusivity, and a strong commitment to improving the course development process.

Chapter 2 of this evaluation provides a review of the literature that supports the processes and practices that foster and support an inclusive learning environment for students. I review the student and faculty populations within higher education and the gap that exists between them with regard to diversity. In Chapter 3, I provide the methodology and methods employed during this UFE, a review of the location of the evaluation and the data collection and analysis methods. The findings, including major elements and themes that emerged from data collection are provided in Chapter 4. The final chapter discusses the findings in relationship to the evaluation questions and sets forth recommendations for improvement of the course development process as it relates to fostering and supporting an inclusive learning environment for students.

## **Chapter Two: Review of the Literature**

Chihiro Nakao, a member of the Japanese manufacturing experts focused on continuous quality improvement in the mid-1980s created a framework for quality improvement called the “Production Preparation Process” or the “3Ps” that involved identifying the changes required to bring transformation of a production process (Coletta, 2012). Transformation of the course development process is a long-term goal for this evaluation so a framework that embraces the concepts from quality improvement methodology seems a fitting structure for the literature review. Nakao’s original framework changed and evolved over time as lean thinking became commonplace outside of manufacturing. Current models have settled on People and Processes as stable components, referred to as “Ps” while the third “P” has included concepts like Product (which most closely aligns with Nakao’s original idea), Problem-solving, and Purpose. Using the framework of the 3Ps as a guide, I will organize this literature review using the concepts of People, Process, Product, and an additional component, Pedagogy creating a comprehensive “4P” framework.

I begin with the gap that exists in higher education between the people, particularly between students and faculty, and the argument for providing an inclusive learning environment for an increasingly diverse student population. Next, I will introduce the relevant scholarly works regarding the processes that support the people. In higher education, processes are continually evaluated to identify opportunities for improvement,

including how students enter, persist in, and successfully complete their academic programs. Creating an inclusive learning environment entails implementing multiple processes such as faculty development, teaching practices, community building, curriculum development, and course delivery. This literature review introduces relevant scholarly works that emphasize the impact of these processes on the establishment and maintenance of an inclusive learning environment. Students, faculty, and those engaged with institutions of higher learning are no strangers to process. I offer pedagogy as the third concept for this literature review. There is a substantial body of research that provides the pedagogical structure for this evaluation. Inclusive pedagogies such as UDL and CSP can provide scaffolding for an inclusive learning environment through course development for graduate students in a predominantly, but not exclusively, online program. Finally, for the sake of this evaluation, I define the “product” as the course that has been developed using the processes and pedagogies that embody the inclusive learning environment. These four elements serve as the framework for the review of the literature relevant to this evaluation.

## **People**

When considering the people in higher education, the most obvious groups that come to mind are students, and instructors or faculty. The review of the literature in this section provides a picture of the student population, how it has changed over time in post-secondary educational institutions, and how the same isn't true for instructors and faculty. Students are becoming much more diverse with respect to a multitude of factors whereas their instructors continue to be predominantly middle-aged and white.

## **Students**

### ***Race and Ethnicity***

By 2050 it is expected that Students of Color will outnumber white students (Bell, 2002; Espinosa, et al., 2019; Williams, 2020). Graduate student enrollment shows similar trends to undergraduate or combined post-secondary enrollments with white students comprising more than 75% of all graduate students in 1995 and only 56% in 2016. Despite the increase in the numbers of students enrolled, the proportion of white students vs. Students of Color seeking advanced degrees continues to be skewed toward white students (Irwin et al, 2021; Loya, 2020). Educational attainment/completion has increased for Students of Color (Irwin et al., 2021) but retention rates are lower than for white students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016a; 2016b). It is evident that the landscape of higher education is undergoing transformation not only due to increasing diversity among U.S. students but also as a result of global migration and the influx of international students choosing to study in the United States (Barrington, 2004; Rich, 2020). These factors collectively contribute to the changing dynamics and composition of educational institutions in the United States. Bell (2002) wrote that both white students and Students of Color benefit from the opportunity to explore racial identity development within their educational environments such that well-informed culturally aware course content and delivery allows instructors to create inclusive classrooms and facilitate difficult but necessary dialogue among students from racially and ethnically diverse groups (Williams et al., 2020)

### ***Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation***

There is little data demonstrating enrollment, retention, or persistence within the LGBTQIA+ student population likely due to the lack of a federal mandate to identify LGBTQIA+ students in education data. Title IX requires that schools report gender data but this is not inclusive of all gender identification categories and does not accurately capture or reflect the experiences of trans\* students (Ford et al., 2021). Since 2014, when the “other” category for gender was introduced, the number of students identifying as such has steadily increased (Ford et al., 2021). It is important to acknowledge that LGBTQIA+ inclusion in learning environments has positive effects on students’ experiences across sexualities and gender identities (BrckaLorenz et al., 2021; Nicolazzo, 2016).

The lack of available data pertaining to enrollment, retention, and persistence among the LGBTQIA+ student population may be attributed to the absence of a federal requirement mandating the identification of LGBTQIA+ students in educational data. While Title IX necessitates the reporting of gender data by educational institutions, it does not include the full range of gender identification categories, failing to accurately capture the experiences of transgender and non-binary students (Ford et al., 2021). Since the introduction of the "other" category for gender in 2014, there has been an upward trend in the number of students identifying as such (Ford et al., 2021). It is vital to acknowledge that fostering LGBTQIA+ inclusion within educational environments yields positive outcomes for students across diverse sexualities and gender identities (BrckaLorenz et al., 2021; Nicolazzo, 2016). The absence of comprehensive data

collection on LGBTQIA+ students inhibits our understanding of their educational trajectories potentially losing an opportunity to contribute to improved educational experiences, promoting a more inclusive and affirming learning environment for these populations.

### ***Social Class***

The data show that there are more students from low-income families enrolling in postsecondary education but retention, persistence, and graduation rates for these students is still far below that of students from higher-income households (Bloome et al., 2018). The systemic structures that normalize the middle and upper-class elite college-going experience create inequities in outcomes for students from low-income households (Gelbgiser, 2021). Carnevale and Smith (2018), in report by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, found that 70-80% of college students are working while pursuing postsecondary education but that low-income students work more hours at jobs that are not necessarily related to their major. More work hours negatively impact grade point averages and program completion for these students.

### ***Age***

The number of older students enrolled in higher education, both graduate and undergraduate, is on the rise. In 2020, one in ten college students was over the age of 40. (Chen, 2017; EAB, 2019; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). Adult learners, defined as those over the age of 25, seek out postsecondary education for reasons including career change or promotion, networking, and community building (Bertolini, 2022; Iloh, 2018; Ingram, 2005). While colleges and universities are making

obvious, if performative, efforts to increase their compositional diversity as it pertains to race and ethnicity, social class, and ability, the same does not hold true for non-traditional, older students (Chen, 2017; Loya, 2020). The overarching youth-centric focus of higher education can serve to alienate the adult learner leading to feelings of exclusion, and indifference (Bernhard, 2020; Chen, 2014, 2017; Kasworm, 2010). Instructional methods that consider the complexity of the adult learner is required to better address the needs of this population (Caruth, 2014).

### ***Dis/ability***

As with the previously mentioned student groups, the numbers of students with disabilities is also increasing in higher education (Lee et al., 2015; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018; Newman et al., 2021). Students with disabilities are often unable to maintain full-time student status and are more likely to drop out (Lee et al., 2015). It is important to mention that disability can be contextual and often disability is seen as the student's deficiency rather than a fault in the system designed to provide an inclusive learning environment (Boda, 2021). Ben-Moshe, et al. (2013), for example, notes that being in a wheelchair only becomes a disability when the physical environment is inaccessible. Students with disabilities, both visible and invisible, are more likely to remain in their academic programs if they develop social support networks that allow them to feel included in their classes and on campus (Leake & Stodden, 2014).

### ***Students in Online Programs***

Because University College provides predominantly online programming, it is important to understand the population of students in this specific modality. Online

graduate programs have been growing in size and number since before the pandemic (Ruiz & Sun, 2020). Many of these programs market to the non-traditional student who may otherwise find graduate education inaccessible. According to the report, "Online College Students 2020: Comprehensive Data on Demands and Preferences," online graduate students are more diverse than their on-campus counterparts in several ways. The authors report that online graduate students are more likely to be non-white, with 40% of online graduate students identifying as a racial or ethnic minority, compared to 31% of on-campus graduate students, older than traditional on-campus students, and more likely to be working full-time (Magda et al., 2020; Seaman et al., 2018). These findings indicate that online graduate programs enroll a more diverse student population with regard to race and ethnicity, age, and socio-economic class, compared to traditional on-campus graduate programs.

### ***Summary***

While this assemblage of identities that students may bring to their courses is by no means exhaustive, it is important to help illustrate the breadth of diversity found on college campuses across the United States including at the University of Denver's University College. This review does not capture the full extent of the intersections many students have within and among these groups. Cadenas et al., (2022) in their work distinguishing graduate students as a distinct demographic from undergraduate students, mentions how the impacts of intersecting marginalized identities can be barriers to student success. What is found in the literature about the postsecondary student population at large holds true for the graduate program being evaluated in this study



(University of Denver, Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, 2022). This increase in diversity across the postsecondary education landscape supports the need to provide an inclusive learning environment for students of different racial, cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds (Creighton, 2007).

### **Faculty and Instructors**

The instructor that greets students in their classrooms today, both physical and virtual, is likely an untenured, part-time or contingent faculty member who is a white woman in their mid-50s (American Association for University Professors, 2018; Bell, 2002; Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2014; Gaytan and McEwen, 2007; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2017). Unlike the increasingly diverse student population, teaching faculty are overwhelmingly monolingual, white women (Irwin et al., 2021; National Center for Education Statistics, 2021) leaving an enormous cultural chasm between instructors and the students they teach (Williams, et al., 2020). The literature documents some increase in variation in the ethnic diversity of faculty over the past decade but the data show that approximately 75% of college instructors are white, just over 10% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3% each are Black or Hispanic (Irwin et al., 2021). Black, Hispanic, and female faculty continue to be underrepresented particularly in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields and evidence suggests that the compositional diversity not changing nearly as quickly for Black faculty members (Irwin et al., 2021; Li and Koedel, 2017). Instructors are more and more often finding themselves in front of classrooms full of students whose racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and social class backgrounds are different than their own (Howard, 2003; Williams, et al.,

2020; Woolfolk, 2016). Despite these demographic shifts, the academy continues to inhibit the inclusion of different ways of learning and knowing in college classrooms (Barrington, 2004; Ortiz, 2020). The research shows that the curricular and pedagogical decisions made by faculty have an impact on the creation of an inclusive environment (Paris, 2017; Picower, 2009; Schmid et al., 2016).

### ***Adjunct Faculty***

Adjunct faculty or contingent faculty are those higher education instructors that work at an institution on a part-time, sometimes contractual, basis and are neither benefitted nor tenure-eligible. These instructors can serve a multitude of purposes but are most often hired to teach introductory courses (House Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2014). Less often, adjunct instructors are hired for their expertise in a highly specialized area that is not present among full-time faculty or to bring practical experience from a particular profession (American Association for University Professors, 2018; DePaola and Kezar, 2017; Murray, 2019). The racial and ethnic backgrounds, gender, and age of adjunct instructors closely mirrors that of all instructors in postsecondary institutions with almost three-quarters identifying as white and women outnumbering men (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). Adjunct or contingent faculty numbers have increased significantly over the past several years and constitute about 40% of all instructional faculty across higher education and nearly 50% of graduate-level instructors (American Association for University Professors, 2018; American Association for University Professors, 2022). DePaola and Kezar (2017) discuss the rise in numbers of contingent faculty despite the critique that non-tenure track instructors may be delivering

a lower quality instructional experience to students than their tenured peers. As the number of adjunct or contingent faculty continues to increase, there is ongoing research and discussion regarding instructional quality, pay equity, and institutional support that will likely impact the role of these instructors in the coming years (Maisto 2012; Scott, et al., 2019).

### **The Diversity Gap in Higher Education**

Diversity is increasing among all students enrolled in postsecondary degree programs with regard to many individual and intersecting identities (Espinosa et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2021; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018; Williams et al., 2020). For example, Espinosa (2019) reported that while there remains not enough data for indigenous students' participation and completion in post-secondary and graduate programs, Black and Hispanic (the author's terminology) student populations have seen significant increases across higher education settings over the last 20 years. This increase in diversity is not however reflected among instructors (Li & Koedel, 2017; Stout et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2020). Appointed and adjunct faculty remain largely white with white women comprising the bulk of undergraduate, untenured instructors (Williams et al., 2020).

Although the data is not always specific to graduate-level programs, it has been well researched that diversity in college classes, both physical and virtual, serves as a starting point to strengthen complex cognition, support exploration of students' sense of self, and promote learning that translates to skills needed to thrive in increasingly diverse communities (Espinosa, 2019; Gurin, et al., 2009; Irwin, et al., 2021; Ortiz,

2000). Additionally, diversity across departments such that students can see themselves and their experiences reflected in the institution's workforce is an integral part of creating a campus climate that is welcoming and inviting to students from different backgrounds (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016; Schak et al., 2019).

Quaye and Harper (2007) argue that graduate students who are only exposed to the white, dominant narrative are likely to enter faculty positions and refer back to their courses for content, perpetuating that dominant narrative. Without specific and purposeful intervention, the lack of diversity among faculty members and the lack of professional development opportunities to change teaching practice to be more inclusive, students continue to be at risk of feeling disconnected and disengaged from their studies (Quaye and Harper, 2007; Schmid et al., 2016).

## **Process**

Processes provide the infrastructure for how students and faculty interact. There are many factors that impact the success of students within their higher education programs. This portion of the literature review provides context for how an increasingly diverse student body may be impacted by the processes in place within their colleges and universities. I begin this section with the broad factors that impact the success of diverse student populations, then narrow the lens onto inclusive learning environments and the elements that are necessary to create and maintain that environment.

### **Factors that Impact Success in Diverse Student Populations**

The number of students completing graduate degrees has increased significantly since 1996 growing from just over 500,000 degrees completed to 1.25 million in 2016

(Barrington, 2004; Espinosa et al., 2019). White students still earn the majority of graduate degrees, but all race/ethnic groups as defined by the U.S. Department of Education have seen increases in numbers of completed graduate degrees (Espinosa, et. al, 2019; Irwin et al., 2021). There isn't an abundance of disaggregated data on the factors contributing to the success of different racial/ethnic, gender, or social class groups in graduate programs specifically (Cadenas et al., 2022). For the sake of this review, graduate students will be called out specifically when the source does so but otherwise will be considered within the broader post-secondary student population, and success will be defined through measures such as retention, persistence, academic evaluation (grades), and degree completion.

Studies show that there are several common factors that impact student success as they relate to diverse student groups. Negative factors include financial hardship, ability to balance multiple priorities, poor advising or mentoring, and poor social climate within the student's department (Charles et al., 2021; Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). Positive factors include a feeling of belonging, safe and inclusive learning environments, support from friends and family, feeling supported by the university, and a diverse leadership and faculty population (American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers, 2019; Charles et al., 2021; Trent, et al., 2021). It is well documented in the literature that when students, both graduate and undergraduate, express feeling welcomed, included, seen, and respected in their classes, they are more likely to do well in those classes and persist in their programs (Gurin, et al., 2002; Rendon, 1994; Rich, 2020; Sathy & Hogan, 2019). Students seek out learning environments where they see themselves reflected

throughout the institution via faculty diversity, and through the inclusion of multiple lived experiences in the curriculum (Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, 2016). Students are more likely to remain engaged with and graduate from an institution that provides financial, social, and academic support (Bain et al., 2011; Rendon, 1994; Stout et al., 2018). Colleges and universities will need to provide supportive and welcoming places for students if they expect the increasingly diverse student population to remain in and successfully complete degree programs.

### **Inclusive Learning Environments**

An inclusive learning environment has been identified as one of the factors that positively impacts retention and persistence in postsecondary institutions (Trent et al., 2021). Definitions of inclusivity within the college classroom can span a wide range of concepts all of which seek to describe the engagement of students, through intentional practices that promote substantive interactions across a range of human diversity (Dowling et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2020; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021). This range may include the learning needs of neuro-diverse learners, students from broad socio-economic backgrounds, and students from different racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, age, and gender groups. There are critics that note that this wide range and lack of agreement on the definition of an inclusive learning environment causes confusion or lack of substance for educators in higher education and can be reduced to good teaching practice (Higbee, 2009). Stentiford and Koutsouris (2021, p.2257) question these authors' views of inclusive pedagogy as "...a neat set of procedures or a toolbox of 'tricks' that educators

can deploy...” rather than a broad approach to teaching and learning that supports both instructor and student and avoids the marginalization of individuals and groups.

The literature on inclusive learning environments tends to bifurcate with one path focused on students with learning disabilities and the other path on students from varied socio-cultural and racial backgrounds and experiences (Douglas et al., 2016). It should, however, be noted that race, gender, and disability have been and continue to be intertwined in the educational system in painful ways (Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016). Certain characteristics have been considered disabilities by those with the power to define normal for others (Ben-Moshe & Magaña, 2014; Boda, 2021). When it was no longer acceptable to segregate students by color, learning ability became a way to discriminate and segregate students of minoritized populations from their white counterparts (Blanchett, 2006). Students of color, in particular, continue to be overrepresented in special education as the direct result of the continued myth of the “impaired intelligence” of enslaved Africans, which started as an argument for slavery (A Harvard Educational Review forum with Alim et al., 2017; Longmore & Umansky, 2001). In ways analogous to the connection of race to disability, gender and sexual orientation have been used as a way to negatively label and segregate people in educational settings. During the women’s suffrage movement, white men in power claimed that women would be unable to equally participate in society due to their temperament and “lack of nervous stability” (Longmore & Umansky, 2001). Homosexuality wasn’t removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) as a “sociopathic personality disturbance” or “sexual deviation” until

1973 and “gender identity disorder” not until 2013 (Drescher, 2015) leaving the LGBTQIA+ community at risk for unjust categorization within educational spaces.

While the literature may present myriad definitions for what an inclusive learning environment is, there is also a body of research that has helped describe what it isn’t. While the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s brought the first wave of research on diversity in Higher Education as a means to reduce inequality in the workforce, the concept of inclusion was missing (Slay et al., 2019). Researchers continue to make the case that diversity alone does not ensure inclusion (Gurin et al., 2009; Slay et al., 2019). In 1994, bell hooks wrote that, “educators should embrace cultural diversity and deconstruct academic biases that uphold racism, sexism, and white supremacy.” Inclusive learning requires a concerted effort to deliver change that supports an increasingly diverse student population. Through this review, the literature confirms that the creation of an inclusive, safe learning environment benefits all students and may be a factor in the successful engagement in and completion of graduate study.

### ***Factors that Contribute to an Inclusive Learning Environment***

The challenge of supporting a diverse group of students leaves instructors straddling a precarious boundary between engagement and alienation (Ortiz, 2000; Williams et al., 2020). Faced with a racially, culturally, and socially diverse class, instructors may shy away from issues of race, gender, class, and other identity-focused issues (Ortiz, 2000; Penner, 2018; Slay et al., 2019) rather than providing the needed culturally relevant, racially affirming, and socially meaningful spaces for students (Howard, 2003). Strategies noted in the research on inclusive learning environments include critical



reflection for both students and faculty (Bell, 2002; Dewsbury and Brame 2019; Schmid et al., 2016), the development of community, collaborative and active learning opportunities (Brownell and Swaner, 2009; Grier-Reed and Williams, 2018; Hughes, 2007), and assignments that allow students to reflect and connect their experiences to course content (Loya, 2020; Quaye and Harper, 2007; Rendon, 1994). The ability to engage in a course with these elements that encourages students to take the perspective of other students promotes not only cognitive development but also empathy (Loya, 2020; Ortiz, 2000). An inclusive learning environment encompasses the integration of lived experiences into course materials, the promotion of empathy, and the facilitation of co-constructed and collaborative learning.

Given the changing landscape of higher education, faculty members and instructors are being asked to “use novel pedagogies, create inclusive learning spaces, and facilitate positive intercultural interactions in their classes” (Sanger & Gleason, 2020, p.17). In addition to the copious amount of literature regarding specific teaching practices and face-to-face engagement styles to promote a sense of belonging (Goodenow, 1993; Peacock and Cohen, 2019; Thomas et al., 2014), acceptance, and welcoming within the classroom setting (Faulkner et al., 2021; Moore, 2011; Schmid et al., 2016), the literature also defines pedagogical factors important to the development of an inclusive learning environment. These factors include paying mind to socio-economic barriers by using open source materials (Hockings et al., 2012), diversifying reading lists and course materials (Schmid et al., 2016; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020), and aligning the curriculum, assessments, and design to provide a flexible framework that allows students

choice in demonstrating varying ways of knowing and learning (McLoughlin, 2001).

Another element, collaborative learning, assists students in taking a more active role in the learning process by working with other students in groups to improve interpersonal skills, negotiating, compromising, and listening to the views and experiences of others (Brown and Croft, 2020). When courses are intentionally designed to provide these elements, students are exposed to a variety of people and their experiences, and instructors have the opportunity to share power by allowing students to guide their own learning (Cabrera et al., 1998).

“Inclusive curriculum design benefits both staff and students when it is based on principles of equity, collaboration, flexibility, and accountability” (Morgan and Houghton, 2011, p. 5). Whether students are in a physical classroom or engaging online, human connection, respect for the voices and experiences present, decentering the white, male, eurocentric perspective, and acknowledging different ways of knowing and learning are key elements to creating an inclusive online learning environment.

### **Pedagogy**

This section contains a review of the literature centered on the inclusive pedagogies that serve as frameworks for this evaluation. I have chosen to provide background on UDL as it is the underlying structure for the instructional design team’s current process and CSP for its goals of supporting multiculturalism and multilingualism, for divesting from whiteness, and eliminating deficit approaches in education (Paris, 2012).

## **Pedagogies that Support an Inclusive Learning Environment**

The term “inclusive pedagogy” can be used to describe one pedagogical framework but is also used to describe a collection of asset-based pedagogies including UDL and CSP. These frameworks come in contrast with the cultural superiority that defines deficit thinking by maintaining that students from culturally, racially, and financially diverse backgrounds are capable learners (Howard, 2003). Their approaches all serve to broaden the definition and scope of intelligence and work to reduce marginalization by looking beyond traditional ways of knowing and learning (Barrington, 2004; Dreamson et al., 2018). Florian (2015, p.7) argues that inclusive pedagogy creates the counter narrative to “[b]ell curve thinking” where the height of the curve is considered the place to center learning to serve the ideal number students while the tails of the curve are left underserved. Inclusive pedagogy makes the case for centering the tails and by providing that support to the margins of the curve, the center is better served as well. The author also recognizes that identifying how to do that without lowering expectations of student achievement can be a challenge (Florian, 2015). Inclusive pedagogy is becoming increasingly important as is tied to student success especially when considering the academic needs of a more diverse student body that may include newly arrived immigrant students, Students of Color, students for whom English is a second, third, or fourth language, and students from an ever-widening range of learning styles and backgrounds (Dreamson et al., 2018; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2012).

## ***UDL***

UDL was developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology to design learning environments using principles from architecture, technology, and neuroscience (Burgstahler, 2020). The foundation of UDL began in special education as a way to move from a deficit model of learning to an asset-based approach. The idea is to create a learning environment that is accessible to different people knowing that people “engage, process, and represent information in different ways” (Fornauf & Erickson, 2020). Another way to describe how UDL functions is to analyze how new instructors are oriented to center their teaching on some mythical “generic student” that exists at the top of the bell curve of “normal” students (A Harvard Educational Review forum with Alim et al., 2017; Florian, 2015). UDL dispels this myth and widens the lens to include all students out to the tails of that bell curve. Initially focused on strategies to make education more accessible and inclusive to students with different learning needs, UDL can be extended into all classrooms and used to embrace racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, and social class identities that students bring into their learning spaces, physical and virtual (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008; Rich, 2020; van Rooij & Zirkle, 2016). This extension provides a counterpoint to the white supremacist notion of the “good student” (A Harvard Educational Review forum with Alim et al., 2017). When discussing the value of UDL as a framework for inclusion, H. Samy Alim in A Harvard Educational Review forum with Alim et al. (2017) asks the question, “Inclusion into what?” This question defines the role of UDL as a framework for accessibility into the structure of learning spaces and its potential shortcoming in addressing the need to interrogate learning materials, content,

and teaching practice. If we make the readings and learning materials accessible but the content and teaching practice remains steeped in white supremacist, racist, sexist, nationalist, and ableist narratives, a truly inclusive environment cannot be achieved.

### ***CSP***

CSP “seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p.93). Stemming from the work of Moll and Gonzalez’s (1994) funds of knowledge and Gloria Ladson-Billings’ (2014) work in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, CSP’s purpose is to sustain, “Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander young people, families, and communities as these memberships necessarily intersect with gender and sexuality, with disability, with migration, with language, with land, with class and more...” (Paris, 2021, p.366). CSP also names divesting from whiteness and colonial logics as a key part of its intention by rejecting “the white settler capitalist gaze and the kindred cisheteropatriarchal, English-monolingual, ableist, classist, xenophobic, and other hegemonic gazes” (Alim et al., 2020, p.262). This framework provides the principles needed to decenter the dominant narratives existing within higher education and amplify the voices and experiences of minoritized students. CSP extends far beyond the classroom and embraces the fullness of cultural practices, worldviews, languages, familial and community knowledge, and values (Alim & Paris, 2017; Paris, 2012). This approach can support the development of courses that are inclusive and allow students to see their whole selves and their lived experiences in the learning content, readings, outcomes, and assignments in a graduate-level course.

### ***UDL and CSP***

There exists a body of literature that combines the tenets of both UDL and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy into a framework for advancing the ideals of inclusive pedagogy in higher education. The work of Waitoller and King Thorius (2016) calls for the “cross-pollination” of CSP and UDL to include and benefit students’ “intersecting markers of difference” that include race, gender, class, race, and dis/ability. The authors discuss the dynamic nature of centers and peripheries or privilege and oppression and how those positions need to be constantly considered for students in inclusive learning environments (Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016).

UDL was initially created for students with learning disabilities and didn’t always consider the “cultural dimensions of learning” (Chita-Tegmark et al., 2012) and CSP didn’t always extend to include disability among its defined member groups (Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016). In future works, however, scholars including Holmes (2018) and Paris (2021) have written about UDL and CSP respectively, each including all intersecting identities that students bring to learning environments. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) and other members of the collective embracing asset-based pedagogy call for the inclusion of race, gender, class, language, as well as ability in the movement toward a more just, equitable, and inclusive pedagogy. These two frameworks, extending toward each other, decenter the dominant narratives that lay blame upon students, and sometimes teachers, rather than admit that the system is broken and is not built to support whole students in their growth and development (Alim et al., 2017; Grier-Reed & Williams-Wengerd, 2018).

## **Product**

The final section of this review summarizes the literature around the product. The product in this evaluation is the output of the course development process, a course that is ready for delivery to students. Keeping in mind, in this setting, courses are designed and developed by an ID and SME such that it can be delivered by an instructor, who may not be the SME, in any number of modalities including online asynchronously.

## **Course Development**

In many higher educational institutions, particularly those with traditional face-to-face instruction, courses are designed and developed by individual instructors (Chao et al., 2010). For those institutions, like University College, that offer online courses or who rely upon industry experts rather than career educators as instructors, the process is quite different. It involves a collaborative effort of a team that may include IDs, project managers, faculty members, and SMEs (Chao et al., 2010; Oblinger & Hawkins, 2006; Xu & Morris, 2007). The literature offers several different models of course design from the single developer that is responsible for the technical aspects of the LMS and the content to more collaborative models involving larger teams and project support (Oblinger & Hawkins, 2006; van Rooij & Zirkle, 2016; Xu & Morris, 2007). Menchaca and Bekele (2008) identified several broad categories for successful online course development that included elements such as interactivity, learner feedback, the use of multimedia materials, and the structure and quality of the content. The bulk of the literature in this area makes a clear distinction between the development processes common to face-to-face instruction and online instruction.

### ***Online course development***

Because this evaluation focuses course design and development that is decoupled from delivery and that is the model most often used in online course delivery, it is important to have an understanding of the literature specific to online course development. Despite the increase in online learning, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic (Cesco et al., 2021; Green et al., 2020; Song et al., 2004; Thomas, et al., 2014), there are studies that disparage online learning as less than optimal, isolating (Rovai, 2004), and less rigorous (Allen and Seaman, 2013) than in-person courses. However, in a system that largely devalues online learning, Xu and Morris (2007) found that online course development can be a valuable professional development experience for faculty when it is collaborative and active. This carries over to the student experience when the development is seen as an independent process rather than a translation of an in-person lecture to a different medium or modality. Student perceptions of online courses track similarly when the courses are designed with opportunities for student-student and student-instructor engagement (Hurford and Read, 2021; Thomas et al., 2014), are accessible both technologically and pedagogically (Song et al., 2004; Phillips and Colton, 2021), and provide students with agency to co-construct learning opportunities (Rovai, 2004; vanRooij and Zirkle, 2016).

### ***Inclusive Course Development***

Inclusive course development is the process by which courses are intentionally built to maximize student engagement for all students, taking into account lived experiences, educational and social backgrounds, as well as any physical or sensory impairment



(Morgan & Houghton, 2011). The course development process is defined by the literature in several ways but often includes the development and design of elements accessible for students with learning impairments as well as elements that support students who are members of minoritized groups (Salazar et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2021). Inclusive course development is the process by which courses are built to maximize student engagement for all students through the course syllabus, reading lists, learning activities, and assessments.

Looking particularly at the elements of course development that support minoritized students and their feelings of inclusion in the learning environment, there are common themes within the literature outlining how instructors deliver and students interact with course materials on a conceptual, emotional, and behavioral level (Considine et al., 2017; Nelson Laird, 2011, Salazar et al., 2010). The Leeds-Beckett University in the UK developed “The Inclusive Course Design Tool” as a series of questions to guide course developers to consider myriad factors that contribute to an inclusive course design including the use of inclusive terminology, sharing feedback with students, opportunities to “fail safely,” and the addition of activities that “nurture a culture of academic belonging” (Smith et al., 2021). Whatever the content, inclusive course design provides the framework for IDs and SMEs to curate elements to create a course structure and design that allows the instructor and students to engage in a welcoming and safe learning environment (Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2012; Harris et al., 2020). There is an ample amount of literature that addresses the factors that contribute to an inclusive learning

environment but the literature focused on the process of developing, creating, or sustaining such an environment is less abundant.

Whether students are in a physical classroom or engaging online, human connection, respect for the voices and experiences present, decentering the white, male, euro-centric perspective, and acknowledging different ways of knowing and learning are still the key elements to creating an inclusive online learning environment. “Inclusive curriculum design benefits both staff and students when it is based on principles of equity, collaboration, flexibility, and accountability” (Morgan and Houghton, 2011, p. 5).

### **Summary**

From this review of the literature, I have come to understand that the student populations in graduate classrooms, both physical and virtual, are becoming more diverse with respect to race and ethnicity, gender identity, age, dis/ability, culture, and social class. Instructors, on the other hand, are not changing to match the diversity of their students (Espinosa et al., 2019; Irwin et al., 2021). This leaves a gap in the ability to create truly inclusive learning spaces and we have seen that inclusive learning environments are particularly important for students from minoritized groups. The focus of this evaluation is on the process by which courses are designed and developed to create space for minoritized students to see themselves and their experiences reflected in and valued within the course materials. While the structure of the course may be guided by the principles of UDL, the content of the course should also be curated with an inclusive lens. CSP provides the framework for course developers to create and follow a process, acknowledging the dynamic nature of privilege and oppression, of centers and

margins, to create a course that decenters the dominant white, cishet, patriarchal narrative. The practices employed in the course development process are integral in the creation of a course container that delivers a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive space in which to learn.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This section describes the methodology and methods used to investigate the formal and informal practices within the course development process in one academic department at University College to assess the extent to which the process fosters and supports an inclusive learning environment. The study was designed as a program evaluation to guide decision-making around the improvement of the process to provide such an environment. This evaluation specifically assessed the course development process from the academic department leadership perspective. This evaluation employed qualitative data collection methods and analysis. The pragmatic framework set forth in this UFE was chosen so that the results could be used by stakeholders for ongoing improvement. The questions posed by this evaluation are as follows:

Q1. What is the current course development process within a selected department at University College?

- a. What are the formal and informal practices for creating an inclusive learning environment within this process?

Q2. To what degree does the course development process within that department support an inclusive learning environment?

Student feedback demonstrates that there is room for improvement in creating a learning environment where students from minoritized groups can see themselves and

their lived experiences in the curriculum and course materials at University College. There are several ways for an academic department to do this including through teaching practice, community-building, and through course development. This evaluation centers on course development as a way to support an inclusive learning environment through formal and informal practices that allow for the thoughtful and purposeful selection of learning outcomes and materials, assignment topics, and the methods through which students are encouraged to engage with the course content in a way that values their identities and lived experiences.

## **Methodological Approach**

### **Evaluation Approach and Framework**

The purpose of this evaluation includes determining the extent to which the course development process within one academic department at University College currently supports an inclusive learning environment through its formal and informal practices within the process and guiding decision-making around the improvement of the process. This purpose aligns with the pragmatic paradigm which, when employed as a framework for evaluation, focuses less on the discovery of the “truth” and more on how an evaluation helps a program define what is or is not working toward defined goals (Mertens & Wilson, 2018). For this reason, the pragmatic paradigm is the most appropriate for this evaluation. An assessment of the degree to which the course development process is meeting the goal of supporting an inclusive learning environment and perhaps how that goal could be better embodied through an improved process provides the foundation for this evaluation.

The pragmatist's axiology requires a practical approach to problem-solving or decision-making that focuses on achieving a desired outcome or result (Chen, 2015; Mertens and Wilson, 2018). Pragmatism is not an effort in uncovering the truth, rather it emphasizes the practical outcomes and effectiveness of ideas and actions. It doesn't matter what one believes to be the truth, the focus is more about what difference it makes to believe in one thing or another (Morgan, 2007). In a pragmatic approach, decisions are made based on what is practical and achievable, given the available resources, constraints, and context (Rossi et al., 2004). Pragmatists study what is of interest to them and seek to find solutions that bring positive consequences rather than insisting on rigid adherence to preconceived ideas or theories (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Wholey et al., 2001). It is more important to stakeholders in the course development process that the evaluation and subsequent recommendations are aligned with the values stated by University College in its documented commitments to inclusive learning than uncovering some truth or theoretical ideal. The research presented in my literature review attests to the understanding that an inclusive learning environment is beneficial to students. This evaluation seeks not to refute that claim but rather to align with the current research.

Within the pragmatic paradigm exist evaluations focused on the intended use of findings. I have chosen UFE as the framework for the evaluation of the course development process. I will be looking specifically at how the program currently meets its intended goals, as well as how the process could be improved. This method allows me to immerse myself in the evaluation process in several capacities.

I specifically selected this evaluation approach over other evaluation approaches because of its flexibility and allowance for the researcher to be deeply engaged in the process and in relationship with stakeholders, PIUs, and beneficiaries. Use Branch theorists including Daniel Stufflebeam and Michael Patton agree that evaluators may have an expanded role in engaging with stakeholders, or “real users” of the evaluation to cultivate trusting relationships so that the evaluation process, outcomes, and recommendations are more likely to be woven into the fabric of a program (Christie & Alkin, 2012). Michael Patton, creator of UFE, describes the role of the evaluator in terms such as “negotiator,” “facilitator,” and “internal expert.” (Patton, 2012). As an Academic Director and stakeholder, I know the processes and policies of University College, have access to the information needed to determine to what extent the department is fostering and supporting an inclusive learning environment through the course development process, and have the trust and respect of those involved in the process such that the findings from this evaluation are more likely to be considered in improvement efforts.

The evaluation will be performed using the tenets, elements, and steps put forth by Michael Patton in the UFE. Patton’s methodologically agnostic UFE centers around two major tenets. First, a group of PIUs who have a vested interest in the findings should be identified at the onset of the evaluation, and second, the intended users should participate in major decision-making during the evaluation (Patton, 2008). Early iterations of Patton’s UFE also contained five major elements that distinguish them from other types of evaluations (Patton, 2008). These elements, are centered on the active engagement of stakeholders and the relationships formed between the evaluator and stakeholder groups.

The elements are: (a) Identify stakeholders, (b) In collaboration with stakeholders, develop the focus of the evaluation and its intended use, (c) Engage stakeholders in the creation of measures, and the selection of data collection methods and tools for analysis, (d) Actively involve intended users in understanding evaluation findings, and (e) Outline, with users, plans for implementing recommendations based on key findings (Patton, 2008). These five elements were expanded over time to seventeen steps that broaden the evaluation approach to include assessing readiness of the PIUs to participate in an evaluation before it begins and performing a meta-analysis of the evaluation at its conclusion. Figure 1 shows the visual representation of how the two tenets, five elements, and 17 steps align.

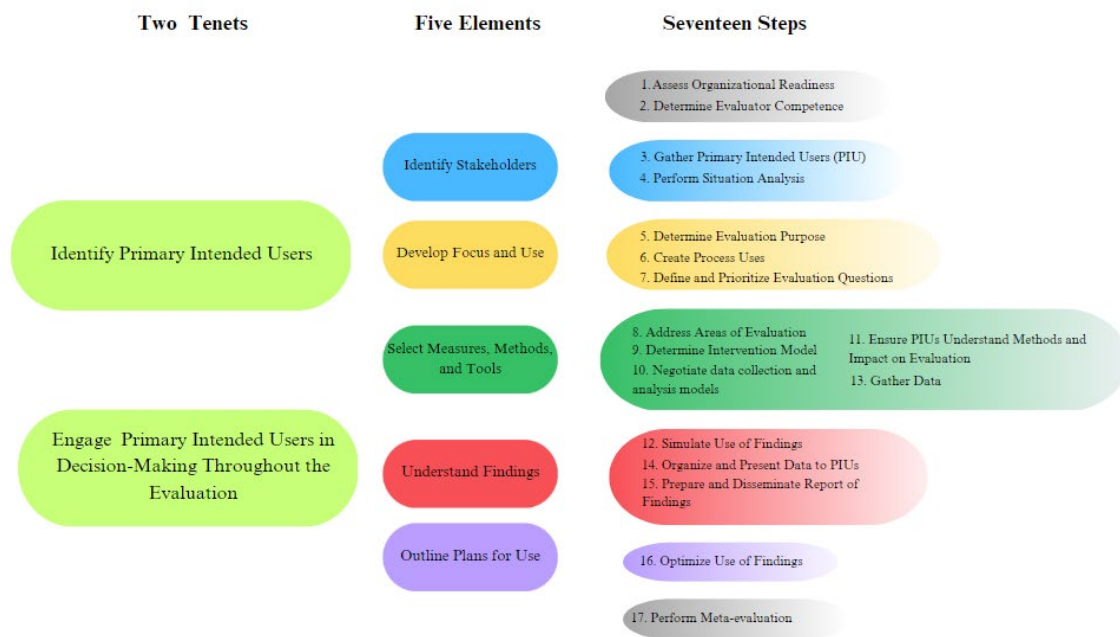


Figure 1: Patton's Utilization-Focused Evaluation



*Note:* Adapted from Better Evaluation: *The 17 Step UFE Framework* and *The 5-step UFE framework in action*, 2021 (<https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/utilisation-focused-evaluation>).

While these tenets, elements, and steps may seem linear, with a one-step-at-a-time logic, the process often requires the evaluator to loop back to previous steps as new potential users are identified or program priorities shift and change (Better Evaluation, 2021). In UFE, movement between evaluation questions and data collection methods are bidirectional; questions may inform methods and methods may create new questions. UFE is also agile such that the evaluation process can shift and change as needed to adapt to changes within University College or among stakeholders. This is important because this evaluation is one effort among many at University College to respond to the feedback of students and instructors regarding the creation and support for teaching and learning strategies that are inclusive.

Patton's utilization-focused approach emphasizes the importance of involving stakeholders in the evaluation process and tailoring the evaluation to meet their specific information needs. The approach also underscores the importance of focusing on evaluation use, with the goal of generating information that can be used to improve programs and inform decision-making (Patton, 2008). Patton's UFE isn't a methodology and doesn't prescribe any specific method or theory, rather it serves as a guiding framework for the evaluation. Overall, a utilization-focused approach seeks to generate evaluation findings that are relevant, credible, and useful for program stakeholders, and to promote program improvement and decision-making based on evidence (Patton, 2012).

## **Exploratory Practice**

In preparation for this evaluation, using Patton's first four steps as a guide, I considered how I might structure my work in such a way that I could continue my role as an Academic Director, collect data, and work in collaboration with the committees that were already tackling DEI issues across University College. Patton's first four steps in a UFE require the evaluator to assess organizational readiness, assess and support evaluator competence to undertake a UFE, gather and organize PIUs, and perform a situational analysis. The formation of the subcommittee focused on curriculum at University College demonstrated that the department was committed to improving the content delivered to students. Because this committee was formed to initiate action to improve issues of DEI at University College, it seemed a good fit to select an evaluation approach that would allow for the group to be deeply involved throughout this evaluation.

While I am new to program evaluations, and my competence to perform such a detailed evaluation could be questioned, I believe my coursework and additional independent study of program evaluations, specifically UFE put me in a position to successfully complete this evaluation. University College leadership provided additional support in the form of access to individuals close to the process, access to documents used across teams, and time to perform the evaluation during work hours.

PIUs play an integral role in a UFE, serving as stakeholders and beneficiaries, those most likely to use the findings of the evaluation (Patton, 2012). The curriculum committee makes the most sense to engage as PIUs. This committee, selected by University College leadership consists of the Associate Dean of Academic Operations

and Affairs, the Learning Experience and Design Director (LEDD), two IDs, three Academic Directors including myself, and three adjunct instructors, two of whom joined the group after the beginning of this evaluation. This committee meets monthly to plan and implement curricular elements that contribute to an inclusive learning environment for students.

The situational analysis evolved out of my first evaluation question, “What is the current course development process within a selected academic department at University College?” This question allowed me to explore the course development process as it currently exists. The analysis helped to better define the program’s goals, objectives, and activities as well how well it is serving its stakeholders and beneficiaries.

### **Location and Program**

This program evaluation took place at a mid-sized, private, doctoral degree-granting, research university in the west. The college hosting the evaluation, University College, is the continuing education arm of the university which offers predominantly master’s degrees tailored to adult learners seeking career-focused, application-oriented programming. The degree and certificate programs can be completed in a variety of modalities, all of which have an online, asynchronous component (University College, 2023). While the majority of students choose the 100% online, asynchronous format for classes, there are local students, including international and veteran students, who attend in-person classes in the evenings several times throughout the academic term. The student population is predominantly white and female, over the age of 30, and working full- or part-time while attending school. Over the last five years, the college has seen an

increase in students from all race/ethnicity groups as collected and reported by the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis in the University Factbook (2022). Data regarding sexual orientation/gender identity, ability, and socio-economic status is not required to be reported by federal regulation, and while it may be collected informally for informational purposes by individual departments, is not publicly available.

### **Organizational Structure**

University College has a leadership team consisting of a dean and four associate deans. The associate deans each have an area of specialization including Academic Operations and Affairs, Admissions and Student Services, Finance, and Enrollment and Marketing. Each academic program within the college has an Academic Director who is appointed teaching faculty and reports directly to the dean of University College. The Academic Directors maintain a small teaching requirement but the majority of the role is designed to be administrative such that the directors provide supervision of adjunct instructors, curriculum development, and maintenance of their programs. The Academic Directors maintain significant autonomy over their programs and while the resources provided and processes developed by the departments within the college are shared among the directors, the day-to-day management of each academic program is mostly guided by the director. Due to the potential for variability among Academic Directors, this evaluation will focus on one academic program within University College although most of the processes, stakeholders, and workflows are common among academic departments therefore the findings of this evaluation will be shared with all academic departments.

### ***Instructors***

Instructors at University College and within each academic program are predominantly adjunct faculty members selected for expertise in their industry over their teaching experience. Instructors may or may not have a terminal degree but the majority have at least a Master's Degree and work experience in the area covered by a particular course. Because of this design, instructors are provided with well-developed course content that is housed in Canvas, the university's LMS. Learning materials, assignments, and grading rubrics are mostly pre-determined during course development and overseen by the Academic Directors and members of the Learning Excellence (LX) team. New instructors at University College have an onboarding experience that includes synchronous meetings with a member of the LX team and online, self-paced learning modules with resources available via the LMS. Teaching assignments are completed by the Academic Directors two times a year with input from instructors, Teaching and Learning Specialists (TLS), and academic advisors. Instructors are required to complete a course competency for each course they teach before they can be assigned to a particular course.

### **Creating a New Course or Updating an Existing Course**

The course design and development and design process is maintained jointly between Academic Directors and a team of IDs who are either full-time employees of the university and part of the LX team, or are contracted on a per-project basis. When new courses are introduced or existing courses are updated, Academic Directors are responsible for identifying a SME to pair with an ID for a 16-week course development

project. SMEs are most often selected from existing adjunct faculty members or from the director's professional network. Occasionally, an informal search is completed to find a subject-matter expert. A director may also choose to complete the course development themselves. While there are several opportunities for Academic Directors to engage in the process of course development, the bulk of the work is completed between the SME and the ID.

Onboarding for SMEs is variable depending on the Academic Director, ID, and the SME's experience. The process involves, at a minimum, a meeting with the Academic Director to understand the vision for the course and how the course fits into a larger curriculum, an introductory or "kick-off" meeting with the ID and Academic Director, and access to online, self-paced modules that outline the course design and development process. Prior to the pandemic, the introductory meetings were held in small groups, in-person at University College, with a subset of IDs, Academic Directors, and SMEs. Initiated during the pandemic and maintained through the present, meetings are most often held virtually via a videoconferencing platform. Each ID is responsible for up to six course designs at one time. The assignments may or may not be for the same program meaning that an ID may be working with multiple Academic Directors as well as with a number of SMEs.

During the course design and development process, the ID and SME meet regularly to create a set of deliverables that includes the course description and outcomes, weekly learning topics and objectives, learning materials, and assignments. The ID is responsible for the course design including the creation of structural elements within the LMS, for

ensuring accessibility of course materials, providing support for assignment design, and for creating assessment rubrics. The SME is responsible for the course development which includes the creation of the course description and course outcomes that align with program outcomes, the development of instructor competencies, the selection of course readings and learning materials, and collaboration regarding the content knowledge and desired outcomes for assignments and rubrics.

Throughout the course design and development process, which occurs in three cohorts over the course of one calendar year, the IDs meet regularly with the Director of Instructional Design to collaborate. These meetings allow the ID team to share what is and isn't working well in their course designs. If needed the team's director will intervene to help reset expectations for a course development that has gone awry. Occasionally, there are issues with SME performance that necessitate the discontinuation of a course development.

When the course design and development process is complete, the course container is reviewed for final approval by the Academic Director, the Director of Instructional Design, and the Assistant Dean of Academic Operations and Affairs. The instructional design team does employ a set of standards, based on UDL, for content accessibility including closed captioning and narrative descriptions of images for those with sensory or learning impairments. At this time, there are no formally defined criteria to assess course containers for inclusive content in the directors' or the deans' approvals. While some Academic Directors report efforts to create inclusive learning opportunities for students during course development, there is no formal documented expectation to do so.

### ***Course Materials***

The collection of items housed in the LMS for any given course is called a “course container.” Course containers are designed to be used for instruction in multiple course modalities, all of which have some online, asynchronous component. Instructors are responsible for guiding in-person class lectures, participating in online discussion threads, and grading assignments. It is important to note this for the evaluation because individual instructors are not directly responsible for the development of course materials. This model is similar to that of other institutions offering online programming but different than the development process for the more traditional academic setting that predominantly employs face-to-face instruction (Chao et al., 2010; van Rooij & Zirkle, 2016).

### **Commitment to DEI**

University College documents its collective understanding of and commitment to an inclusive learning environment in several ways. This documentation is available to the public via the college’s website and is referenced in the hiring process for faculty, staff, and adjunct instructors. The elements included are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: University College DEI Content

Document	Verbiage
University College Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honor the individual: we meet others where they are; work inclusively; and embrace diversity of thought, background, and perspective.</li><li>• Champion learning: we know first-hand the powerful outcomes that result when education extends over a lifetime.</li><li>• Transform lives: we make a positive, lasting impact on the lives of others.</li></ul>



- Work together: for us, this begins with the cultivation of mutual understanding and extends to collaboration and collective ownership of results.
- Pursue excellence: we go the extra mile to deliver exemplary educational offerings and service to others.

(University College, 2022)

University College Diversity Statement	<p>‘University College embraces inclusive excellence through its commitment to equality of opportunity, inclusiveness, fairness, mutual respect, and dignity in all its professional and academic endeavors. We value all differences, visible and invisible, including age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio- economic background, and other critical social dimensions. We fulfill our commitment to inclusive excellence through communication, action, and cultural awareness. We reject behavior that is not compatible with this vision.’ (University College, 2022)</p>
University College DEI Syllabus Statement	<p>“At University College, we embrace inclusive excellence through our commitment to equality of opportunity, inclusiveness, fairness, and mutual respect, in all our professional and academic pursuits. It is in our diversities, reflected by differences in our race, ethnicity, age, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, gender identity and expression, differences in abilities, socioeconomic background as well as intersectionality, that we can find inspiration and the ability to grow with one another. This work is an invitation for all students, faculty, and staff to constructively connect through expressions of differing points of views, opinions, and ideas to develop a learning community that fosters equity and inclusivity.</p> <p>A commitment to equity and inclusion means that all can participate in the learning community, inside and outside of the classroom, allowing everyone to achieve their full potential in the program. A dedication to equity and inclusivity requires that we make space for and uplift voices that have historically been left out. We must also approach this work critically, asking when, where, and why targeted communities have been systematically excluded from the curriculum and how we can intentionally and thoughtfully bring them into our curriculum.</p> <p>Through ongoing collaboration among the University College community, we can cultivate learning environments that honor all lived experiences. To learn more about these efforts and/or to share any thoughts, concerns, or issues you</p>

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encounter, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Associate Dean of Academic Operations and Affairs...” (Curriculum Committee, 2023)

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In the last three years, there has been a reinvigoration of work at the department level to be more intentional about diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion efforts at University College. The dean initiated a steering committee (DEI Steering Committee) to work on department level issues. This committee includes faculty and staff, and recently has started a search to include adjunct faculty members, alumni, and current students. This committee recently completed a language guide to serve as a resource for faculty, students, and staff to use more inclusive language in the office setting and in the classroom, both physical and virtual. The DEI Steering Committee as added three subcommittees responsible for curricular updates (curriculum committee), hiring practices for faculty, staff, and adjunct instructors (hiring committee), and internal professional development and education (packed lunch committee).

Beginning in the spring quarter 2023, a syllabus statement was added to the publicly available syllabi as well as syllabi in each course container. This statement was developed by the curriculum committee and has been reviewed by members of the office of the Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the Office of Teaching and Learning at the university level. University College has made strides in promoting diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion through the establishment of a DEI Steering Committee, the creation of a language guide, and the development of subcommittees focused on curricular updates, hiring practices, and professional development.

## **Theoretical Framework**

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, this evaluation is pragmatic in nature meaning that the utilization of findings to positively impact the chosen program is what drives the work. It is assumed that reality is created by those individuals within the space and therefore reflects the experience of those individuals and their experience solving practical problems (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In exploring the process of fostering and supporting an inclusive learning environment through course development, UDL and CSP together can provide the structure through which curricular elements of graduate-level courses can create such an environment. Thus, I believe that UDL and CSP are the proper perspectives from which to evaluate the recommendations for the course development process at University College. UDL provides access to the pedagogical elements of a course through structures and processes that support a variety of ways of learning (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008), and CSP ensures that courses are designed and developed to value and sustain Black, Latinx, and Indigenous (and all the identities that intersect and travel with race and ethnicity) culture, and ways of learning and knowing (Paris, 2012). Extending toward each other, these two frameworks decry deficit thinking and work toward eliminating the inequities present in the dominant narratives in higher education classrooms (Grier-Reed & Williams-Wengerd, 2018; Waitoller & King Thorius, 2016).

Once data collection and analysis were completed, recommendations regarding the continued effort to support and foster an inclusive learning environment were explored. As UFE does not define data collection or analysis methods and has no requirements

regarding the overlay of an additional theoretical framework, the findings were viewed through the lens of UDL and CSP combined in order to provide structure to the program recommendations.

UDL, at its most basic, allows for the creation of accessible content for neurodiverse learners and that, in turn, helps all learners (Burgstahler, 2020). The ID team at University College uses UDL as its framework for the design elements of a course including closed captioning, alternate text for images, and screen readers. While the IDs are not accountable for the course content, the co-creation of learning strategies founded in UDL serve to link with content elements including engagement opportunities and assessment.

CSP does not come in conflict with other asset-based work like UDL. In fact, it purposefully joins other theorists and theories that seek to dismantle deficit approaches. Centering and sustaining the cultures and values of young people of color in their communities, not only serves to embrace the diverse perspectives in classrooms but holds them sacred, and worthy of sustaining (Paris, 2021).

“To be and become culturally sustaining educators, we must be willing to give up the false and damaging beliefs that who we are (and the unjust power that may come with our memberships, identities, relations), that what our norms and beliefs are (including those damaging ones we may have internalized), somehow deserve more attention in teaching and learning settings.”(Paris, 2021, p. 369)

UDL and CSP together can create an environment that supports and fosters inclusion for students and their intersecting identities. These two frameworks, in concert, provide the foundation for recommendations for this program.

## Design Methodology and Procedures

### Identification of Stakeholders and PIUs

A critical first step in UFE is the identification of stakeholders and PIUs. These stakeholders have some vested interest in the outcome of the evaluation, may be users of this evaluation, or may be key beneficiaries of the recommendations formed through the evaluation process. Stakeholder groups include a) course development SMEs, b) instructional design team members including the Director of Instructional Design, c) members of the leadership team, d) the curriculum committee, e) instructors, and f) students. Each stakeholder or stakeholder group either plays a key role in the course development process and each has input into decision-making or is the recipient of the work achieved during course development. See Table 2 for detailed descriptions of course development team member responsibilities.

Table 2: Current Course Development Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
SME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conceptualize the overall vision for a new course or course update.</li><li>• Collaborate with the Academic Director and ID through the development process.</li><li>• Provide subject-matter expertise through the creation of course descriptions, outcomes, and instructor competencies, the selection of learning content and readings, the design of course assignments, and instructor engagement opportunities.</li><li>• Invest in creating quality course content that follows guidelines set forth by the Academic Director and University College to provide a valuable learning experience for students.</li></ul>
Instructional Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work collaboratively with SMEs, the Academic Directors, and the assistant dean to ensure courses meet the standards of higher learning accrediting</li></ul>

	<p>bodies and engage educational tools and practices are most effective for the student population at University College.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report progress on course developments at a regular cadence to Academic Directors and instructional design director</li> <li>• Interpret SME and Academic Director vision for the course within the LMS.</li> <li>• Provide technical support and expertise with regard to principles of UDL within the LMS.</li> </ul>
Curriculum committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define, implement, and evaluate initiatives to address issues of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion within curricula across academic programs.</li> <li>• Collaborate with areas across the university to share best practices in creating inclusive and equitable learning spaces</li> </ul>
Academic Director, Director of Instructional Design and Assistant Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review course content for its alignment to program and college-level outcomes.</li> <li>• Provide feedback or requests for edits or improvements on course design and developments projects.</li> <li>• Hold the ultimate responsibility for the presentation of course content to students.</li> </ul>

Additionally, students and adjunct faculty members, beneficiaries of the evaluation, are directly impacted by the products of course development but are not intimately involved in the process of course development. Adjunct faculty deliver course content and are invested in student involvement and successful course completion. All stakeholders are key to the success of the course development process.

Because the purpose of evaluations within the pragmatic paradigm is to help stakeholders see how a program's outcomes will be achieved, this evaluation paradigm provides the needed structure to move this program forward. Ideally, the evaluation will not only benefit the course development process but will be scaled for use in other

departments and used as a framework for both formative and summative evaluations in future projects at University College.

### ***PIUs***

The PIUs of UFE are the stakeholders who will be using the evaluation findings to inform decision-making and program improvement. For this evaluation, the PIU group is the curriculum subcommittee. This group is comprised of key stakeholder representatives and has been charged with overseeing large-scale curricular change through a DEI lens.

This study will include information from those currently working at University College in the aforementioned roles who were involved in the development of a course during the selected academic terms. It should be noted that UFEs value the input of PIUs such that there may be requests from this group to engage or inform members of stakeholder groups or beneficiaries of the evaluation that are not active participants in the study.

### **Data Collection**

This study uses qualitative data collection methods and analysis (Jones et al., 2013). The qualitative data collection began with semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders including IDs and subject-matter experts. Other methods of data collection included document analysis and direct observations. The depth of information gathering is important to understand how course development is or is not supporting an inclusive learning environment. Data collection aligns with the third element of five in Patton's UFE, selecting measures, methods, and tools. This element encompasses steps eight through eleven and step thirteen in the seventeen-step process (Patton, 2008; Patton,

2012). UFE does not require the evaluator to use specific methods but does emphasize the collaboration with PIUs in the selection and implementation of these methods. Due to the timeline of this evaluation and the formation of the curriculum committee, the data collection methods were selected in advance and confirmed with the committee.

The data collection portion of this study was divided into several segments. The first segment outlines the existing course development process and aligns with Patton's fourth of seventeen steps to perform a situational analysis (Patton, 2012). The information gathered from the situational analysis was used as the scaffolding for semi-structured interviews, document review, and observations. Throughout the process, information was shared with the curriculum committee for continuous feedback and as a forum to consider opportunities improvement within the course development process. Specific feedback is available for review in the Evaluation Timeline below and in the data collection audit trail in Appendix A.

### ***Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews are a type of qualitative research method that involves conducting interviews with participants using a flexible and open-ended interview guide, rather than a standardized set of questions (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a general list of questions and topics to cover, but may also ask follow-up questions or explore new topics based on the participants' responses. Semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structure and flexibility, allowing the interviewer to guide the conversation while also being responsive to the participant's perspectives and experiences (Jones et al., 2013).



### *Interview Participants*

In order to include the voices of key stakeholder groups, participants for this study were selected from members of stakeholder groups that took part in the course development process at University College during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. The groups were selected for their extensive knowledge of the course development process for all departments at University College. All participants were selected from stakeholder groups; all stakeholders were not necessarily participants in the study. The participants and participant groups that were engaged in the study are IDs including the LEDD, Academic Directors, SMEs, the Associate Dean of Academic Operations and Affairs. It is important to note that there is significant overlap in and among roles of participants in the study. I, as an Academic Director, have also been a SME and instructor, and have worked on program committees, including the curriculum committee. SMEs are often also adjunct faculty members. IDs have been students, are recent alumni or adjunct faculty of University College, and serve on program committees including the curriculum committee. Interview participants were selected for their insight not only into their own role but for their view of the course development process within the larger context of University College. The academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 were selected to reflect recent changes in the course development process.

Interviews with participants who represented key stakeholder groups included the Associate Dean of Operations and Academic Affairs, one SME, the LEDD, and one ID. The purpose of these semi-structured, individual interviews was to gather information regarding participants' understanding of inclusive learning environments, to document

the current state of the course development process from each role, and identify challenges and supports within the process, and to identify potential areas for program improvement. An email was sent requesting participation and all requests were granted. Find the email request text in Appendix B. The interviews were conducted using the Zoom videoconferencing platform, were recorded, and lasted approximately one hour. Interview questions maintained a consistent theme but were tailored to the role of the participant within the course development process. Recordings and the auto-generated transcripts were held on the password protected media platform provided by the university. Transcripts were read for accuracy and then provided to each participant for review, clarification, and as a member check. Transcriptions were then uploaded to the NVIVO software platform for analysis. A list of interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

### ***Document Review***

Document review is a qualitative research method that involves analyzing existing documents, such as written materials, reports, and records, to gain insights into a particular phenomenon or issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Document review can be used to gather data on a wide range of topics, such as organizational processes, policy changes, historical events, and cultural practices. The data obtained through document review can be analyzed using qualitative methods, such as content analysis or thematic analysis. These methods involve identifying patterns and themes in the data, and developing interpretations based on these patterns and themes.

Several sources of documentation were reviewed for this evaluation including, course containers within the LMS and course alignment maps used by the SME and ID teams as a framework for course development and design. Documents were uploaded to the NVIVO platform and coded for key terms and elements from the literature known to be important to students in creating an inclusive learning environment as well as for themes that emerged from interviews. These elements and key terms include the language used to define course outcomes, descriptions, and instructor competencies, diversity of content, the ability for students to demonstrate learning in more than one way, the invitation (but not obligation) to share lived experiences or to bring experiences not emphasized in course material, and opportunities for collaborative learning and instructor engagement (McLoughlin, 200; Sathy & Hogan, 2019; Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2020). See Table 3 for a list of documents reviewed and their purpose in the course development process and Appendix D for examples of the documents used by the instructional design team.

Table 3: Instructional Design Documents Location and Purpose

Document	Location/Access	Purpose
Values	Public-facing website : <a href="https://universitycollege.du.edu/about/">https://universitycollege.du.edu/about/</a>	The University College Values are a public-facing document and an overarching guide for the Academic Director to use for creating the vision for the course and to share that vision with the SME and ID at the onset of a course design project.
Diversity Statement	Public-facing website : <a href="https://universitycollege.du.edu/about/">https://universitycollege.du.edu/about/</a>	The University College Diversity statement is also a public-facing document and an overarching guide for the Academic Director to use for creating the vision for the course and to share that vision with the SME and ID at the onset of a course design project.

Syllabus Statement	Public-facing syllabus repository : <a href="https://du.simplesyllabus.com/en-US/syllabus-library">https://du.simplesyllabus.com/en-US/syllabus-library</a>	The Syllabus Statement is a commitment to students found in every course syllabus starting Spring 2023.
Brainstorming Document	Shared by LEDD to Academic Director, distributed by Academic Director to SME.	The Brainstorming document or Course Pitch is designed for Academic Directors to send to prospective SMEs to gather information about subject matter knowledge, the SMEs vision for the course, their understanding of DEI as it relates to the course, goals and expected outcomes, topics, and possible assignments/learning activities.
University College Course Design Pre-Development Information Sheet	Shared by ID to SME and Academic Director in Kick-off meeting	This information sheet is intended to streamline pre-course development communication by capturing in one place all the information SMEs and IDs need to get started on the course. This sheet should be completed as part of a pre-development conversation between the Academic Director and SME.
SME contract/SOW	Shared by LEDD to SME, reviewed by Academic Director	This is the legal contract that outlines the scope of work, expectations, and pay for the SME.
Timeline	Shared by LEDD to Academic Director, distributed by Academic Director to SME.	The timeline document provides the SME with major milestone expectations and due dates for certain portions of the course design.
Alignment Map	Shared by ID with SME. Co-constructed by ID and SME, reviewed and approved by Academic Director	The alignment map is a foundational document in the course development process. It serves to document the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course outcomes</li> <li>• Alignment of course outcomes to program and concentration outcomes</li> <li>• Instructor competencies</li> <li>• Weekly topics</li> <li>• Major assignment themes</li> </ul>

Design Document	Shared by ID with SME. Co-constructed by ID and SME, maybe reviewed and approved by Academic Director	<p>The design document is the repository for all of the course content that will be uploaded into the Canvas container. This document includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning materials including readings, materials from 3<sup>rd</sup> party sources (e.g., YouTube videos, podcasts, blogs), recordings from the SME or invited lecturers, presentation materials, etc.</li> <li>• Discussion prompts with grading rubrics</li> <li>• Formative assignments with grading rubrics</li> <li>• Summative assignments with grading rubrics</li> <li>• Notes from the SME to instructors regarding course delivery.</li> </ul>
SME Course Development Process Portal	Assigned to SME by LEDD.	This is a Canvas container that provides the SME with just-in-time resources for completing a course development
Course Design Expectations	Accessed and used by ID team members.	The course design expectations is a document used primarily by the ID team that lists all of the elements of a course design/development along with detailed descriptions of the responsibilities of the SME and ID.
Rubric Templates	Shared by ID with SME. Co-constructed by ID and SME, reviewed and approved by AD	This is a repository of assignment rubric templates that can be customized by either the SME or ID.
Course Design QA Checklist	Accessed and used by ID team members.	This spreadsheet is a guide for the ID to use to prepare course designs for approval by the AD and LEDD. Essential and preferred design and development elements are delineated.
Completed course Canvas container	Shared by ID with SME. Co-constructed by ID	Once the design document is complete, the ID moves all of the materials into the Canvas Container.

	and SME, reviewed and approved by AD	This is the platform for delivery of the course to students.
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### ***Observations***

Qualitative observations involve gathering data through direct observation of phenomena, events, or behaviors, using methods such as participant observation, interviews, and focus groups (Jones et al., 2013). Qualitative observations are used to gain insight into experiences, beliefs, and perspectives, as well as to explore complex social phenomena or issues (Patton, 2015). The observations in this study will be helpful in identifying patterns and themes in the data.

Observation of two course developments occurred during a regularly scheduled course development cohort beginning in December, 2022 and ending in April, 2023. Both courses were major updates to existing courses and were led by the same ID who participated in the individual interviews. The SMEs for each course were existing adjunct faculty members and were selected by the Academic Director for their depth of knowledge in the subject and for their expertise in their field of practice.

Academic Directors are not required to be present during the weekly course development meetings but this is a practice I chose for myself as an Academic Director since my appointment in this position. I see my role in these meetings as a support to the ID-SME team in terms of providing context for how course materials, outcomes, and assignments align with the larger curriculum. Attending these meetings allows me to see direction of the course prior to the scheduled approval touchpoints. During these observations, all parties were made aware of my dual role as AD and observer.

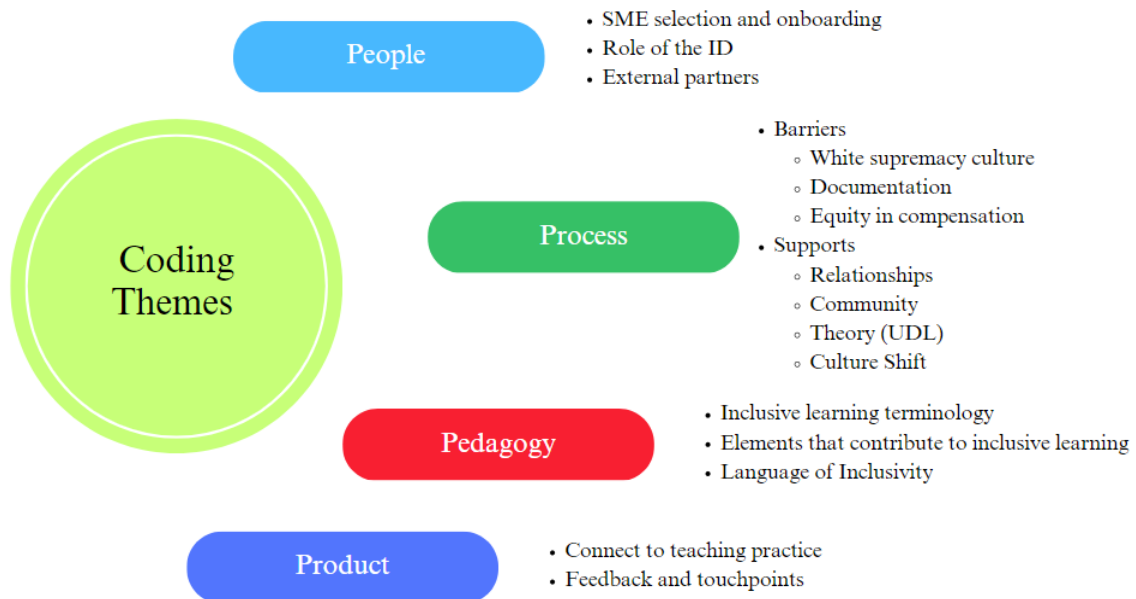
Throughout both course developments, I kept concise notes of events and conversations that occurred that related to elements that contribute to an inclusive learning environment. These notes were captured on a password-protected laptop and were used to corroborate information gathered during interviews and document review.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research involves the systematic and rigorous examination of data collected through various methods such as interviews, observations, and document reviews, in order to identify patterns, themes, and relationships in the data, and to develop meaningful interpretations and insights (Willig, 2014). Within a UFE, data analysis is covered in element four, understand findings which aligns with steps twelve, fourteen and fifteen of Patton's seventeen step UFE (Patton, 2012). Miles and Huberman's (1994) steps for qualitative data analysis were incorporated into this evaluation. The steps are data organization, data reduction, and data exploration.

Data organization is the first of Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis steps. For this evaluation, data were organized in several ways. Interview transcripts, sample documents, observation notes were captured and stored in OneDrive files and a OneNote Notebook using the Outlook 365 platform. This allowed me to collect and store multiple types of data and information in one secure platform that was accessible in different locations from different devices. As data were collected, transcripts, documents, and notes were loaded into the NVIVO software platform for coding. Each item was read carefully and key words and phrases were identified. The initial collection of terms and phrases were consolidated or "reduced" into major themes

and categorized by their alignment with the 4P framework introduced in the Literature Review: People, Process, Pedagogy, and Product. Exploration of the data consisted of multiple reviews, key word searches, and visual mapping of the recurring themes found



across data sources. Find the coding scheme and major themes in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Coding Diagram

Once coding was complete, the results, including a version of this visual, were shared with the curriculum committee and feedback was requested. Individual conversations were also had with members of the committee as a form of member checking. The role of the evaluator in UFE is to work with the PIUs to understand the data collection and analysis methods in order to optimize the use of the findings for program improvement which is described in step sixteen of Patton’s seventeen step process (Patton, 2012). Patton (2012) also describes how the evaluator can participate as “internal expert.” This is where my proximity to the course development process is a benefit in this evaluation.



As both evaluator and internal expert, I was able to identify and consolidate key themes that could be shared and explored with the curriculum committee who act as the PIU group for this evaluation.

## Evaluation Timeline

Figure 3 shows the timeline of the evaluation as it occurred within the larger context of DEI efforts at University College.

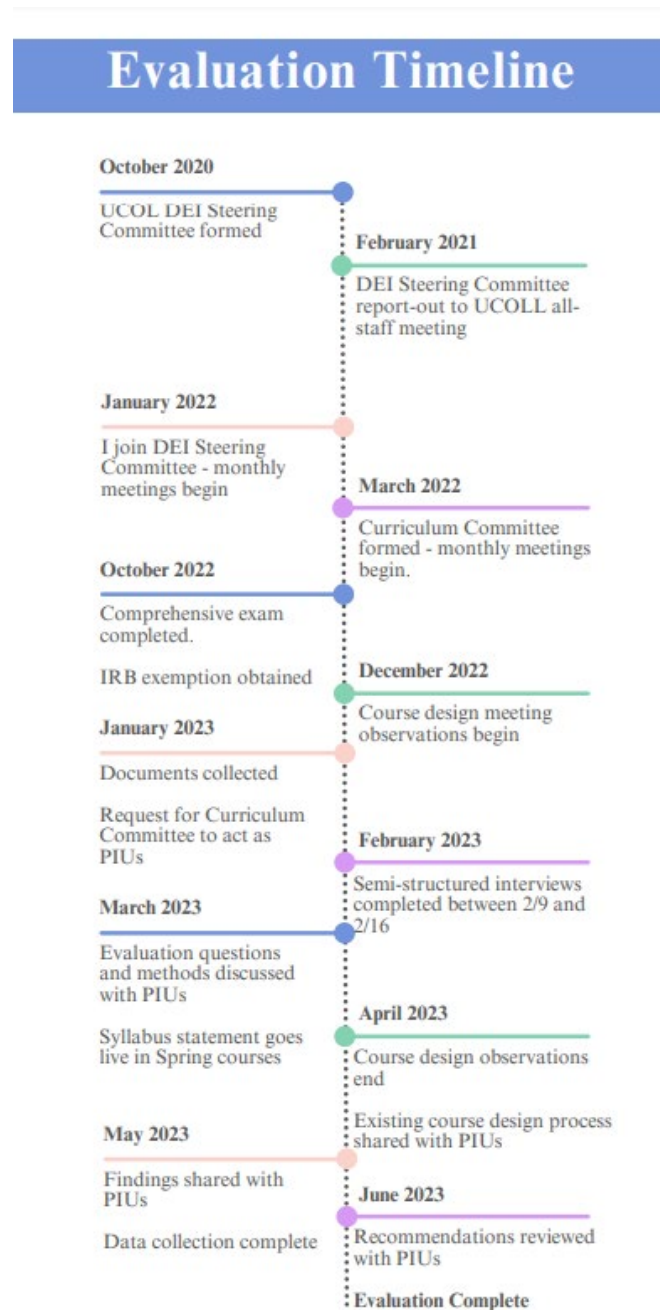


Figure 3: Evaluation Timeline

## **Ethical Considerations**

It is imperative that evaluators and researchers carefully consider ethical challenges that arise during all phases of evaluation and research. Confidentiality of information, informed consent, and researcher or evaluator bias are issues common ethical considerations (Stufflebeam, 2001). In UFE specifically, there is a threat of bias from the PIU group itself in the form of driving the evaluator toward a particular outcome. In order to create the most ethically sound environment for this evaluation, I consulted the five principles outlined by the American Educational Research Association (AERA). These principles provide a foundation for an ethical evaluation process were used to guide this evaluation (AERA, 2011). The five principles are (a) professional competence, (b) integrity, (c) professional responsibility, (d) respect for people's rights, dignity, and diversity, and (e) social responsibility.

While this evaluation was considered a performance improvement activity and not human subject research, Institutional Review Board (IRB) exemption was formally sought and received. Steps were taken to ensure participants were informed regarding the purpose, methods, analysis, and reporting of findings for this evaluation. Permission to collect data was also requested and received. The AERA principles align with UFE via the connections to stakeholders and the responsibility to use evaluation findings to improve processes and program outcomes for beneficiaries of those programs.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations to consider as I employ UFE in the course development process. As this evaluation operates within the broader framework of the university, it is

subject to the fluctuating priorities and potential conflicts inherent in the larger context of the institution. Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014) note that UFE is quite susceptible to several types of bias. These include individual stakeholder biases that may impact how accurately an individual stakeholder may represent their group. Biases may also become a factor as stakeholder groups become deeply involved in the evaluation and attempt to sway the evaluation in a particular direction either toward or away from a pertinent question or important finding. This limitation will be addressed through frequent member checks and review by peers and mentors. The necessity to deeply involve many stakeholders throughout the evaluation process makes UFEs fraught with potential for strained relationships and conflicts of interest (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014). I think it is also important to note that because I am new to evaluation, I will need to address issues of competence through communication and frequent review with those more experienced than myself. As a new evaluator, I will need to hone my negotiation skills to avoid conflicts between stakeholders through decision-making phases. These limitations are not insurmountable but will need constant attention to make sure they do not derail the evaluation.

### **Roles of the Evaluator – Limitation and Delimitation**

Because my roles intertwined in rather complex ways during this evaluation, I thought it important to make explicit what my roles were during this evaluation. In this section, I will describe how my roles allowed me access into the process as an insider and also how I managed to maintain boundaries so as to reduce the potential for bias with regard to decision-making and recommendations for program improvements.

In this evaluation, I am serving many roles: student, Academic Director, evaluator, stakeholder, PIU and data source. These roles are an advantage to this evaluation in that I understand the end-to-end course development process and where it sits within the larger context of University College. I have trusted relationships with other stakeholders and PIUs that provides access to the individuals involved and documentation used in the process. Ultimately, I have a vested interest in the outcome from all perspectives.

This close involvement, however, does come with risk. The most obvious risk is the difficulty in teasing out my roles and making clear to myself and others in what role I am acting in any given situation. I have addressed this risk through preparation and reflection prior to evaluation activities and clarifying with others my role in interactions. This can best be exemplified in my communication with SMEs during observations my roles as both AD and evaluator. An additional risk is the potential for bias toward a particular outcome in this evaluation. This risk was mitigated through collaboration with PIUs, in this evaluation, the curriculum committee. There was a standing item on the curriculum committee meeting agenda where I was expected to share progress, request feedback, and identify upcoming evaluation steps. As a student, Academic Director, evaluator, key stakeholder, PIU, and data source, I recognize that my input and contributions were critical to the success of this evaluation but not free from risk. I committed to working collaboratively with others throughout this evaluation to ensure that the work was focused on the most relevant outcomes, and that the results could be used to improve the program's overall effectiveness.

## **Trustworthiness**

There are several techniques that can be used to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research, such as using rich and detailed descriptions, using multiple methods to collect data, and engaging in peer review and member checking to validate the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Overall, ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research is essential to ensure that the research findings are credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable, and can be trusted by the research community (Jones et al., 2013) In UFE specifically, the close involvement with PIUs provides an environment that values the engagement of stakeholders throughout the evaluation, transparency in data collection, analysis, and reporting, and triangulating data through the collection of data from multiple sources (Patton, 2015).

In order to maintain reliability and trustworthiness throughout the evaluation process, it was important to maintain constant comparison of data collected throughout the evaluation process (Patton, 2008). Due to the collaborative nature of UFE, validity and reliability was demonstrated through member checks with key stakeholders. Member checks were performed in group settings during curriculum committee meetings and via individual conversations with PIUs. Feedback was received in conversation and via email from PIUs. This additional data was collected and incorporated into the coding process and is documented in both the Evaluation Timeline and in a data audit trail available in Appendix A. As Patton (2015) also notes the importance of triangulation, the process of validating data through collection from multiple sources. Triangulation was incorporated into the data analysis process using information collected from interviews, document

review, and observations as well as from additional feedback received from PIUs.

Through triangulation, member checks, and constant comparison, the necessary steps were taken to maintain trustworthiness throughout the evaluation.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided detailed information regarding the methodology and methods used in this evaluation of the course development process. Consideration was given to making sure the evaluation followed the key principles of a UFE, allowing for input from PIUs throughout the evaluation. The next chapter discussed the findings that came about as a result of the analysis of the data collected as outlined in chapter 3. The evaluation findings will be gathered with the goal of providing an assessment of the course development process that can be used for continual improvement of the process.

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

The purpose of this UFE was twofold. The first portion of the evaluation aimed to examine the formal and informal practices of the course development process within one academic department at University College. The second portion of the evaluation centered on assessing the degree to which the course development process contributes to an inclusive learning environment. This chapter first presents the findings related to the existing course design process to address the current state environment and to what degree the process fosters or supports an inclusive learning environment. The insights obtained from this effort served to clarify the expectations of the process, roles of the individuals, and the purpose of the documentation associated with the design and development of courses at University College. I sought to answer the following questions:

Q1. What is the current course development process within a selected department at University College?

- a. What are the formal and informal practices for creating an inclusive learning environment within this process?

Q2. To what degree does the course development process within that department support an inclusive learning environment.



## **Review of Methodology**

The fourth of Michael Patton's five major elements of UFE is to understand the evaluation findings (Patton, 2008). I used a variety of data collection strategies to determine the current course development process and employed a UFE as the methodology for discovering the extent to which the existing process supports an inclusive learning environment. Four key stakeholders in the process participated in one-on-one interviews, two course developments in progress were observed, and the documents used in course design and development were analyzed for their content regarding inclusive learning environments. Thematic coding allowed for detailed analysis of the multiple sources of data. As data were collected, transcripts, documents, and notes were loaded into the NVIVO software platform for coding. Each item was read carefully and key words and phrases were identified. The initial collection of terms and phrases were consolidated or "reduced" into major themes and categorized by their alignment with the 4P framework introduced in the Literature Review: People, Process, Pedagogy, and Product. Exploration of the data consisted of multiple reviews, key word searches, and visual mapping of the recurring themes found across data sources.

## **Understanding Findings**

In order to most effectively convey the findings to PIUs and stakeholders, the results have been organized into two categories. The first category explores the first evaluation question regarding the existing process and the formal and informal practices that are implemented to support and foster an inclusive learning environment for students during

course development. The second category of data analysis uses the four major elements introduced in the literature review: people, process, pedagogy, and product. Within each of these elements, the themes that emerged were analyzed for their impact on the course development process and their role in fostering and supporting an inclusive learning environment.

### **Analysis for Evaluation Question One**

The first evaluation question addresses the process of course development as it exists and identifies the formal and informal practices within the process that contribute to an inclusive learning environment. The current course development process is shown in Figure 4. The process begins with an Academic Director's need for a new course or to significantly update an existing course. The process ends with approval by the Director of Instructional Design and the delivery of the course to students. This process had not been previously documented in a way that fully articulated the timeline, key actors in the process, documents used, or the steps taken as is illustrated in Figure 4. Using my knowledge of the process from my role as an Academic Director and former SME, I created a draft of the process visualization and shared it with PIUs for additions and edits. I received feedback from the ID that included an overview of documents used by the ID team at each step. I also received feedback from the LEDD to correct a portion of the approval process whereby final approval for course developments has been delegated by the Associate Dean to the LEDD in most instances.

## COURSE DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE



Figure 4: Course Development Timeline and Process

With the process outlined, the sub-question to the first evaluation question sought to define both the formal and informal practices within the course development process that contributed to the creation of an inclusive learning environment. The next section of the data analysis describes the findings related to this sub-question.

### **Formal Practices**

As mentioned throughout, this evaluation is specifically assessing the course development process as it relates to the content of the course and how the practices within the process foster and support an inclusive learning environment. Formal practices are defined as those that are documented as standard work or expectations within a process that are designed to make a process replicable and consistent (vanTatenhove et al., 2010). The IDs come to the process with knowledge and experience in adult learning theories and UDL whereas the SME is selected for their content knowledge and may not have prior knowledge of or experience with the academic theories and practices. Because the ID is responsible for driving the course development process with variable input from ADs or the LEDD, the formal practices for the whole of the course design process are almost exclusively owned by the ID team and presented by the ID to the SME. The overall findings from the document review, interviews and observations pointed to few formal expectations and practices focused on inclusive learning environments.

While a commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment is evident in University College's values, and diversity and syllabus statements, formal practices and expectations to create such an environment during the course development process are not. Each of the interview participants noted a lack of formal practices. The Associate

Dean stated “the expectations are vague, really vague right now.” In response to a question that asked the SME to think about elements of the course that may have been included in the design and development that could have contributed to an inclusive learning environment, she noted the following, “I would have to say, I don’t think we talked a lot about it. I don’t remember having conversations about it...” The ID mentioned documentation as the main source of formal practice but that, in fact, most of the drive to create an inclusive learning environment is based on conversation between the ID and SME. This was validated by the LEDD and Associate Dean in their responses to the interview question about explicit expectations for inclusivity. Both participants expressed that defining explicit expectations and practices was difficult without having more dedicated resources to mitigate the risk of being perceived as performative. They also noted that this was an area of opportunity within the course design process.

As expressed by the ID, the formal practices in place were identified as part of the documents used during course development. When the Academic Director determines that there is a need for a course development, the Brainstorming or Course Pitch document is used as a tool for gathering information about potential SME candidates. This document specifically refers to the University College values and asks the SME to consider equity issues that may surface within the content of the course. It also asks the SME think about the voices that have been excluded in the field and how the SME plans to address this issue:

University College values illuminating diverse perspectives and valuing and including the diverse backgrounds of learners. To make sure this course reflects those

values, what are the equity issues in your field that may show up in this course? What perspectives and voices are typically included and excluded in courses in this discipline? How can you ensure the course addresses those issues?

This request is by far the most directive and was also mentioned during the interviews as a document that has been revised and iterated upon for the specific purpose of being used as a way to introduce the expectation of SMEs to consider issues of DEI in the course design process.

Once a SME has been selected, they are assigned to the Course Development Portal. The Portal is a self-paced resource within Canvas that is designed for SMEs, especially those new to course development, to review before beginning the development and to reference throughout. There is no obligation for the SME to engage with this material and a conversation with the LEDD revealed that, according to the analytics provided by the LMS, less than half of SMEs spend a significant amount of time engaging with the content. The lack of engagement with the portal was evident in the observations as well. Neither SME made reference to the materials in the portal or demonstrated through conversation or decision-making that they were familiar with the content. In this portal, there are goals for the broad course development, which requests the course “create community among learners” and “employ inclusive instructional practices.” Further along in the portal, those instructional practices are outlined in more detail. A module on weekly topic planning asks the SME to consider their instructional approach and asks the question, “How can I make my class feel and be inclusive, and reflect the global community students operate within.” More resources are offered through a link to the

university-wide Office of Teaching and Learning’s “Inclusive Teaching Practices” subsite (Office of Teaching and Learning, 2023). This website has less to do with course development with regard to content and is more focused on the traditional academic model where the instructor is responsible for both the content of the course as well as delivery in the physical or virtual classroom.

There are two additional documents that are used by the ID but that are not routinely shared with the SME. The Course Design spreadsheet outlines the expectations and responsibilities of the ID and SME throughout the course development process. It makes mention of inclusive practice in the “Weekly Readings and Instructional Materials” section, noting that course materials, “...should be inclusive (honoring a variety of identities, perspectives, and learning styles).” This particular item is not found on the QA Checklist that is used at the end of the design process to ensure that the course has met the minimum requirements for delivery to students. If, for example, an ID chooses not to engage in this practice or finds it to be too difficult either because of the lack of content offering diverse perspectives or because the SME isn’t invested in supporting students in this way, the QA checklist would not necessarily catch the omission during the approval process.

Several factors appear to be involved in establishing comprehensive formal practices within the course development process. The role of the SME has been to provide the subject matter expertise and to identify or create content for the course. Adding the work of learning about and implementing the pedagogical aspects of inclusive learning broadens the scope of work for the SME significantly. The SME mentioned this during

the interview when she stated the desire to have an expert in DEI to consult with during the process. She expressed feeling ill-prepared to find the content, create assignments, and consider all of the pedagogical theories that drive adult learning. The formal practices that are currently in place are heavily focused on the structural aspects of the course including identifying weekly topics, finding relevant content, and creating assignments all within a well-defined timeline. There has also been some fear, or at least trepidation, regarding the implementation of a checklist or audit tool, as it may be perceived as performative and might ultimately yield negative or harmful sequelae. From the data gathered it appears as though the course development process was designed with more informal than formal practices.

### **Informal Practices**

Informal practices within a process are more flexible, relying on personal preference or experience, and are dependent on the interpersonal relationships of those engaged in the process (vanTatenhove et al., 2010). These types of unwritten rules significantly influence the current course development process. While formal practices were most easily identified through documentation, informal practices emerged during interviews with key participants. The documentation review and observations served to validate this finding. In fact, when questioned about the explicit requirements and expectations for fostering an inclusive learning environment for students, the interview participants were more inclined to refer to informal practices such as conversations, requests, and recommendations rather than to formal policies or documented expectations.



The Associate Dean, LEDD, and ID each articulated the ways in which inclusive practices are encouraged and supported in the process through conversation. The Associate Dean stated, "...but again, it's a conversation, it is not something that is integrated into the actual course design process" and the ID described the informal practice very similarly when she noted, "It's just like relationship building and conversation." The SME however did not necessarily experience these conversations in the same way during course development with a different ID than participated in the interviews. The SME mentioned several times that the focus on getting the final deliverable in the correct format with all the pieces in the right spot pushed aside some of the conversations about creating an inclusive learning environment that may have taken place given the time and space. She mentioned in a few instances that the conversations were not being brought up or were "pushed to the side" in favor of the more concrete expectations for the deliverable.

Both SMEs observed were open to bringing content to their courses that reflected the perspectives of folks of different identities and intersections but relied heavily on the ID to make suggestions and recommendations throughout the process. One SME had experience creating content for predominantly online courses and didn't struggle with the formatting or timeline issues. This left more time for conversation about how to best engage students with materials from diverse viewpoints and assignments that gave students ownership over their learning. The other SME was less experienced in course development and the ID spent significantly more time assisting with the completion of the design document. In this scenario, rather than leaving the informal conversations

unspoken as mentioned during interviews, I believe this ID spent more time behind the scenes to make sure that deadlines were met and inclusive practices were incorporated.

While the documents used in the course development process provide some structure for formal practices, the format and wording used provides insight into informal practices as well. The first document delivered to the SME is the contract or statement of work. This document doesn't mention any expectations focused on creating an instructional approach that considers issues of DEI but rather focuses on the timeline and final deliverable. Other documents that do contain language focused on the creation of an inclusive learning environment use terms like, "consider," "think about," or "reflect on." The document that contains the most robust information about inclusive learning environments and sets some expectation around creating such an environment, the Course Development Portal, is not required for SMEs. The lack of structured documentation to communicate the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment is noteworthy.

### **Summary**

The findings from this evaluation point clearly to the fact that the majority of guidance surrounding the creation of an inclusive learning environment is embedded within informal practices and that those informal practices are dependent upon the work of the ID to direct their implementation. The ID team is attempting to navigate a situation where they bear significant responsibility but have relatively little control. While the ID team has both formal and informal practices to manage the process, the SME generally is responsible to the AD with regard to content. In the absence of a distinct, formal

framework established by the ADs that sets a clear expectation for why and how to create an inclusive learning environment through course content, we are relying on informal practices that are ID-, Academic Director-, and SME-dependent. The fact that there is a tendency to prioritize the formal practices around the timeline and structure of the deliverable is expected. This is best demonstrated by the SMEs repeated mention of feeling pressure to conform to the structural and temporal elements of the design process and the request for formal, expert support related directly to creating an inclusive learning environment.

### **Analysis for Evaluation Question Two**

The second evaluation question asks to what degree the course development process supports an inclusive learning environment. This question addresses the current state of the program as a platform for recommendations. This section of findings will be presented using the same structure as was introduced in the literature review through the main themes of people, process, pedagogy, and product. I will present the findings in a slightly different order to help frame them most clearly. First I will describe the findings as they relate to pedagogy in order to provide some understanding of the concepts and their definitions used in course development. Next, I will explore the findings that relate to the people involved in course developments with particular attention to the relationships between and among those people. I will then analyze the findings related to the actual course development process. Finally, I will explain the findings aligned to the product, or the final deliverable that is assigned to an instructor for delivery to students and is the consummation of the other three main themes.

## **Pedagogy**

In the context of data analysis for the elements of the course development process that support an inclusive learning environment, I use the term pedagogy to describe the learning theories that are used throughout the process. For example, the ID team come to their course developments with an understanding of adult learning theories and of UDL as a framework on which to build more accessible and inclusive courses. Terms that were coded most often across interviews, documents, and observations when referring to an inclusive learning environment included community, lived experience, identity, belonging, and accessibility.

## ***Defining Inclusive Learning***

It is important to first understand how the participants in this process define inclusive learning environments. As was noted in the literature review, there are many definitions of inclusive learning and actually several descriptions of what it is not (Dowling et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2020; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021). It was not surprising to see a range of responses from the interview participants and variability within the documentation. While there was some variation in how the interview participants defined an inclusive learning environment, all participants mentioned a student-focused approach that included concepts such as belonging, safety, respect for differences, and creating a space where students can see themselves and their experiences throughout the course. The LEDD provided this definition:

I think an inclusive learning environment, beyond just inviting everyone in, also helps them think about materials differently. So it introduces diverse perspectives and

materials, and it allows students to critically analyze topics in an environment that lets them relate to the material and to one another in an authentic way.

One important distinction noted was the difference between the definitions depending on the role. The Associate Dean, LEDD, and ID focused more on creating learning spaces where students from minoritized groups would be able to see their experience reflected in the course material where the SME was more centered on the concept of diversity of thought and perspective. This inconsistency in definition is significant because it means that those who are working at University College in an academic setting may be making assumptions about how SMEs understand the concept of inclusive learning environments and therefore may be working toward different goals during course development.

#### *Elements That Contribute to an Inclusive Learning Environment*

After participants provided their own definitions of inclusive learning environments, they were prompted to provide specific elements they believed contribute to such environments. The existing literature on this subject suggests that there are numerous elements that are integral to creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment for students. These elements include collaborative and active learning opportunities that build a community of learners based on empathy that encourages sharing lived experiences (Brownell and Swaner, 2009; Grier-Reed and Williams-Wengerd, 2018; Hughes, 2007; Ortiz, 2000), assignments that allow students to connect their experiences to the course content (Loya, 2020; Quaye and Harper, 2007; Rendon, 1994), and the opportunity for critical reflection for both students and instructors (Bell, 2002; Dewsbury

and Brame 2019; Schmid et al., 2016). The ID and LEDD were the two interview participants who presented the most well-defined ideas about what should be part of the course development process to support an inclusive learning environment. As the two individuals most closely involved in the process and those that are experts in the pedagogical theories used in course design, it was not surprising that they were able to easily list the most widely known elements from the literature and recent research. The LEDD referenced Paolo Freire's concept of thinking deeply about big ideas in the world (Freire, 2000) and then provided 10 very concrete tools and strategies that support an inclusive learning environment. These tools and strategies included all aspects of a course including, culturally responsive material selection and creation, clear and supportive assignment design that allows for frequent practice and feedback, opportunities to create a learning community that values the varied lived experiences of students and allows them to share and collaborate with their peers, and a course design that gives students agency and choice regarding the curriculum and their demonstration of knowledge. The ID mentioned many of these same items and added the need for accessible learning materials. It is interesting to note that while some of these items are mentioned in the Course Development Portal they are not presented in the context of inclusivity, they are presented more informally as things to consider.

### *The Language of Inclusivity*

The documentation employed in the course development process corroborates the findings obtained from the interviews. Although there are requests to address equity concerns (Brainstorming Document), incorporate readings from diverse viewpoints

(Course Design Expectations), and foster an environment where students can “feel and be inclusive” (Course Development Portal), there exists no single formal definition or framework of what constitutes an inclusive learning environment across University College. In fact, within the documents that do contain verbiage about inclusive learning, the vocabulary is somewhat inconsistent. See Table 4 for evidence of this inconsistency.

Table 4: University College Documents and Inclusivity Language

Document	Verbiage
University College Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work inclusively</li> <li>• diversity of thought, background, and perspective</li> </ul> <p>(University College, 2023)</p>
University College Diversity Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive excellence</li> <li>• Equality of opportunity</li> <li>• Inclusiveness</li> <li>• Mutual respect</li> <li>• Value all differences, visible and invisible, including age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socio- economic background, and other critical social dimensions.</li> <li>• Cultural awareness</li> </ul> <p>(University College, 2023)</p>
University College DEI Syllabus Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive excellence</li> <li>• Equality of opportunity</li> <li>• Inclusiveness</li> <li>• Mutual respect</li> <li>• Diversities, reflected by differences in our race, ethnicity, age, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, gender identity and expression</li> <li>• Differences in abilities, socioeconomic background as well as intersectionality</li> <li>• Differing points of views, opinions, and ideas</li> <li>• Learning community</li> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Inclusivity</li> <li>• Uplift voices that have historically been left out</li> <li>• When, where, and why targeted communities have been systematically excluded</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning environments that honor all lived experiences (Curriculum committee, 2023)</li> </ul>
Brainstorming- Course Pitch Document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity, equity, inclusion</li> <li>• Diverse perspectives and backgrounds</li> <li>• Equity issues</li> <li>• Perspectives and voices typically included and excluded</li> </ul>
University College Course Design Pre-Development Information Sheet	Inclusive teaching practices
SME Course Development Process Portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Inclusive instructional practices</li> <li>• Demographic diversity</li> <li>• Variety of perspectives</li> <li>• Worldview</li> </ul>
Course Design Expectations	Materials should be inclusive
Course Design QA Checklist	Accessibility
SME Contract/SOW Timeline Alignment Map Design Document Rubric Template	No mention of inclusive learning practices

One of the two SMEs observed during data collection completed the Brainstorming Document including the section titled, “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” with a statement that was focused less on the learning environment and more on the content of the course. The SME noted,

“Every aspect of the determinants of healthy aging for older adults is influenced by socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and environment. Research demonstrates that



older adults from marginalized and disadvantaged populations are at elevated risk of accelerated aging and premature death.”

While the SME was focused on the equity issues within the course, he relied heavily on the ID to both provide a definition of an inclusive learning environment and to introduce those elements that might contribute to such an environment for students.

The main point to be emphasized here is the possibility for inconsistent definitions of and therefore conflicting implementation approaches for creating an inclusive learning environment. This matter presents fewer challenges for individuals working internally at University College due to their more comprehensive grasp of the pedagogical frameworks employed in course and curriculum development. However, complications may arise when assumptions are made about a SMEs understanding of these definitions and frameworks. SMEs are often thrust into the course development process without formal expectations from the Academic Director and are expected not only to deliver course content but also to conform to implicit and inconsistent expectations for creating an inclusive learning environment.

### **People**

As noted in analysis for the first evaluation question, the course development process relies heavily on the relationships between and among those involved in the course development process. For this portion of the analysis, the data were coded into “cases” in order to capture insights by role. Cases were created for the Associate Dean, Academic Director, Instructional Design Director, Instructional Design Team, ID, SME, Student, and Others. This coding strategy allowed me to code for themes common among or

unique to particular roles and to better understand the relationships between roles in their contribution to an inclusive learning environment.

As expected, the roles with the most mentions during interviews and observations, and in the documents were first the SME then the ID, followed by the Academic Director, then smaller numbers of mentions of the ID team and students, with the least number of mentions being of the Associate Dean. This tracks with the overall structure of the process whereby the SME and ID are doing the bulk of the work under the supervision of the LEDD and Academic Director with collaborative efforts from the ID team. Students are not directly involved in the process but are the recipients, or to use a term from UFE, beneficiaries of the process. The role of the Associate Dean, as self-reported is “minimal in the day-to-day activities” but rather is strategic in nature.

There were several themes that emerged within the overarching element of “people.” These themes are described in detail and include the role of SME selection and onboarding as a factor in creating an inclusive learning environment, the heavy reliance on the ID to champion inclusive learning efforts, and the role of outside partners in the course development process.

### ***SME Selection and Onboarding***

The SME selection process and onboarding was mentioned in all four interviews as an integral piece contributing to the creation of an inclusive learning environment. There was however disagreement as to whether the SME should be hired already possessing the skills and understanding of inclusive learning environments or if those skills could be trained in or worked around. The Associate Dean noted that the SME selection process

should account for the capacity and capability to create an inclusive learning environment and that if a SME is not already somewhat skilled in this area, others in the process should not necessarily be required to take on the responsibility for the course content on top of their contributions to inclusive practices. The rest of the participants acknowledged that, with added support from the ID, best practice resources, and learning tools provided in orientation or during development, they felt a SME with limited experience in the pedagogical underpinnings of creating an inclusive learning environment could be successful. This comment from the Associate Dean relays the trepidation surrounding hiring a SME with no experience in inclusive learning,

“We don't have an interviewing process in the way that I think that we could for SMEs. So you may be an amazing subject matter expert. But if you're lacking all of the components that we would need to have an inclusive course design, then are we doing you and us and our students a disservice? Does that mean that we need to bring you up to speed on that? I would have answered that 3 months ago with, ‘Well, yeah.’ I would answer, that today as “No.” Because that is not something that you can teach through a training. So, I think a SME alone, not thinking about any of the social location, the positionality, their lived experience. If they're not there, we are really making it difficult for how to translate to the classroom. It's not something you make up for. It's not something to go, ‘Oh, well, I don't have this. I'll just go get it over here. I'll just have this person in the process provide that or I'll have this checklist, and as long as we go through that checklist, we'll get that part.’”

The LEDD also noted that “having SMEs who are ready to do this work is critical” but in the absence of such a situation, she and the ID team have discussed what their responsibility is to train the SME in inclusive learning environments. They have introduced the Course Development Portal and created learning modules, resources, and exemplars but as previously mentioned, only a handful of SMEs have taken the time to engage with this content outside of the weekly meetings with the ID that are scheduled throughout the design and development cohort.

The SMEs interviewed and observed, including the Associate Dean who has been a SME, all referenced feeling less than confident in their knowledge and skills in inclusive learning practices. During our interview, the SME stated, “You know, my specialty isn’t DEI so as much as I want to create that environment, I probably have limitations just based on my experience.” The selection process and onboarding for SMEs currently doesn’t formally address the knowledge or experience the SME may have with regard to inclusive learning environments. This structure leaves the ID, equipped with mostly informal expectations and practices, with the bulk of the responsibility for infusing those elements of a course known to foster and support an inclusive learning environment.

### ***Relying on the ID to Support Inclusive Learning Efforts***

The IDs bear the most responsibility for taking action to implement the elements of course development that support an inclusive learning environment and they bear that responsibility with almost no formal expectation to do so. If the Academic Director isn’t thinking about inclusive learning when they select a SME, and the SME isn’t coming to the development with knowledge or experience in the space, the burden of introducing,

explaining, encouraging, supporting, and actually doing the work to include elements that will allow students to see themselves and their experiences in the course design falls squarely on the ID.

The Associate Dean's viewpoint seemed to lean towards alleviating the workload on the ID by exclusively hiring SMEs with a background or experience in DEI but did not expand on how this practice might limit the pool of SMEs significantly. The LEDD discussed the myriad ways that IDs "expand and enhance" instructional strategies during course development and also mentioned a desire to reduce the burden on the ID when she stated:

"I'm interested in how we take it out of just leaving so much on the way that the ID navigates and guides the SME and hoping they can help them get there to like, can we build in strong steppingstones or structures, so that we can guarantee it. So we can set it up more intentionally."

In the absence of formal practices to support the ID, as was described in the previous section, there is also limited opportunity to hold either the SME or the ID accountable for creating that environment. While it may be a stated value and may be an effort that many find beneficial, the process does not provide adequate support to ensure practices are being implemented that support an inclusive learning environment for students.

### ***The Role of External Partners in Course Design and Development***

A smaller yet important theme that emerged in the data centers on the role of external partners in the course development process. There were mentions of existing supports from external partners as well as the desire to bring more voices to the table in a more

formal way. Existing support came from the ID team and informal relationships with individuals and teams outside of University College including with a librarian and with the university-wide Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL). There was also discussion around the desire to engage experts in DEI as an additional support for the SME and ID.

As I was considering my role as the Academic Director in the course development process, I realized that when I determine the need for a new course, that I was selecting a single SME from my own network with whom I would share my vision for the course and who would likely bring their singular worldview to the course. I thought about what it might look like to engage others in the process and I was encouraged to hear through interviews that this was already occasionally happening. The most robust support comes from the ID team. This team meets regularly, under the guidance of the LEDD, to collaborate and brainstorm, to review and practice difficult situations that occur during course development, and to share best practices with each other. Of this team, the ID reported,

“It’s so nice to have a team that is doing the same work and doing the same process. So, it’s really frequent where someone will be like, “I’m trying to solve this or I’m trying to figure out how to do this.” And people might have slightly different approaches or just things you would have never thought of. So, just being able to share it and practice with each other is really helpful.”

Another instance of bringing in external partners was mentioned by the LEDD and described in more detail by the ID. A research librarian was consulted on a course development that was focused on the research process. In this situation, as described by

the ID, the librarian identified a potentially problematic content element and was able to suggest a more appropriate and inclusive alternative that was relevant to an audience other than the dominant, euro-centric view. The ID team has also hired a part-time accessibility expert to help guide the ID and provide some support to ensure the course materials are accessible to all students. This team member was also instrumental in adding an accessibility section to the Course Design QA checklist. These examples illustrate a more team-based approach that has organically developed among the ID team. The team-based approach was also mentioned by the SME in a request to have a DEI expert to help her think more deeply about how to engage students in this way,

“I think it would be great to have included somebody who does specialize in DEI to just take a look, even at the very beginning of the topics and some of the content...it would be really great to have as part of the Learning Development team, somebody with that perspective...somebody to look at it and say, “You know, this could be really improved. This lesson needs to have more of this language in it, or more of these characteristics to ensure that students are represented in the class itself.”

The idea of community and a team approach to course development was a theme that emerged throughout the data collection process.

### ***Summary***

The course development process relies heavily on the relationships between its participating members. This structure allows for the flexibility to engage SMEs with varying levels of expertise in inclusive learning practices but, without a more formal structure, puts individuals or particular roles at risk for carrying a disproportionate

amount of the responsibility to make the process successful. There is recognition of this risk among those at the dean and director levels and there is an interest in creating a more team-based approach as a way to mitigate this risk.

### **Process**

As expected, the data captured about the course development contains a wealth of information about the actual process of course development. In this section, I will discuss the themes that emerged that pointed directly to the process. The semi-structured interviews contained a question about the process with regard to the barriers or challenges encountered as well as the supports. I have structured the themes that emerged around the process into these categories as well.

### ***Barriers***

There are several barriers that make doing the work of creating a course container that contributes to an inclusive learning environment. These barriers are centered on the structures and processes in place at University College many of which can be directly linked to capitalist and white supremacist notions of productivity and success.

### ***Harbingers of White Supremacist Structures***

The number one barrier noted by the Associate Dean in relationship to the course development process was white supremacy and the focus on the individual's experience in the classroom rather than a more holistic look at systemic oppression and the characteristics of the organization that are not actively breaking down these systems. This notion comes from Tema Okun (2023) who originally described fifteen characteristics of white supremacist culture. Characteristics that emerged in data collection were a sense of



urgency, belief in one right way, and perfectionism (Okun, 2023). These characteristics while not specifically named as white supremacist culture characteristics, were identified by each interview participant, in observations, and are key features of several documents used in the course development process.

Common across interviews and observations, and prevalent in the documentation was a focus on the course development timeline and the sense of urgency that was created around meeting a number of deadlines throughout the process. This timeline is documented as part of the SME's contract and statement of work, is sent as a separate document, is embedded in the Course Design Portal, is reviewed during the kick-off meeting, and is a driver of the meeting schedule established by the ID. The Associate Dean remarked, "The sense of urgency means there is no chance for iterative change in the process. We can't stall. Courses are 10 weeks and require a certain number of hours of engagement." The ID also stated something similar,

"The project management aspect of the role is challenging. When the focus needs to be on orienting the SME, helping them find content and creating assignments all in the 16-week timeframe, there isn't time to talk about inclusivity. Sometimes it takes 5 weeks to "click" and then you are 1/3 through the development timeline."

The concept of how much time each participant had to complete each part of the process versus how much time they needed and what got pushed to the side was a common theme when asked about barriers encountered during the course development process.

### *Documentation Practices*

The SME, in particular, mentioned several times during the interview her frustration with the structure of the documents used in the course development process. While the document used to capture the content of each course in a seemingly convenient structure does provide some consistency to the process, it is also the source of some consternation among its users.

“My biggest struggle, I would say, was formatting to me was really challenging, and so I felt a lot of times like I was fighting against the structure of the process like the actual that the document. So it just felt like I was always just struggling, and what I wanted to do is just write it into Canvas. To me that would have been a much easier process rather than trying to write up all the things then bounce back into making sure that the topics were aligned. Those details, I think, for me were the most frustrating part of writing the course. Because then, on top of that, like you're wanting to make sure that you're making those connections, and that you're staying true to what was approved to do, and that you're saying true to the program. And so then I think things like inclusivity start to sort of get a little bit pushed to the side.”

The SME is referring to the Design Document which is a template used in all course developments that contains the elements that become part of the Canvas course container. In my own experience and in observations, many have experienced issues with this particular document. One SME noted the challenge of seeing the connection between the Design Document and what the final version would look like in Canvas. This same SME also began to draft in a separate document adding additional effort for the ID to copy the

work into the Design Document throughout the process. The ID also noted that she experienced other SMEs with similar frustrations and is considering a way to address different styles of course development to try to provide some more flexibility in hopes of supporting the SME so they have the capacity to think more about things inclusive practices and worry less about the format and structure. The LEDD also mentioned the Design Document as a tool that while providing structure and standardization to the process, can cause frustration among IDs and SMEs alike.

### *Equity in Compensation*

This theme ties back to SME selection but also belongs here in the barriers section. The SME selection process incentivizes ADs to select from existing adjunct instructors or individuals within existing networks. The SME that can do this type of work has to be able to have a significant amount of time to dedicate for a single pay-out at the end of the process that tallies to approximately \$25 per hour. The SME Infographic outlines that the SME should expect to spend 10 hours per week over the 16 week course development cohort. There is currently no formal (not requiring an exception from the dean) compensation model that allows for collaboration/consultation with other individuals or groups. If external resources are engaged, they are most often doing so for no compensation. Expecting we could engage a community of partners to provide diverse perspectives in the course development process and finding SMEs who are both experts in their industry and knowledgeable about inclusive learning practices, and are willing to be compensated at a rate of \$25 per hour seems difficult at best.

### *Support for the Process*

The interview participants who were directly and actively involved in course development noted that they did feel supported throughout the process of course development as it related to creating an inclusive learning environment. What or who that support was depended on the role. Most of the conversation around support structures centered on the relationships between individuals and teams. Other supports included theoretical frameworks like UDL or in the case of the ID, feminist care ethic, content and technical resources, and a culture shift that is being felt across University College.

### *Relationships and Community*

When asked specifically about supports for the course development process, it became evident that the most pronounced and observed form of support stemmed from the relationships among the individuals and teams involved in the process. The SME felt supported by the ID and Academic Director articulating that she could come to either person for feedback or advice. The ID felt supported by the LEDD and other members of the ID team stating, “I just keep talking about people because I feel like the people are the support. Pull someone into a conversation, or have people involved in meetings who can come in and fill the expertise gap.” The LEDD, quoted below, felt supported by Academic Directors, their team members, and the Associate Dean:

I feel like there are more creative partners in this space...because I didn't, you know, have all the answers on how to transform a design process on my own. Even if, like, I had 100% support, and everyone was like any money, anything you want to do... Even if that were the case, I still couldn't have figured that out on my own. So I feel like I'm both

getting those yeses, but also like getting thought partners in helping make that a priority, too.

In my role as Academic Director, I found myself invited into conversations with the ID and SME as a thought partner to provide additional context for where the course being developed was situated within the larger curriculum and as a resource for types of assignments that had been successful in other courses.

### *Theoretical Foundations*

In addition to support by individuals or teams, participants mentioned physical or theoretical resources as supports in the course development process. The ID mentioned using UDL as a support to provide evidence to SMEs about inclusivity and accessibility in this statement, “...even frameworks like UDL being a thing that everyone is really familiar with and knowing best practices about those, and bringing that in as part of the conversation on a frequent basis that’s a really tangible thing that you can pull in as actual evidence...”

Similarly, the LEDD pointed to the ever-growing collection of tools and resources that can be called upon during the course development process to help ease the burden on the ID. These tools and resources include the content of the Course Development Portal as well as numerous templates, exemplars, rubrics, and best practices that are essentially ready to copy directly into a course container.

### *Culture Shift*

The final support that emerged during data collection is a culture shift at University College. This shift likely began with a change in leadership at the Associate Dean level.

It was mentioned in two interviews that the previous Associate Dean, while definitely not opposed to creating an inclusive learning environment through course development, was more focused on traditional academic rigor. This focus was likely driven by a change in accreditation status through the Higher Learning Commission, the regulatory body for higher education institutions, which required University College to adopt and maintain a process for ensuring a certain academic level of content and instruction within its courses. Once accreditation was achieved and processes were in place to maintain accreditation, the new Associate Dean was able to shift focus. The LEDD noted,

“So there’s definitely been a focus on DEI. In terms of the practice and the roles and how you navigate in achieving those goals, I do think that’s changed a lot as well. I feel like it used to be either we were sort of just doing that in our own conversations because it was important to us as teaching and learning experts but it wasn’t like any part of the higher-up mandate.”

This culture shift can also be observed through the reinvigoration of the DEI Steering Committee and the formation of the curriculum committee that served as the PIU group for this evaluation.

### ***Summary***

The course development process at University College presents several barriers that pose challenges to the creation of inclusive learning environments. Barriers that are closely linked to white supremacist structures include the sense of urgency that overshadows the efforts of the SME and ID toward creating an inclusive learning environment, the focus on meeting deadlines that limits the time available for reflection

and hinders the development of inclusive practices. Additionally, a rigid adherence to the "right" way of doing things can stifle flexibility and creativity. Furthermore, the lack of compensation for SMEs and thought partners may deter the involvement of experts knowledgeable about inclusive learning practices, thus limiting the variety of perspectives incorporated into the course development process. There are, however, also supports that aim to facilitate the creation of inclusive learning environments. The strong relationships, the collection of tangible resources, and the culture shift, while helpful are all informal structures in a complex process.

### **Product**

The final section of data collection is focused on the product, the actual course container and all of its contents that is approved for assignment to instructors and delivered to students. This section is significantly smaller than the other three because the course development process has generally been considered over when the ID copies the content into Canvas and sent it on to the LEDD and AD for review. There were, however, two themes that emerged centered on the product. These themes are the connection to teaching practice and the additional touchpoints and feedback that could be helpful in ensuring the course does, in fact, create an inclusive learning environment for students.

### ***Teaching Practice***

The first theme that emerged is the connection to teaching practice. For this theme, there was information shared that was important to include in this evaluation. The ID mentioned, "You don't have any control over that inclusive environment when the teacher comes in." This alludes to the connection to teaching practice in a way that was

the opposite of what was presented in much of the literature. The literature points to the idea that there is much more emphasis placed on teaching practice over the content and is exemplified in the conversation with experts in UDL and CSP where H. Samy Alim introduces the statement “inclusion into what?” (A Harvard Educational Review forum with Alim et al., 2017). Alim refers here to the opposite situation reported by the ID. If teaching practices are inclusive but the content is not, into what are we inviting students to engage? From the perspective of the ID team at University College who are working diligently to create inclusive courses, they are at the mercy of the instructor who may or may not be experienced in inclusive teaching practices. In an observed weekly meeting, the ID relayed a situation whereby a SME was reticent to include a particularly well-crafted assignment into a course container for fear another instructor may not share her desire to teach in the same manner. It had not occurred to the ID that a SME may choose to forego inclusive elements in a course as a perceived courtesy to other instructors. These connections to inclusive teaching practices are another part of the course design process that is not formalized and therefore may be at risk of being overlooked.

### ***Additional Feedback and Touchpoints***

The second theme that relates to the product is the need for additional touchpoints and feedback that includes a course once it has been delivered to students. The ID remarked in the interview,

“This could be part of the design but it’s also part of the maintenance. You do the design, it gets taught and we’re trying to figure out some format for ongoing support. What happens if it gets taught and human beings use it in a wild way that we did not



foresee? How are we able to maintain that communication so the course can be updated? If the course was successful is a big question.”

The concept of adding on to the end of the process to include feedback to the development team once a course has been delivered to students could be an integral part of the course development process.

### **Summary of Findings**

This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the course development process and its significance in creating an inclusive learning environment, based on data collected through interviews, document review, and observations. The findings of this study align with the themes introduced in the literature review, namely pedagogy, people, process, and product. The analysis revealed key insights into both formal and informal practices that contribute to fostering inclusivity in learning environments. However, it was identified that the absence of formal support and the inconsistent language used to describe inclusive learning may lead to misaligned efforts and an overreliance on specific individuals or roles within the process. Furthermore, the study highlighted that certain structures rooted in white supremacist ideologies, such as a sense of urgency regarding timelines and deliverables, as well as rigid adherence to inflexible document formats, hinder the availability of time and space for critical thinking and purposeful reflection on creating inclusive learning environments for students. Notwithstanding these challenges, the evaluation findings indicate the presence of supportive relationships among participants, a genuine desire to engage in the necessary work to enhance inclusivity, and a strong commitment to improving the course development process. Chapter Five delves

into the implications of these findings and presents recommendations that will be shared with key stakeholders and the PIUs of the course development process.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this evaluation was twofold. The first portion of the evaluation aimed to investigate the formal and informal practices of the course development process of a specific academic department at University College. The second portion of the evaluation focused on assessing the degree to which the course development process contributes to an inclusive learning environment. The primary goal of this evaluation was to identify and document existing formal and informal practices within course development process and determine how these practices may support an inclusive learning environment for students. The findings from this evaluation will guide improvements within the academic department at University College. Moreover, the recommendations from this evaluation may serve as a model for other academic departments to consider adopting and encourage the application of program evaluation for other projects and programs within University College.

### **Completing the UFE**

The evaluation conducted in this study followed the UFE framework as described by Michael Patton. The final steps of UFEs include understanding the findings and optimizing the use of those findings (Patton, 2012). As of the submission of this dissertation-in-practice for committee review, preliminary findings have been shared with the curriculum committee which represent the PIUs. Ultimately, my recommendations along with the recommendations collected from the interview participants will be shared

with the PIU group and University College leadership with the intention of creating a plan for use of the findings and recommendations. Initially, this plan is expected to involve the implementation of pilot programs within the academic department at the center of this evaluation. The success of these pilots will guide longer-term plans for implementation of processes across other academic departments at University College.

### **Review of Methodology**

This program evaluation was conducted using the UFE approach, chosen for its emphasis on the practical use of findings, prioritization of collaboration, and flexibility in data collection and analysis methods. Throughout the evaluation, a group of PIUs was consulted and qualitative methods were employed for data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four key stakeholders involved in the course development process and two instances of course development were observed. Additionally, analysis was performed on the documents used in course design and development, specifically focused on their content related to fostering inclusive learning environments. The data collected, comprising these three different types, were coded to identify recurring themes and emerging trends. To facilitate a comprehensive analysis, the 4P framework (people, process, product, pedagogy) was used, enabling a multi-faceted approach. Initial findings have been shared with the PIU group and will be used as a framework for implementing improvements in the course development process.

### **Understanding Findings**

To effectively convey the findings to PIUs and relevant stakeholders, the results have been organized in two distinct categories. The first category pertains to the evaluation's

first question, which explores the existing process and the formal and informal practices employed to support and foster an inclusive learning environment for students during course development. The second category of data analysis focuses on the four major elements introduced in the literature review: people, process, pedagogy, and product. Within each of these elements, the emerging themes were scrutinized for their impact on the course development process and their role fostering an inclusive learning environment.

The remainder of this chapter will present a review of the findings, providing a detailed discussion for each finding in the same order as presented in Chapter 4. Furthermore, recommendations for process improvement will be offered along with implications for future evaluations and projects directed at enhancing the course development process.

### **Discussion for Evaluation Question One**

The first evaluation question addresses the process of course development as it exists and identifies the formal and informal practices within the process that contribute to an inclusive learning environment. The process begins with an Academic Director identifies the need for a new course or a significant update to an existing course. The Academic Director selects a SME to collaborate with an ID to define learning outcomes, select appropriate learning materials, and design assignments. There are milestones and deadlines throughout the process that involve the Academic Director. The process concludes with a series of quality assessments and final approval by the LEDD. The

content of the course is copied into Canvas and assigned to an instructor for delivery to students. Refer to Chapter 4 for a comprehensive description of this process.

Prior to this evaluation, the process had not been illustrated to encompass all roles, documentation, approval milestones, and sequential steps. Although the exercise of mapping out the process did not yield new information, per se, the ability to share the visualization with the PIU group allowed us to begin to think more clearly and critically about the process itself. Having outlined the process, the following portion of the evaluation aimed to identify and define the formal and informal practices embedded within the course development process that contributed to the creation of an inclusive learning environment.

This UFE was designed to assess how the course development process implements practices that support an inclusive learning environment specifically related to course content. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation revealed that the course development process relies heavily on informal practices with regard to creating an inclusive learning environment. Once assigned to a course development project, IDs assume the responsibility of leading the course development while simultaneously providing guidance to SMEs who possess varying levels of knowledge and experience in the pedagogical structures that underpin course content, learning outcomes, and assignments. Due to the significant variation in SMEs' knowledge and experience, coupled with inconsistent engagement from Academic Directors, IDs find themselves needing to be quite agile through the course development

process. This need for flexibility has likely led to a predominant dependence on informal practices throughout the course development process.

The balance of formal and informal practices is an important dynamic in the course development process. Formal practices tend to be standardized, replicable, and more rigid with the intent of creating consistency across users of a practice or process while informal practices are flexible and are dependent on the interpersonal relationships of those engaged in the process (vanTatenhove et al., 2010). While my first thought was to consider how the adoption of more formal practices might, in the short term, alleviate some of the IDs responsibility in guiding the SMEs through the development of learning outcomes, selecting learning materials, and creating assignments, it stands to reason that a process dependent on more formal practices brings with it significant risk.

The problems that may be solved with the implementation of formal processes include the heavy reliance on the ID to drive the course development process and inconsistent communication among Academic Directors to SMEs regarding University College's commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment. If formal processes are agreed upon, documented and shared across teams, University College leadership would be able to set clear expectations with the Academic Director team. Academic Directors would be able to prepare SMEs with more precise information about the course design process requirements with regard to inclusive practices and IDs would be equipped with the necessary tools to collaborate more effectively with SMEs. Formal practices have the potential to make the course development process more predictable, efficient, and more structured.

With the predictability, replicability, and structure of formal practices comes the potential for reduced agility and the limitation of creativity and growth. All participants in the evaluation noted the support they found within and among teams in the process. Consequently, the potential loss of organic relationship-building could negatively impact the ID's and SME's ability to innovate during the course development process. A balance of a few key formal practices to help lessen the burden of work on the ID without creating inflexibility thereby losing the benefit of the existing strong relationships could be beneficial to the course development process.

### **Discussion for Evaluation Question Two**

The second evaluation question asks, to what degree the course development process supports an inclusive learning environment. This question addresses the current state of the program as a platform for recommendations for improvement. The discussion surrounding the major themes that emerged during data analysis will be presented using the same structure as was introduced in the literature review and employed in the findings chapter.

### **Pedagogy**

In the context of the discussion of the elements of the course development process that support an inclusive learning environment, I use the term pedagogy, as it was described in the Chapter 4, to describe the learning theories that are used throughout the process.



***Defining Inclusive Learning, Elements that Contribute to an Inclusive Learning Environment, and the Language of Inclusivity***

The findings with the Pedagogy category have been consolidated into three major themes, which are interconnected and are best discussed as a whole. It is not surprising that this evaluation captured a diverse range of responses regarding the definition of an inclusive learning environment and the elements of course development that contribute to such an environment. That finding aligns with the existing literature on the subjects. As identified in the literature review, there are many definitions of inclusive learning (Dowling et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2020; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021) and several key elements integral to creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment for students. These elements include collaborative and active learning opportunities that foster a community of learners built on empathy, where sharing lived experiences is encouraged (Brownell and Swaner, 2009; Grier-Reed and Williams, 2018; Hughes, 2007; Ortiz, 2000). Additionally, assignments that allow students to connect their experiences with the course content (Loya, 2020; Quaye and Harper, 2007; Rendon, 1994) and the opportunities for critical reflection for both students and instructors (Bell, 2002; Dewsbury and Brame 2019; Schmid et al., 2016) play vital roles. While there was some variation in how the interview participants defined an inclusive learning environment all participants acknowledged the importance of a student-focused approach that encompasses concepts such as belonging, safety, respect for differences, and the creation of a space where students can see themselves and their experiences reflected throughout the course.

The potential discrepancies in the definitions of an inclusive learning environment and elements that contribute to such an environment are not a major concern within and among teams at University College. While consistency in language is beneficial, it is unlikely that the inconsistencies are causing significant harm or disrupting internal processes and practices. This is due to the fact that the individuals working within the institution have a foundational understanding of the pedagogical theories employed whether or not the terminology is consistent.

This same variability in the language used to define an inclusive learning environment among the SME, ID and Academic Director does pose a potential problem. Without a clear and mutually agreed upon definition of an inclusive learning environment and its contributing elements there is a risk of misalignment during course development which could impact the student experience. As evidenced in the findings, University College faculty and staff are oriented toward a definition of an inclusive learning environment that recognizes and embraces the identities and intersections of students and instructors, particularly those from historically marginalized groups. Conversely, the SME's response centered on "bringing all voices to the table" without explicitly addressing issues of gender, race, ethnicity, age, or other marginalized identity. This raises questions about the potential impact of this misalignment on the selection of learning materials, assignments, and outcomes by the SME. To achieve a truly inclusive learning environment, it is crucial to explicitly name and address the systems of oppression that are perpetuated in higher education. This brings us back to the Associate Dean's interview and the suggestion that SMEs must possess experience in DEI work or

demonstrate a strong motivation to engage in personal reflection and translate that reflection into action during course development.

### **People**

The findings of this evaluation strongly indicate that the course development process is significantly influenced by the relationships between the individuals involved. This observation is closely related to the first evaluation question concerning the balance of formal and informal practices. The prevalence of informal practices means that a substantial portion of the course development process relies on the relationships between the Academic Director and ID, as well as between ID and SME. Within the broader category of “People,” several key themes emerged including the impact of SME selection and onboarding as a factor on the creation an inclusive learning environment, the crucial role of the ID in championing inclusive learning initiatives, and the involvement of outside partners in the course development process.

### ***SME Selection and Onboarding***

SME selection and onboarding surfaced as an integral component of course development that contributes to the creation of an inclusive learning environment. There was however disagreement among interview participants as to whether the SME should already possess the necessary skills and understanding of inclusive learning environments or if those skills could be developed through training or alternative approaches. The current structure, whereby SMEs are not assessed for their experience with inclusive practices or DEI work, continues to position the ID, equipped with mostly informal expectations and practices, with the bulk of the responsibility for creating an inclusive

course for students. However, this additional requirement for SMEs could significantly limit the pool of qualified candidates.

Although not the primary focus of the evaluation, the process of selecting and onboarding SMEs emerged as an area of emphasis in the forthcoming recommendations. Currently, the process for selecting SMEs and facilitating their introduction to the course development process is informal and relies heavily on the Academic Director. The Academic Director identifies the need for a course and selects a SME from their network without a formal interview process. Consequently, the SME often brings their singular worldview to the process, resulting in course content that centers primarily on their perspective alone. The onboarding process for SMEs lacks a defined structure and varies depending on individual Academic Directors. Due to this somewhat siloed practice, the ID assigned to course development has limited knowledge of the SME before the kick-off meeting, often only receiving a “Brainstorming-Course Pitch” document in advance. During the initial meeting, while introducing the timeline, documentation, and process summary, the ID also needs to assess the extent of additional time that may be required to guide the SME in learning about and implementing inclusive practices. However, this approach assumes that the ID is willing and adequately prepared to undertake this task. In reality if the ID is not fully aligned with the instructional design philosophy or becomes overwhelmed by the pressure to meet the milestones within the 16-week timeframe, meaningful conversations, reflection, critique, and feedback may be dismissed. This inherent risk was clearly articulated and demonstrated through the interviews and observations.

### ***Relying on the ID to Support Inclusive Learning Efforts***

In the absence of established formal practices to support the ID, which in itself poses a dilemma, there is also limited opportunity to hold either the SME or the ID accountable in terms of creating an inclusive learning environment. While many individuals across University College aspire to provide such an environment for students, the process does not provide adequate support to do so consistently. The available literature primarily focuses on course development processes traditional face-to-face instruction whereby courses are designed and developed by individual instructors (Chao et al., 2010). However, for institutions that offer online courses, where course development is decoupled from course delivery and who rely upon industry experts rather than career educators as instructors and, the process is quite different. It entails a collaborative effort involving a team that may consist of project managers, faculty members, and SMEs (Chao et al., 2010; Oblinger & Hawkins, 2006; Xu & Morris, 2007). The literature presents several different models of course design from the single developer that is responsible for the technical aspects of the LMS and the content to more collaborative models involving larger teams and project support (Oblinger & Hawkins, 2006; van Rooij & Zirkle, 2016; Xu & Morris, 2007).

The examination of this theme necessitates revisiting the section in this chapter that examines the interplay between formal and informal practices, specifically focusing on how formal practices, while potentially alleviating some of the burden on IDs for guiding the course development process, may inadvertently perpetuate harmful structures rooted in white supremacy that are pervasive throughout higher education. While there may be

occasional issues of poor performance with a SME that warrant a formal process, the emergence of this this theme raises the question of how we can establish a framework that distributes some of the responsibility to other individuals or groups without relying too heavily on rigid practices. In the discussion of the next theme on the role of external partners, the opportunity arises to cultivate a community-oriented approach to course development that could also alleviate a portion of the workload burden for the ID. This prompts the consideration of a more collaborative approach that is co-constructed by ID, SME, and other key stakeholders, rather than relying solely on formal practices that fail to disengage us from narratives steeped in white, heteronormative, eurocentric patriarchal perspectives that dominate the narrative higher education.

### ***The Role of External Partners in Course Design and Development***

An important theme emerged in the data revolves around the role of external partners in the course development process. Participants mentioned the existing support received from external partners as well as the desire to bring more voices to the table in a structured way. Existing support primarily stems from the ID team and informal relationships with individuals and teams outside of University College such as with the librarians and the university-wide Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL). This team meets regularly, under the guidance of the LEDD, to collaborate and brainstorm, to review and practice difficult situations that occur during course development, and to share best practices with each other. There was also discussion around the desire to engage experts in DEI as an additional support for the SME and ID. This aligns with the work of Xu and Morris (2007) who highlighted instructors' positive experiences with

course development that is collaborative and active. Studies indicate that student perceptions of online courses are also more positive when the courses are designed with agency to co-construct learning opportunities (Rovai, 2004; vanRooy and Zirkle, 2016). The concepts of agency and co-constructed learning for both students in courses and instructors in development will be explored further in the opportunities for further research section of this chapter.

This idea of building a community of experts to develop courses emerged throughout the evaluation. As previously mentioned, the ID relayed her experience with engaging the research librarian to help with a particularly challenging course development. The LEDD discussed an existing effort to collaborate more closely with other IDs at the university level, and discussed the recent addition of an accessibility expert to assist IDs with UDL standards. The Associate Dean acknowledged the need to work in community while the SME expressed a desire for assistance from a DEI expert to provide feedback and support. Sanger and Gleason (2020, p. 17) noted that given the changing landscape of higher education faculty members and instructors are being asked to “use novel pedagogies, create inclusive learning spaces, and facilitate positive intercultural interactions in their classes.” This underscores the relevance and significance of fostering a community of experts to effectively meet these new demands on academic programs.

### **Process**

As expected, the data captured about the course development contains a wealth of information about the actual process of course development. In this section, I will discuss the themes that emerged that pointed directly to the process. On the topic of inclusive

course development, Morgan and Houghton (2011, p.5) stated, “Inclusive curriculum design benefits both staff and students when it is based on principles of equity, collaboration, flexibility, and accountability”

### ***Barriers***

There are several barriers that make doing the work of creating a course container that contributes to an inclusive learning environment. These barriers are centered on the structures and processes in place at University College many of which can be directly linked to capitalist and white supremacist notions of productivity and success.

### ***Harbingers of White Supremacist Structures Including the “Right” Way to Document***

I have combined the discussion for these two themes because of their alignment with white supremacist structures. The Associate Dean drew attention to this significant challenge, pertaining to the course development process, as the white supremacist focus on an individual’s experience rather than a more holistic view of systemic oppression and the practices within the organization that perpetuate this focus. Analysis of the data revealed characteristics aligning with Tema Okun’s (2023) “White Supremacy Culture,” including a sense of urgency, belief in one right way, and perfectionism. These characteristics were evident in interview discussions, observations, and the course development documents, contributing to an overall atmosphere of unease and anxiety throughout the course development timeline. The emphasis on meeting multiple deadlines and the utilization of a document that many found frustrating directly align with the specific characteristics identified by Okun.



These findings are also closely connected to the implementation of formal and informal practices within the course development process that contribute to an inclusive learning environment for students. If the roles of the ID and SME were to be formally prescribed with specific tasks or checklists and with rigid expectations, this reinforces the white supremacist characteristics defined by Tema Okun (2023). The more structured, linear, and inflexible the role of the SME becomes, the less likely they are to feel empowered to look beyond their own worldview. Although the Alignment Map and Design Document work together to guide the SME to use the practice of backward design, a component of UDL, the Design Document alone confines the SME to a linear framework. In order to begin to deconstruct the structures and processes that perpetuate the white supremacist culture that are at play in the course development process, it is essential to provide supports for the ID and SME to explore other ways of knowing and learning.

### *Equity in Compensation*

This theme encompasses both SME selection and barriers within the course development process. The current process incentivizes ADs to choose SMEs from the existing adjunct instructor pool or from their networks. However, the SME must have a significant amount of time to dedicate to the course development process for not a whole lot of compensation. While compensation models for course development decoupled from delivery were not readily available in the literature, Sanger and Gleason (2020) alluded to the added workload placed on faculty members to create an inclusive learning environment for students in their work on diversity and inclusion from a global

perspective. If University College expects SMEs to not only bring content knowledge but also experience with or an understanding of inclusive pedagogy to course development, we should be considering how a compensation model supports a change in expectations.

I began this evaluation focused on the course development process and how it contributes to an inclusive learning environment with regard to the content of the course. What I came to find is that the course development process itself may create a barrier to providing the SME and ID with the support they need to do this. It's not really a matter of creating a checklist, or providing examples, or reminders to do the things the literature tells us makes an inclusive environment. The issue transcends these superficial measures. The current process is deeply rooted in conventional academic structures, which predominantly reflect white, patriarchal and eurocentric perspectives, that don't necessarily open up the space for a different way of doing things. The development of this process was, by no means, built consciously to reflect these perspectives but was created to fit into the larger academic framework that has historically prioritized and perpetuated certain cultural, social, and knowledge systems. Consequently, the existing course development process lacks the flexibility and openness needed to embrace alternative approaches that promote inclusivity. It restricts the possibilities for SMEs and IDs to authentically engage in the creation of content that supports an inclusive learning environment

### ***Support for the Process***

What is working to support the course development process is the cultivation of meaningful relationships, the sharing of knowledge with new-found thought partners, the

formation of communities of individuals who are and who want to do the work to center folks in the margins of our classrooms. As several interview participants noted, a culture shift has been happening at the leadership level. The fortuitous timing of this program evaluation aligning with the creation of the curriculum committee has allowed me to actively contribute and share this work from the outset. These positive developments have contributed to an environment where the course development process is enriched through collective efforts and a shared vision for an inclusive environment for students.

### *Culture Shift, Theory, and Community*

These three themes which, involve a recent culture shift, the strength of the relationships among individuals and teams in the course development process, and the foundation of learning theory could easily have been categorized under the “People” element as well. However, they also have a significant impact on the course development process and many other workflows, projects, and processes across the college. The support provided by leadership, for initiatives like the DEI committees and fostering innovation supported by evidence has elevated our focus beyond administrative tasks and allowed us to prioritize projects that align with our stated mission and values.

Additionally, access to more relevant data about the people and processes at University College has helped increase transparency and eliminate silos that previously hindered work across departments. This new-found insight has encouraged a more community-based approach to problem-solving across University College.

This culture shift also provides leverage to begin to address the challenges and barriers within this process. The literature strongly supports this endeavor. Research

demonstrates that students who feel welcomed, included, seen, and respected in their classes are more likely to excel academically and persist in their programs (Gurin et al., 2009; Sathy & Hogan, 2019). An inclusive learning environment recognizes that students bring with them diverse and intersecting identities, shaped by historical and contemporary social contexts, as well as unique experiences that impact their engagement in their courses (Morgan and Houghton, 2011). Embracing this understanding opens avenues for transformative change and allows the individuals and teams engaged in course development to support the increasingly diverse student population at University College.

### **Product**

The final section of the discussion is focused on the product, the actual course container that is approved for assignment to instructors and delivered to students. There were two themes that emerged centered on the product. These themes were the connection to teaching practice and the additional touchpoints and feedback that would support the work of creating an inclusive learning environment.

#### ***Connection to Teaching Practice***

The first theme that emerged in this category is related to the connection between teaching practice and course content. A review of the literature found there is more emphasis placed on teaching practice over the content itself when considering what practices support an inclusive learning environment. I return to the conversation with UDL and CSP experts in which H. Samy Alim uses the phrase “inclusion into what?” (A Harvard Educational Review forum with Alim et al., 2017). This phrase helps solidify the

bidirectional nature of teaching practice and course development. Neither of these alone can create an environment where students see themselves and their identities reflected in their coursework and feel welcomed and included in the learning environment. This emphasizes the need for a broader approach to teaching and learning that supports both instructors and students while avoiding the marginalization of individuals and groups. In light of this, it becomes essential to explore avenues for inviting instructors into the process and helping them recognize the significance of aligning course content with inclusive teaching practices. The course content has to support the teaching practice if we expect University College adjunct instructors to be able to create an inclusive learning environment. Moreover, this connection between the course content and teaching practice directly impacts students' experience during the course delivery, shaping their perception of the inclusive learning environment fostered within the curriculum.

### ***Additional Touchpoints and Feedback***

The second theme in the Product category is the need for additional touchpoints and feedback for the ID-SME team once the course has been delivered to students. The theme of constructive feedback and the opportunity for the SME to engage in thoughtful conversation with the ID about how to bring inclusive learning practices into the course development was prevalent throughout the evaluation. The integration of additional feedback loops into the existing course development process draws inspiration from information technology with concept of optimization. Creating the space for this type of feedback acknowledges that the introduction of new processes inevitably brings forth imperfections and unforeseen challenges that require resolution. By embracing the notion

of optimization within the course development process, we are able to approach it with the understanding that the product may not be perfect in the first iteration and there is an inherent opportunity to receive valuable feedback from "end-users" or beneficiaries, both faculty and students. This recognition allows us to create an environment that accommodates imperfections and embraces continuous improvement.

### **Summary**

The primary objective of a UFE is to maximize the use of the evaluation findings to inform decision-making for the purpose of making substantive program improvements. The discussion of key findings provides context for the recommendations presented in the next section. It has become clear through this evaluation that while there are definitely challenges and there is room for improvement, there are also practices in place that support the SME and ID in the creation of an inclusive learning environment for students through the course development process. More importantly, there is a culture shift underway that has allowed key stakeholders and teams to begin to innovate in this space, to think critically about existing structures and practices, and to experiment. I believe that if this evaluation hadn't taken place that positive change would still come but the ability to do a comprehensive and detailed evaluation provides a much more solid foundation for the implementation of the forthcoming recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

Revisiting the rationale for this evaluation, I am interested in the idea that students want more from their education as it relates to their own lived experiences. The feedback I received in my role as an Academic Director was that students didn't see themselves

reflected in the materials. So how does this relate to course development? How do we give students the “more” they are seeking? Based on the findings from this evaluation, I have come to believe that there are several elements that can be introduced into the course development process to strengthen the connection of the course content to an inclusive learning environment. The LEDD said something in her interview that I thought quite profound.

I think that especially in an online environment where so much of the guidance and materials and activities are built in, the container becomes like a room, a space, it’s even more important, right? We’re not just creating a syllabus, we’re creating a lot more of the learning environment in this design. So I think the design creates opportunities or activities that will be affirming for students of all identities...

Using this analogy of course container as a learning space, we can provide a place where students can see themselves and their lived experiences reflected in the course materials, where they can engage with their instructors and classmates to make connections between the course content and the real world, where they can more safely explore, critique, and confront systems of oppressions. Here, UDL can be used as a framework to acknowledge and embrace the racial, ethnic, gender, cultural, and social class identities that students bring into their learning spaces and in this scenario, their course containers (Burgstahler & Cory, 2008; Rich, 2020; van Rooij & Zirkle, 2016). Students can take what they have learned, not only from the course materials but from the interactions with instructors and peers into their lives outside of the classroom. This is supported by CSP as this theory extends beyond the classroom and into cultural practices,

worldviews, languages, familial and community knowledge, and values (Alim & Paris, 2017; Paris, 2012).

For the recommendations, I break from the 4P model. The pedagogy, people, processes, and products are interwoven in a way that makes it impossible to separate them in the context of program improvement. I will however be drawing inspiration from another process improvement model for my recommendations. In this model, there are iterations, or cycles, of improvement that are supported by changes in practice that allow for movement toward a target, or ideal, state. While there may be support among the PIU group as well as with key stakeholders and beneficiaries of this process to make massive changes to this process, a model that allows for incremental change is necessary as we consider where the course development process exists within the larger environment of University College.

Figure 5 illustrates the forward motion of smaller incremental changes that progress toward an ideal state. Each wedge represents the practices, formal or informal, that are implemented to support the new change.



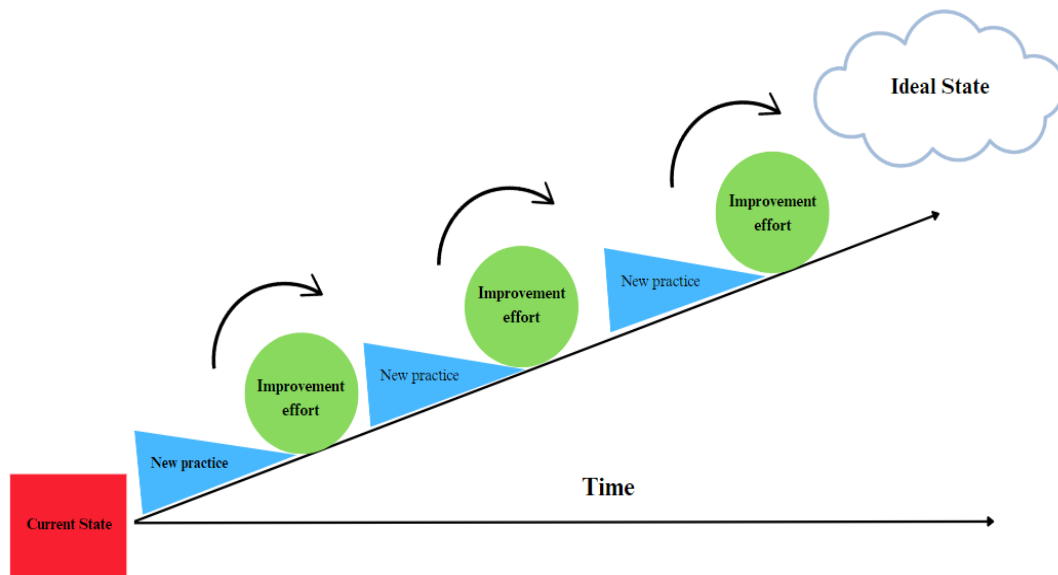


Figure 5: Process Improvement Incline

*Note: Adapted from W. Edward Deming's PDSA Cycle (2023)*

<https://deming.org/explore/pdsa/>.

### **Process Improvement Cycles**

With the understanding that the ideal state may not be achievable all at once, there are smaller, incremental changes that move us closer to the ideal state. The following recommendations have been developed from the review of the literature, from the suggestions collected during the semi-structured interviews, and from my analysis of the findings of this UFE. The findings from this evaluation identified aspects of the course development process that are quite effective in supporting an inclusive learning environment as it relates to the content of the course and some areas that would benefit from improvement. My recommendations first build on the existing strengths of the program including the support SMEs and IDs found through relationships with each other

and with other individuals and team members, the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of UDL and other inclusive practices, and the culture shift that is occurring at University College. I then provide recommendations that center on the challenges and barriers that emerged during the evaluation. I conclude with a summary of the ideal state.

### ***Recommendations That Build On Existing Strengths***

- 1. Leveraging the culture shift:** A positive culture shift was noted as a support to the course development process by several interview participants. This recommendation is less concrete with regard to changes in practice but instead builds upon opportunities to use this culture shift to acquire or confirm leadership buy-in for the time and resources needed to make substantive changes to the course development process to better support IDs and SMEs in their efforts to implement practices that foster and support an inclusive learning environment. The literature shows a shift in focus from student deficits to institutional responsibility as predictors of student retention and success (Noguera, 2001). Leadership support in the form of resources and funding demonstrates a true commitment to improvement efforts.
- 2. Expanding existing relationships:** Every interview participant acknowledged that they found support from others in the course development process. As the first step toward a community- or team-based approach to course development, creating opportunities to include more voices in the process as a course is being created or updated serves to expand the perspectives represented in the course content. This is already happening in a few different

ways. Informal pilots are taking place where willing adjunct faculty members volunteer to collaborate on the vision for a course, industry experts are surveyed for their insights on content they think students should learn in specific courses, and external partners are consulted for specific issues in a course development. Developing, implementing, and evaluating more robust pilots leveraging existing relationships moves us closer to the ideal state and provides the data needed to pursue the financial resources to support a compensation model for community member participation.

3. **Solidifying the use of inclusive pedagogies in practice:** This comes in the form of professional development for SMEs, IDs, and Academic Directors. The professional development can include internal educational offerings through the Teaching Excellence Program at University College, through university-wide opportunities provided by OTL, or via individual attendance at conferences or independent learning. The ID team already has foundational knowledge in adult learning theories and UDL. If Academic Directors and SMEs had similar foundational knowledge and all parties learned more about inclusive pedagogies, especially CSP, a few improvements follow. Academic Directors would be able to better communicate their expectations regarding the creation of an inclusive learning environment during the SME selection and onboarding processes. IDs would be able to spend less time assessing, accounting for, or educating a SMEs knowledge and competency to implement inclusive practices during course development. By investing in

developing knowledge of inclusive pedagogies among all key participants in the course development process, we further decrease the burden of the ID to carry that responsibility alone and solidify the commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment for students through the content of their courses.

### ***Recommendations That Fill Existing Gaps***

#### **4. Finding clarity in concepts and language around inclusive learning**

**environments and DEI:** While this recommendation falls in the middle of the list, a concerted effort to define what an inclusive learning environment looks like for University College should be one of the first process improvement projects. The literature shows that there are multiple ways of defining an inclusive learning environment (Dowling et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2020; Stentiford & Koutsouris, 2021). In order for SMEs to understand their role in creating an inclusive learning environment, they first need to know how it is defined not only for themselves but in collaboration with those involved in the course development. As noted in the findings, there is inconsistent language found in the course development documentation and in several public-facing documents. Because the language of inclusivity extends outside of the course development process, this is a project that could be undertaken by the DEI Steering Committee in collaboration with the curriculum committee. Once a clear definition of an inclusive learning environment is agreed upon, that definition should be used consistently across all platforms at University

College, knowing of course, that the definition may be refined and updated over time. This effort will not only be helpful for internal communication, it will decrease the likelihood of misalignment between SMEs and University College faculty and staff in the course development process.

- 5. SME selection:** As mentioned, SMEs are most often selected by the Academic Director from existing networks. This sets up a cycle whereby the same voices are invited into the process, narrowing the likelihood that the perspectives of marginalized folks are included. In order to make this part of the process more equitable, SME selection should move into the existing hiring process where positions are posted broadly and advertised widely, job descriptions, compensation, and expectations are transparent. An application and interview process that mirrors our current hiring practices for instructors, faculty, and staff allows us to identify SME candidates outside of existing networks who may bring experiences and worldviews previously not represented in our courses.
- 6. Planning and visioning:** Successful course developments start long before the first meeting between the ID and SME. Once the Academic Director has selected a SME, a more formal planning session should take place. In this session, key elements to discuss with the SME include (a) expectations around creating an inclusive learning environment to include learning material and outcome selection, assignment creation, and ways to build a learning community within the course design; (b) the flow of the course development

process; (c) how the course fits into the larger curriculum, and; (d) logistical elements such as pay. The information gathered in this planning session should be shared with the ID in advance of the kick-off meeting. A formal template for this planning and visioning session reduces the work of the ID by both preparing the SME to begin working on the course elements sooner and by providing information about the SMEs experience in DEI work so that the ID can plan for additional support if needed.

7. **Centering inclusive practices:** It was discovered through the document review that communication to the SME prior to and throughout the course development process is heavily focused on the timeline and the final deliverable. A project championed by the ID team, as owners of the current documentation, along with Academic Directors to emphasize the importance of implementing inclusive practices throughout the course development process would communicate the commitment of University College to create an inclusive learning environment. For example, the statement of work (available to view in Appendix D), which is one of the first documents received by the SME regarding course development currently does not mention inclusive practices as part of the process. If that document was updated to include, if not center, the expectation to find learning materials that represent diverse perspectives and address equity issues, to create assignments that give students agency and choice in their learning, and to develop discussion prompts that allow students to incorporate their lived experiences

into their coursework, SMEs would be considering these practices before the kick-off meeting.

- 8. Creating community:** The next step toward a community-based approach to course development to support an inclusive learning environment is to create and adopt more processes and practices that encourage collaboration. In this phase, we use earlier pilot projects to continue to build the course development community. IDs may begin to bring or be hired for specialized expertise in course developments for elements like accessibility, DEI, project management, etc. In this phase, plans for a compensation model are drafted. This step continues to bring more perspectives and voices into the course, reduces the feeling of isolation felt by the SME, provides constructive feedback throughout the process, and begins to shift the role of the SME toward content expertise while expanding the capacity of the ID and SME to take time and space for critical reflection and DEI work.
- 9. Building in additional touchpoints and feedback:** As we iterate toward a more community-based approach, there becomes a need for more communication and transparency within the process. What doesn't yet exist is the ability to optimize course content once a course has been built in Canvas and presented to students and instructors. This aligns with the finding focused on the connection to teaching practice. If we aren't evaluating how a newly designed or updated course fares in the hands of an instructor and in front of students, there is a risk for unintended harm. This recommendation serves to

extend the course development process to allow for student and instructor feedback specifically after the first run of a course. Information may be collected first through the existing course evaluation feedback and then through a survey specific to the elements defined in the literature as those that contribute to an inclusive learning environment. Drawing on the information technology practice of optimization, new courses should be reviewed for their impact on instructors and students.

### **The Ideal State**

The ideal state is yet to be defined. Patton's UFE requires that the evaluation findings and recommendations be formed in collaboration with PIUs. For the sake of this evaluation, recommendations were collected from interview participants and incorporated in the previous section. Preliminary findings have also been shared with the curriculum committee in anticipation of co-constructing our ideal state for the course development process. From the literature and findings in this evaluation, elements of the ideal state will likely include:

- a SME selection process that is more rigorous, formal, and equitable;
- community- or team-based approach that is asset-based, inclusive, and accessible;
- well-defined links to teaching practice;
- practices that address systemic issues of oppression and continue to dismantle white supremacist narratives;
- practices that amplify the voices of marginalized individuals and groups;



- time and space to consider inclusive practices and then implement those practices;
- a fair compensation model;
- practices which acknowledge and celebrate different ways of knowing and learning for both the SME and students;
- efforts to continuously incorporate student and instructor feedback for ongoing optimization

### **Opportunities for Future Exploration**

This UFE focused on the course development process and to what extent both the formal and informal practices contribute to an inclusive learning environment.

Throughout the evaluation, I encountered findings that do not fit into the scope of this work but warrant mention as opportunities for further research or process improvement efforts. The two areas for further exploration include first, connecting the course development process to teaching practice, instructor engagement, and building a learning community for students using inclusive learning theories and practices, and second, exploring how the process of developing a course is much like being in a course.

In the first chapter, I introduce a number of elements of inclusive learning found in the literature. These elements included teaching practice, instructor engagement, creating a learning community among students, and course content. This evaluation focused on the development of inclusive course content including the selection of learning materials and outcomes, the design of assignments and assessments, and the development of discussion topics and prompts. While the connection to teaching practice did emerge as a

theme from data collection, it was not a major focus of this evaluation. Moving forward, it is recommended to undertake future projects that strengthen the alignment between the course content and its utilization in cultivating and supporting an inclusive learning environment. Additional research and professional development efforts should also be pursued to enhance inclusive practices within each of these elements individually, thereby fostering a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning within University College.

The second area of further exploration was discovered as I began to see how the course development process can be likened to a course itself. One interesting challenge I encountered was the difficulty in differentiating between coding elements that define an inclusive environment for students and those that define the inclusive practices for the course development process from the SME's perspective. For instance, coding for “agency and choice” involved considering the students' ability to choose topics or assignment formats that invited their lived experiences, while for SMEs, it involved coding for their agency and choice in managing the processes in place for collecting and storing documents, and for documenting the course content within the Design Document. Similarly, coding for “feedback” encompassed the need for students to receive clear and frequent feedback to enhance their learning, while for SMEs, it involved the need for more feedback from the ID and AD during the course development process. This process revealed numerous connections between creating and being in a course.

In this context, the ID can be compared to an instructor with a cohort of students who interact with her individually. SMEs, like students, bring diverse skills, abilities,

identities, intersections, and worldviews to the "classroom." Recognizing these similarities led me to a significant conclusion: by making the course development process more inclusive, we can develop structures and practices that facilitate the creation of an inclusive environment for students. By applying the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) to engage SMEs in course development, similar to how we engage students in their own courses, we can foster a more accessible process that welcomes all types of learners and invests in practices that support and sustain the cultures, languages, experiences, and world views of the diverse student populations we see in our programs.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have delved into the course development process, explored the opportunities and challenges of creating an inclusive learning environment for students, and provided a collection of recommendations to support the continuous improvement of the process. Additionally, I provide a vision for continued exploration of research and best practices to guide projects that extend beyond the scope of this evaluation. While the prospect of divesting from white supremacist, eurocentric, heteronormative, patriarchal systems pervasive in higher education is far greater than the work of one evaluation, I hope this evaluation is a tiny step toward interrogating the systems that continue to disadvantage students from minoritized groups. CSP, UDL, and other asset-based pedagogies and frameworks can and should be employed to shift the responsibility for student success from blaming students using deficit approaches to addressing the shortcomings of the institutions themselves. Inclusive teaching practices, course content

that acknowledges and celebrates the intersecting identities and lived experiences of students, and supportive learning communities working together can provide students with the “more” they seek in connecting their education to the world around them

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## Appendix A

### Data Collection Audit

Date	Activity	People	Notes
6/17/2022	Meeting	Becca Ciancanelli Director, Inclusive Teaching Practice	Becca shared her model for inclusive teaching practice. Served as a launching point for literature review and methods
6/27/2022	Consultation	Bridget Farrell Research Librarian	Consultation to hone topic for Research Process course
7/7/2022	Discussion	Cindy Cragg Colleague and Classmate	Discussion regarding Literature Review focus: Considering how manage the many modalities that are offered at University College
7/12/2022 - 8/16/2022	FIIT Cohort	Becca Ciancanelli, 9 academic directors, Associate Dean	Faculty Institute for Inclusive Teaching (FIIT): This multi-week group allowed the ADs at UCOL to preview and provide feedback for the FIIT learning modules to be rolled out to all instructors. Many of the resources used in this training overlapped with my literature review. On the right track. May prove difficult to tease out teaching practice from content.

8/5/2022	Teaching Excellence Program	UCOL Instructors	UCOL Learning Excellence Team: Instructor development webinar focused on UDL Framework. Hosted by Becca Ciancanelli and Ellen Hogan. Reviewed accommodations for students, accessibility, and engaging students through multiple methods of content delivery and providing options for students to engage with course materials
12/15/2022	Meeting	ID, SMEs	Course development begins for those courses being observed: Healthy Aging: A Healthcare Imperative and Ethical Considerations in Healthcare
1/9/2023	Meeting	Curriculum Committee	Introduced DiP focus and timeline. Requested and received permission from this committee to be primary intended user group for evaluation. Feedback was positive. Request to have information shared as it comes available.
1/16/2023	Observation	ID, SMEs	Verbal permission to observe course design meetings obtained from both SMEs and ID.
1/21/2023	Conversation	Ashley Forest Former Student of Color	Met Ashley via Cindy Cragg - former student at UCOL. Student of Color. Ashley was willing to share her experiences at UCOL. Corroborated what my experience was with students in my program. Reviewed interview questions with Ashley. Feedback positive. Ashley was most interested to know the variable definitions of inclusive learning environments. Ashley reinforced the need to hire more Faculty of Color. She mentioned only having one Black instructor during her time at UCOL.

1/23/2023	Observation	ID, SMEs	Ethics: AI and its ability to scramble our ability to know what truth is. How do we ask students to talk about this? Aging: Allowing students to use different levels of evidence in their work. Brought the pyramid of evidence in to an assignment and presented the information so students have the agency to select how they present their topic for the week's assignment.
1/24/2023	Email	ID, LEDD, Assoc. Dean, SME	Requests sent for participation in 1:1 interviews.
1/30/2023	Observation	ID, SMEs	Ethics: Adding in a module in week 10 on Social Justice - allow students to bring their experiences to the classroom. Also considered how to allow students to think about and talk about end of life issues in a safe space. Aging: Students asked to visit a senior living environment. ID led conversation about how to provide support for students to make sure they aren't using language that could marginalize the groups that they observe. Added a link to the language guide created by the DEI Steering Committee to the assignment. This assignment raised concerns about how students could be seen as being voyeuristic - added language to the assignment to be sure students make contact with someone at the organization so there is a connection and not just a detached observation.
2/2/2023	Provost Conference	DU-wide	Relationship Rich Education in Practice - discussion table host.
2/9/2023	Interview #1	Associate Dean	Semi-structured interview #1
2/13/2023	Interview #2	ID	Semi-structured interview #2
	Interview #3	LEDD	Semi-structured interview #3

2/15/2023	Meeting	Associate Dean, 3 academic directors	Teaching, Grading, DEI Statements: this group came together to do some reflection and work on our own teaching, grading, and DEI philosophies and practices.
2/16/2023	Interview #4	SME	Semi-structured interview #4
2/26/2023	Conversation	Ashley Forest Former Student of Color, Bobbie Kite, Associate Dean	Conversation regarding adding Ashley to curriculum committee. Heard Ashley's experiences as a Student of Color at University College. Reinforced the need to protect Students of Color from having to be sole source of diversity in a classroom.
2/28/2023	Observation	SME, ID	Aging Course SME: discussed the use of AI for literature search, information bias, research bias. This conversation was initiated by the SME and we were able to take some time to tease out how students might investigate these topics within the context of course materials.
3/6/2023	Meeting	Curriculum Committee	Discussed SME selection and onboarding, design document vs. building in the LMS, and the pressure of working for the deadline. Reviewed evaluation questions with PIUs. Two members asked if student feedback was being considered. Discussed that in the larger picture, yes, that would be addressed likely in implications/recommendations but that they are not intimately involved in the actual process of building courses.
3/22/2023	Email	Associate Dean	Associate Dean received transcript for review. No feedback received
4/3/2023	Meeting	Curriculum Committee	Process map shared with PIUs - feedback obtained from ID director in the form of an annotated version of the process map. Discussed opportunities to support inclusive practice in pre-development planning

			with academic director/Assoc. Dean/LEDD
4/3/2023	email	adjunct instructor, SME and curriculum committee member	<p>This member provided feedback on the process map: How are we identifying the course SME? In the past the SME works with a instructional designer, are we ensuring alignment on the front end to eliminate some of the concerns I had about that issue?</p> <p>Who is approving the "course design expectations?"</p> <p>Is there a template we are using for the SME onboarding to create a consistent experience?</p> <p>I found when designing a course, the weekly meetings were helpful, but I think we need to add a level of approval or sign off that captures week 1-2 first not group 1-5 together. Personal experience, we were aligned and then the approver did not like week 2-5 and it set us back quite a good amount of time.</p> <p>Suggestion - group the approval steps by week 1-2 approval, week 3-5 approval, week 6-8 and week 9-10. Also suggest to have a check in meeting with the academic director before the weekly meeting start. This will help with alignment.</p> <p>What is the overall timeline for the entire process? I did not see that on the slide.</p> <p>I do not see anything listed that has a requirement for diverse content and learning materials. (i.e. women authors, authors of color, etc.) Will that be in the kick-off meeting? If not, why not?</p> <p>Accessibility may also be another</p>

			piece we add at the beginning so the SME and ID understand this? For example, not selecting a document that is not in "Trebuchet MS" because the read over tool does not work for certain text in files.
4/10/2023	email	LEDD, ID, SME	Received interview transcripts for review.
4/10/2023	Email	LEDD	Responded to feedback with additional information regarding recommendations: a. more effort to get folks from different backgrounds in course design and development, not just enlightened folks. B. baking in pedagogies that support critical discourse and allow students to engage in challenging conversations together. c. piloting some course designs that allow for the course to evolve organically - allowing for the inclusion of current events, particular needs, challenges, or interests of students while ensuring that there is the framework to prevent the course from going off the rails.
4/12/2023	email	SME	Responded to transcript email with no additional feedback
4/12/2023	Email	ID	ID provided information about a tool used by the team, "learning experiences menu" where ideas and templates for course design elements are collected and shared. ID also mentioned that expectations are outlined in SME design training

			canvas course - this expectation section does not mention anything about inclusive practices.
5/1/2023	Meeting	Curriculum Committee	Findings diagram shared: Natriece Bryant, adjunct instructor, SME, and committee member discussed the need to consider SME selection process. Who can do this work? How might they be paired with ID to create an effective team?
5/10/2023	Conversation	Sabina Pavlovska-Hilael adjunct instructor, curriculum committee member, and DEIA specialist	Reviewed feedback from findings diagram as Sabina missed 5/1 meeting. SME selection was discussed as a difficult problem to solve. If we only select those with DEIA background, how much does that diminish the pool of potential SMEs? Also discussed dissertation work and discussed opportunities for piloting template for inclusive course design created by Sabina for Hastings College

## **Appendix B**

### **Email Request for Participation**

I am writing to invite you to participate in my Program Evaluation of the course development process from the perspective of the academic director and subject matter expert as it relates to fostering an inclusive learning environment through course materials/content. I would like to interview you because you oversee all course developments, are a member of the curriculum subcommittee of the DEI committee, and are an integral part of the approval process for all courses across University College.

If you decide to participate in this evaluation, we will have an interview via videoconference lasting about one hour. I will send interview questions ahead of our meeting time. I would like to record our conversation and use the transcription feature of the video conference platform so that I may refer back to information gathered during our time together. The information shared in the interview will be used as one data source among several that will help me better understand the course design and development process as it exists now and may help inform recommendations for program improvement efforts.

This is completely voluntary. If you are interested and available for an interview, please respond to this email or feel free to contact me in whatever manner you choose. If



you would like more information about this program evaluation, I would be happy to schedule a time for a conversation.

If you have any questions about this program evaluation you are welcome to contact my advisor Dr. Sarah Hurtado ([sarah.hurtado@du.edu](mailto:sarah.hurtado@du.edu)).

## **Appendix C**

### **Sample Interview Questions**

1. Introduction
2. What is your role in the course development process as it is right now?
3. How do you define an inclusive learning environment?
4. What elements of course development contribute to inclusive learning?
  - a. Prompt with: have you considered ...
5. What are the expectations around including DEI in course development
6. What challenges do you face in the course development process?
7. What support have you found?
8. What conversations have you had with others in this space?
9. How might you envision the course development process differently to create an inclusive learning environment?

## Appendix D

### Course Design Documents

#### SME Collaboration Timeline

COHORT A (Apr-Aug23) for Academic Year 2023-2024

Winter 2024 Delivery

Task	SME Deliverable (Submit to ID via course OneDrive folder)
Self-Paced Canvas Orientation and Brainstorming Sheet – <a href="#">the Course Design Process Portal</a> (Parts 0 & 1)	Complete before kick-off meeting
Pre-Development Meetings (Director, ID and SME), optional follow up Kick-off meeting with ID	4/17/23 - 4/21/23
Alignment Map Part 1 and 2 Complete	5/1/23
Prototype module and one major assignment with rubric (plan for all)	5/15/23
Module 2	5/22/23
Module 3	5/29/23
Module 4	6/5/23
Mid-Point Check-in – June 12th	
5 modules (Director Mid-Point Check-in)	6/12/23-6/16/23
Module 6	6/19/23
Module 7 -8	6/26/23

Module 9	7/3/23
Module 10 and Full content – course home, rubrics, syllabus	<b>7/10/23</b>
<b>Final SME Content Deadline – July 10th</b>	
	<b>Time Period</b>
Multimedia Development and Accessibility (e.g., Captioning)	7/24/23 - 8/4/23
Final Review and Approval	8/4/23 - 8/25/23

# Course Design Pitch

This document is to be completed by the SME prior to the Course Design Kick-off meeting with the Academic Director and Instructional Designer. Know that this is very much a draft, and everything can change. It will be a launching point for conversation about the scope and hope for the course design.

## Your Experience and Expertise

What is the developer's prior experience with course design and online teaching? What professional expertise do you hope to bring to this course design?

## Vision Statement

*How will students change as a result of this course? What will they still remember 5 years from now?*

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

*University College values illuminating diverse perspectives and valuing and including the diverse backgrounds of learners. To make sure the course reflects those values, what are equity issues in your field that may show up in this course? What perspectives and voices are typically included and excluded in courses in this discipline? How can you ensure the course addresses those issues?*

## Course Title Suggestions

*If applicable.*

## Course Goals

*Upon completion of this course, learners will...(knowledge, abilities, and habits of thinking). Try to think of observable behaviors or outputs that learners will be able to DO by the end of the course.*

## Major Assignments

*What deliverables can students produce that will allow them to prove that they have mastered the above? Try to replicate how they will use their knowledge in the real world. (Number of major assignments is flexible and they may build.)*

- 1. Assignment 1 - Describe the assignment. What are they doing? Why / what skill is it practicing? What format (presentation, paper, group report, flexible?)*
- 2. Assignment 2 -*
- 3. Assignment 3 -*
- 4. Final Assignment -*

## Personas

*Who are the students who will take this class? What backgrounds do they bring the course? Why are they taking the course? What are their career or personal goals?*

## Student Activities

*How will students practice their skills together? How will they use their knowledge to engage with the world and with each other? How will the course provide different opportunities for students to engage and show up authentically.*

## Course Topics and Structure

*What is the arc of this course (e.g. narrow to broad, chronological, theory to application)*

*Make a list of the major topics to be included in this course, roughly in order. These will become module topics, but can just be a free-form list for now.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

## Readings

*What central readings or ideas should be a part of the course? We encourage moving away from textbooks, but if you need to vet textbooks, please set up a VitalSource account. [Further info on readings here](#). Except for classic texts, stay within a 2-year publication window and look for current editions.*

**Course Title:**  
**SME:**  
**Delivery Date:**

Course Overview		
Course Outcomes	Weekly Instruction	Assessment
CO1:		
CO2:		
CO3:		
CO4:		

## Course Home

Course Home Module			
Page Title	Weekly Obj Align	Page Content	Notes
Course Overview		<p><b><u>Course Introduction</u></b>            Include a student-facing overview of the learning journey they will go on throughout the course. This is not meant to be a restatement of the course description and outcomes. Rather, explain how they will build skills and master concepts as they move through the topics, activities, and assignments of the course. Include tips for success. A little context about the logic behind the structure of the course will help students be more savvy partners in building their knowledge with you throughout the course.</p> <p><b><u>SUCCEEDING IN THIS COURSE</u></b></p> <p><b>WEEKLY READINGS</b>            Adjust to fit this course; Most of the readings will come from the course text. Additional readings and third-party videos will be in the module or available through e-reserves.</p> <p><b>MEMORY CHECK ASSIGNMENTS</b>            Memory Checks are designed to allow the student to demonstrate comprehension of key concepts introduced in the module content. These are presented as graded discussions, quizzes, or short assignments . Memory Checks will take between 1-2 hours to complete. If the assignment is a discussion, an initial post is due on the Wednesday of the module and</p>	

	<p>follow-up posts due on Sunday of the module unless otherwise specified by the instructor.</p> <p><b>CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISES</b></p> <p>Critical Thinking Exercises require the student to integrate the module content with previous coursework, modules, or personal experience. These assignments will vary in structure but may include graded discussions, reflection papers, technical exercises, or pre-work for portfolio assignments. Students should plan to spend 2-3 hours on Critical Thinking Exercises.</p> <p><b>PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENTS</b></p> <p>Portfolio Assignments are summative assignments that address each of the major outcomes for the course. These assignments are designed to cover learning across multiple modules and require independent reading and research on the part of the student. These assignments are often based on real-life deliverables that the future healthcare leader may be required to know.</p> <p>List the major assignments and how the assignments build overall. Is there a project, lab, or case study they will build on throughout the course? Will they do some smaller assignments, and then a big presentation? Is there a larger project with drafts due in earlier weeks for peer review? How much time should students spend on these assignments?</p> <p><b><u>Pre-Class Activities</u></b></p> <p>Complete the following activities to prepare for the first week of class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the <a href="#">Syllabus</a></li> <li>• Make sure you have the course texts (see the syllabus).</li> <li>• Post any questions you have about the course in the <a href="#">General Course Discussion board</a></li> <li>• Post your self-introduction to the <a href="#">Class Introductions</a> discussion board.</li> <li>• Begin reviewing the Week 1 readings and instructional material</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Resources</u></b></p> <p>Include any resource links that students will need to access throughout the course. For example, the publisher's companion site for their textbook, industry links, a link to resources that will help them get up to speed on course-related concepts if they need a refresher prior to the course.</p>	
<b>Class Introductions</b>	<p><b><u>Class Introductions</u></b></p>	



		<p>Introduce yourself to your classmates to help us create a supportive learning community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name, hometown, area of study (program/concentration).</li> <li>What past professional experience (if any) do you have that can be applied to this course?</li> <li>Why are you taking this course and what are you hoping to contribute?</li> <li>What is something that is interesting about you (hobbies, interests, fun facts)?</li> <li>What are you most excited to learn in this class?</li> <li>How might others support you in the learning process?</li> </ul>	
<b>Course Set-up and Instructor Notes</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include any information about the design or set-up of this course that future instructors would need to know, such as technologies they will need to use, setting up groups.</li> <li>Info about instructional materials and resources that need regular updating.</li> <li>On campus or synchronous adaptation – general overarching changes that would need to be made to the course.</li> <li>Library Resources (e-reserves) and/or Harvard Business Review Course Packs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include a full list of citations for all course materials available through the library.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## Modules 1 - 10

Module : Title			
Weekly Objective		Insert objective starting with observable/measurable verb.	
Weekly Objective		Insert objective starting with observable/measurable verb.	
Weekly Objective		Insert objective starting with observable/measurable verb.	
Page Title	Weekly Obj Align	Page Content	Notes
Module: Overview and		<p><b>Overall Course Objective for this Module:</b></p> <p>CO 1: Insert full text of the course learning outcome supported by this module.</p>	

Instructional Materials	<p><b>Module Topic &amp; Overview:</b> Include a brief 1-2 sentence overview of the topics included this week.</p> <p><b>How does knowing this help you?</b> Enter content.</p> <p><b>Weekly Objectives</b> [see above]</p> <p><b>Activities- What's Included in this Module?</b> In this module, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read assigned material on this week's topic.</li> <li>• Complete a short memory-check (1-2 hours) to check your knowledge of the instructional content</li> <li>• View two short lectures over these major content areas</li> <li>• Participate in a Critical Thinking Exercise discussion (3-4 hours)</li> </ul> <p><b>Connecting the Pieces</b> Include information about how this module relates to concepts in previous modules.</p> <p><b>Content</b> Include a narrative guide through the readings, videos, or diagrams assigned, including in-text citations and number of pages or minutes for each item. For example. This should be the bulk of this page.</p> <p>Start by reviewing Chapter Y of the text (AuthorLastName YEAR), # pages. This will introduce you to XYZ concept. Then read "Article Title" (AuthorLastName YEAR), # pages. This article provides an alternative framework to the one in the textbook. Pay attention to the way the author frames XYZ. Then, review this video ::link:: (X:XX minutes), which will give you insight into how this concept is applied in X setting. Consider which of the two approaches the hospital in the video is employing.</p> <p><b>What does this have to do with the "bigger picture?"</b> Include information about how this module's content will be used in students' professional or personal lives and/or how it relates to bigger problems and trends in the industry.</p>	
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		<p><b>What are your Next Steps?</b> After completing this week's instructional materials, what are students' next steps in terms of assignments, or how will they use this knowledge in subsequent weeks?</p> <p><b>References</b> Include an alphabetized list of references from this week's content in <a href="#">Turabian Author-Date style</a>.</p>	
<p><b>Module: SME Presentation-Title</b></p> <p>Note: The content section will contain a narrative regarding the readings/videos from the SME's perspective. It is recommended that the SME also creates a short presentation exploring the concepts of the week, should the content section not be sufficient.</p>		<p><b>About:</b> Your SME-developed material provides additional context and value to the weekly content that students cannot get from third party readings and resources. As you're thinking about what to include in your weekly presentation or supplemental media, consider making connections between instructional materials and highlighting themes to students. This is an opportunity for you to situate these connections and themes in students' lives beyond the classroom.</p> <p><b>Mode of Instruction:</b> <a href="#">Embedded lecture video, slides, podcast, interview, interactive knowledge check or demonstration and be ~10 minutes</a></p> <p><b>Outline for weekly presentation and/or knowledge check:</b> (Explain the context of this content, including how it will support students' learning this week.)</p> <p><b>Presentation Title:</b></p>	
<p><b>Module: Memory Check – Title</b></p> <p>Note: these may be discussions, mini-assignments, quizzes, group engagement/peer review, etc. There must be some peer-to-peer engagement each week in Memory Check and/or CTE. There must be some peer-to-peer engagement each week in Memory Check and/or CTE.</p>	<p><b>Obj</b></p>	<p>Your Memory Checks are to encourage you to examine your readings thoroughly. These Memory Checks will normally have multiple parts and are meant to be answered along with your journey through the Module content. Please take your time formulating the response to these questions and present a comprehensive answer to all.</p> <p><b>Time</b> The estimated time for this Memory Check is approximately <a href="#">1-2 hours</a>, so please plan accordingly.</p> <p><b>Discussion Prompt / Quiz Questions / Activity Instructions</b> <a href="#">Insert assignment details here.</a></p> <p><b>Engagement/Submission Guidelines (example below is for a discussion board activity)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You will need to make your post before seeing the posts of your classmates.</li> <li>Please make sure to comment on at least two other classmates' posts and</li> </ul>	<p><b># Points</b></p> <p>Rubric: Pending</p>

		answer any questions posed by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. MST to earn full credit!	
<p>Module: Critical Thinking Exercise – <a href="#">Title</a></p> <p>Note: these may be discussions, mini-assignments, quizzes, group engagement/peer review, etc. There must be some peer-to-peer engagement each week in Memory Check and/or CTE. There must be some peer-to-peer engagement each week in Memory Check and/or CTE.</p>	Obj	<p><b><u>Purpose</u></b> Your Critical Thinking Exercises (CTE) are to encourage you to connect your readings to practical application. These CTE will normally have multiple tasks and are meant to be a culmination of weekly outcomes. Take your time responding to these tasks and present a comprehensive post to address all tasks. Make sure you complete the Module Memory Check before attempting the CTE. <a href="#">This CTE has a process for you to walk through and address in a comprehensive response.</a></p> <p><b><u>Time</u></b> The estimated time for this Critical Thinking Exercise is <a href="#">approximately 3 hours</a>, so please plan accordingly.</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Prompt / Quiz Questions / Activity Instructions</u></b> <a href="#">Insert assignment details here.</a></p> <p><b><u>Engagement/Submission Guidelines (example below is for a discussion board activity)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will need to make your post before seeing the posts of your classmates.</li> <li>• Please make sure to comment on at least two other classmates' posts and answer any questions posed by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. MST to earn full credit!</li> </ul>	# Points Rubric: Pending
<p>Portfolio Assignment - <a href="#">Title</a></p> <p><a href="#">Remove if not applicable this week</a></p>		<p><b><u>Purpose</u></b> This is your Portfolio Assignment addressing the course outcome: <a href="#">insert outcome number and text</a>. This summative assignment is designed for you to incorporate the materials provided in the module content with your own research. <a href="#">This assignment is worth X points and should take you a total of X-X hours to complete.</a></p> <p><b><u>Your Tasks</u></b> <a href="#">Provide detailed instructions, including a description of what success looks like.</a></p> <p><b><u>Submission Requirements</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to the <a href="#">UCOL Format and Style Requirements</a> on the Course Homepage, and be sure to properly cite your sources using <a href="#">Turabian Author-Date Style Citations</a></li> </ul> <p><b><u>Revise and Resubmit</u></b> You may revise and resubmit portfolios assignments as necessary provided you are in line with this rule:</p>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have attempted ALL Memory Checks and the Critical Thinking Exercises in the relevant Modules, and</li> <li>• Submitted the Portfolio Assignment and did not pass your evaluation of the assignment (according to the rubric)</li> </ul> <p>If you have met these requirements and would like to revise this assignment, please contact your instructor once you have received a grade to let them know you will be taking advantage of this option. Be prepared to demonstrate your plan for revision that aligns with the rubric.</p>	
Module: Instructor Notes		<p>This page will serve to capture information that instructors need to know about teaching this week. Instructors may add information as they teach. Add or remove categories as desired.</p> <p><b><u>IMPORTANT NOTES</u></b>  Include any notes about keeping readings up to date, technologies used this week and other important notes</p> <p><b><u>THIS WEEK'S DISCUSSIONS / ACTIVITIES</u></b>  Insert information about facilitating discussions or organizing activities.</p> <p><b><u>THIS WEEK'S ASSIGNMENT</u></b>  If applicable, note anything that instructors will need to know about submissions, grading, setting-up assignments.</p>	

## **Scope of Work Agreement for Course Design**

### **University of Denver, University College**

Date: December 18, 2022

Name: XXX: Course Developer

#### **Purpose:**

The below scope of work agreement outlines the project details, deliverables, and compensation related to a course design project for University College at the University of Denver. Developer shall conduct research, evaluate materials, and complete project deliverables to assure currency, innovation, and quality standards in University College courses.

#### **Project Information:**

**Program:** Healthcare Management

**Course Title:** HC-4305 Aging in Healthcare

**Completion date:** March 13, 2023 for course content in the design document, followed by 1 month of build, review, and refinement, and media development, unless otherwise determined by University and Developer. Note that two stages of review will follow, and the developer should expect to continue working to revise the course to incorporate that feedback for 2-3 weeks following submission of completed deliverable.

**Launch Quarter:** The new course container will be launched in Summer or Fall 2023. Note that course designs must be completed months before the launch of a course to ensure that content preparations, catalog and syllabus updates, registration information, and resources orders can be set up in time, we cannot launch the new content prior to this term.

#### **Compensation:**

Developer's compensation for developing this course is \$4,000. Such fee shall be paid upon completion of the course development.

#### **Deliverables:**

Developer agrees to complete all aspects of the course revision or development and provide the following items:

**Completed Canvas Container that meets the baseline expectations for the 9 Essential Elements, including:**

- 1. Alignment Map** (included in the Canvas master)
  - Mapping course to program outcomes
  - Course to concentration outcomes, where applicable
  - Weekly Topics to Course Outcomes
  - Major Assignment to Course Outcomes
  - Text and instructional approach included and approved
- 2. Syllabus (using University College Syllabus Template)**
  - Course description
  - Course learning outcomes (4-6 measurable, active outcomes that are appropriate to field and level and include "to what end")
  - Required texts (cited in Turabian Author-Date style)
  - Course policies
  - An outline or summary of major course components
- 3. List of Course Topics/Modules**

#### 4. Weekly Content

- Narrative overview language
- Weekly student learning outcomes (2-3 measurable, active outcomes)
- Varied content/topic-related readings and multimedia (3 different content types) that support weekly learning outcomes (cited in Turabian Author-date style and including context for students). Instructional content is up-to-date, appropriate in scope and level, and is scholarly or professional.
- Original instructional content (e.g., lecture, slides, knowledge checks)
- Instructor notes (logistical notes or tips for fellow instructors in each week)

#### 5. Weekly Engagement

- 3-4 hours per week of student-to student and/or student-to instructor interaction that allows for practice and formative feedback on weekly outcomes (online and on-campus versions)

#### 6. Major Assignments

- With purpose, detailed expectations, and due dates included
- All course outcomes must be assessed by at least one major assignment
- All academic written assignments support University College Format and Style Requirements, including Turabian Author-Date style

#### 7. Rubrics for all graded items, that align to the University College grading scale

#### 8. Grading Structure

- Points for all deliverables are stated

#### 9. Required Faculty Competencies List (included as a hidden item in the files section)

- Faculty Competencies List is a list of the competencies/skills a faculty member needs to have to teach this course. (To be developed in collaboration between Academic Director and Developer.)

#### Intellectual Property:

It is the intent of the parties that all right title and interest to the Deliverables or portions thereof paid for by University, including, but not limited to, any and all intellectual property rights, shall be vested in University; and that the Deliverables were specifically ordered and commissioned by University, and is a “work for hire” as such term is used and defined in the United States Copyright Act. To the extent, if any, that ownership of the Deliverables or any portion thereof has not so vested, then upon acceptance of the Deliverables and payment therefore by University, Developer hereby sells, assigns, grants and transfers to University all right, title and interest in any Deliverables or portions thereof prepared by Developer for University pursuant to this Agreement, including all copyrights, renewals and extensions thereof.

#### Process:

Developer will be assisted in this endeavor by a University College Learning Experience Design (LX) Team member with experience in the development of courses. **The developer will complete training modules to prepare them to produce the deliverables and collaborate weekly with their support person and follow a series of design steps and checkpoint deadlines to ensure timely and quality completion of the course.** Developer will respond to their Instructional Designer’s requests within 7 days. The Course Container developed by Developer will be reviewed by the LX Team and approved by the Academic Program Director and the Director of Instructional Design of University College. While Developer is the primary course developer, it is understood that Developer will work with and address feedback on the course.

#### Review and Payment:

Submission of Deliverable is not the mechanism which triggers final payment. Deliverable will go through

potentially multiple rounds of revisions, and payment will not be processed until Deliverable has been approved by the Director of Instructional Design. Payment will be processed in the pay period following completion of course development. Please note that we operate on a monthly pay schedule, and completion of course development includes all revisions, completion of the Canvas course container, and final approval by Director of Instructional Design.

**Please Sign Below:**

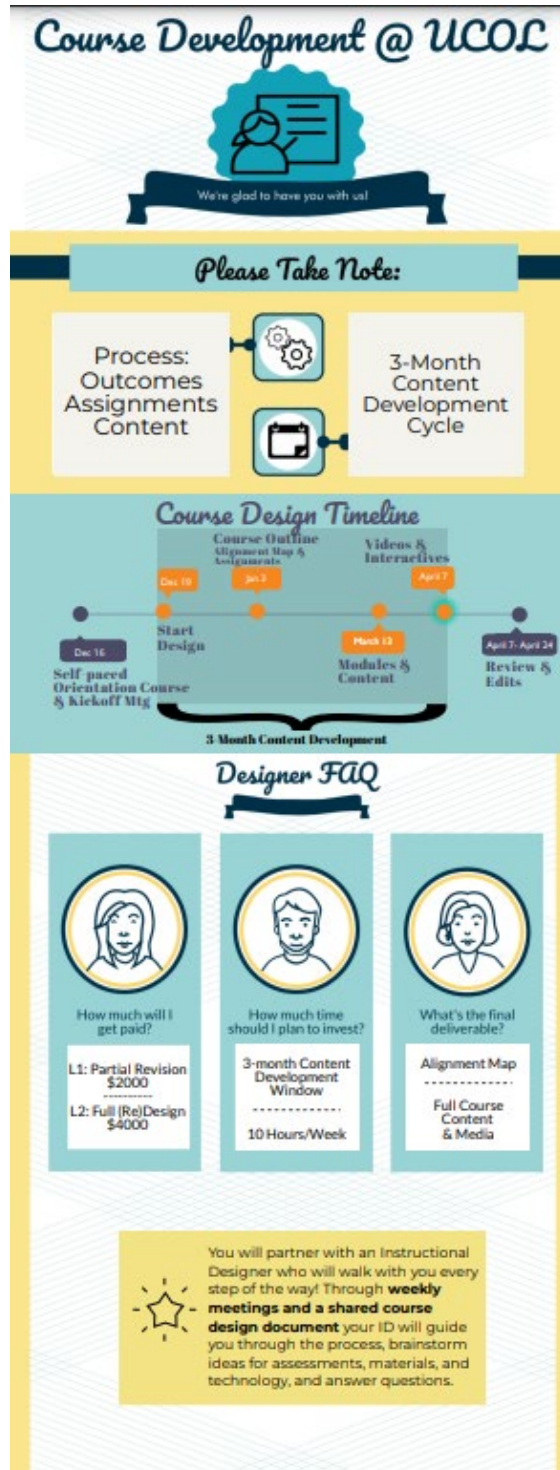
**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## SME Infographic



### Course Design Expectations

Category	Description (Primarily SME Responsibility)	Description (Primarily ID Responsibility)
Alignment		
	The alignment map is complete, with alignment components included: (COs to Program and Conc. Outcomes, topics and assignments to COs)	
	Alignment map includes textbook in Turabian citation style with ISBN and rationale	
	Alignment map includes pre-requisites	
	Alignment Map has weekly topics and assignments included and mapped	
	Alignment Map instructional strategy is populated (materials and activities sections)	
	Alignment Map includes Instructor competencies list	
	(See detailed requirements below.)	
Course Description		
	Provides a narrative of what the course covers.	
	Explains how the student will benefit from taking the course and why it is valuable.	
	Aligns with the course outcomes.	
	Does not include descriptions of specific assignments.	

	Is clearly written, using proper grammar.	
	Uses primarily active voice and action verbs.	
	Is written in the third person, using "students" as the subject rather than "you."	
Course Pre-requisites		
	Course pre-requisites are included in alignment map and reflect what the director indicated in the pre-development form or have been modified in consultation with the director	
	Pre-reqs are included only if necessary. It is indicated if they are required or recommended	
Course Outcomes		
	Includes a manageable number: 4-6	
	Are appropriate to the discipline and degree level and based on discipline-specific competencies/standards.	
	Are specific, discrete (have only one verb), measureable, observable, attainable, relevant, and tactically sound.	
	Provide rationale and/or context by answering the question, "to what end?," describing why the learning is important, or how the objective will be attained.	

	Align with higher cognitive learning. See Action for Words for Bloom's Taxonomy. (For graduate-level courses, the verbs use in the outcomes must fall into the "Analyze, Evaluate, and Create" categories of Bloom's Taxonomy.)	
	Describe performances or actions that are not only related to classroom assignments or textbooks, but also apply more broadly to skills and tasks outside the classroom.	
	Are written in the third person (each outcome begins with an active verb that completes the sentence, "At the end of this course, students will be able to...").	
	Each course outcome is mapped to at least one program outcome and one concentration outcome. Not all program and concentration outcomes need to be met by a particular course.	
Instructor Competencies		
	Instructor Competencies identify 3-4 required competencies	
	Instructor competencies include knowledge, skills, or experience minimally required of an instructor to be qualified to teach the course.	

	Competencies must not be overly subjective. They should be something an instructor can address by referencing an item on their resume	
	Competencies must not be too vague or too specific. (We recommend that you avoid requiring a particular level or type of degree or a specific or very high number of years of experience)	
Textbook		
	Texts/materials required for purchase are truly essential to supporting the course outcomes. Any recommended or supplemental texts are truly supplemental and not essential for success in the course.	
	When possible, courses should be loosely coupled with textbooks to reduce issues with textbook updates. It's preferred that courses have a varied mixture of resources such as case studies, videos, e-reserves/articles, etc. Consider a range of available materials before making a selection: primary, secondary, OER, etc.	
	Textbook is appropriate in text complexity for the students' level and is targeted at the right audience (e.g., business book for business students with appropriate examples and amount of background/context).	

	Textbooks must be current, relevant, and in line with technology trends. Older textbook exceptions can be made in reference to seminal work for a particular industry or technology. (Future-proof: will last for 3-5 years without changing).	
	Cost is not more than \$150 total.	
	Textbook must be the most recent edition.	
	Textbook is cited in Turabian Author-Date Citation Style in the alignment map and includes the ISBN	
Weekly Topics		
	Each module has a succinct and descriptive name	
	Topics build and scaffold in a clear and organized way	
	All ten weeks have a clear purpose and content (including weeks 1 and 10, which cannot just be "welcome, review syllabus" or "work on final project.")	
	Each module topic supports the development of the Course Learning Outcomes. All COs are fully supported by the weekly topics.	
Major Assignments Selection		

	There is an appropriate number and spacing of course assignments given the level of difficulty. (Usually 2-5 major / higher stakes assignments). Only higher-stakes, summative assessments need to be included here, not all graded weekly formative activities/discussions.	
	All course outcomes are assessed by at least one major, summative assessment/assignment, and all assignments align with at least one CO. Ideally there is a tight relationship between the CO and the assignment, and possibly one assignment for each course outcome (with the exception of the portfolio assignment.)	
	Where appropriate, assignments scaffold or build on one another (e.g., a needs analysis assignment builds to a development plan assignment or each lab builds toward a larger multi-component application).	
	In general, multiple choice exams should be avoided. Assignments should be graduate-level, <i>i.e.</i> , applied, require higher-order thinking, and be career-relevant or otherwise reflect authentic ways the knowledge will be used in the "real world."	

	Courses in NFP, HCM, HINF, ICT, COMM, and PWRI should incorporate (a) portfolio assignment(s) in accordance with their program's design norms (See details below)	
Instructional Approach		
	Readings, Engagements, and Assignments should take 10-12 hours per week for graduate courses and 9-10 for undergrad	
	Instructional Materials indicated represent a variety of methods that are well-suited to the type of learning students will achieve in the course	
	Learning activities should be hands-on, relevant, and be opportunities to practice and receive formative feedback on the types of skills and thinking that the course aims to teach.	
	Instructional approach involves peer-to-peer and student-to-instructor engagement	
	Instructional approach could be applied or adapted to both online and on-campus modalities	
	Instructional Approach Section provides an idea of the types of technologies and tools that will be required for the design	



Course Home Module		
	Course Home Module includes a course overview (placeholder for welcome video, intro to the arc of the course, major assignment structure, what should students expect to do each week to be successful in the course) not just a replication of the course description), resource links and info about technology used throughout the class (if applicable), and pre-class assignments (if any).	
	An student self-introduction discussion board is included (ungraded in course home or as part of the week 1 discussion questions.) A good intro board has students make connections between their bios and goals and course contents. A good introduction discussion is useful to the faculty for providing relevant feedback and guidance throughout the course.	The word Introduction appears in the discussion title
	Course Home module includes an ungraded General Questions board that can be used throughout the course for general questions or conversations	

Course Set-up Instructor Notes Page		
	Is included as an unpublished page in the Course Home Module	Any unused blocks are removed.
	Includes an overview of the course structure for future instructors	Must include information about ereserves (including if there are no ereserves for the class)
	Lists and explains how all technology is used in the course	
	Includes information about all instructional materials, including info about the textbook, OER, articles that should be kept up-to-date, a list of ereserves and HBR Coursepacks (removed if NA), and any relevant material	
	Includes details about the on-campus adaptation	
	Include Recommendations for how to use synchronous opportunities	
Weekly Overview		

	Each week, narrative overview language provides the students with a summary and relevant context for the content being covered and work being done by students that week. They may choose to discuss why the topic is relevant or interesting, how it relates to the previous or subsequent topics, and how it will relate to assignments.	
	1-2 paragraphs in length (if more guidance and context is needed, this should go into a weekly lecture page)	
Weekly Learning Objectives		
	WOs should total 2-4 per week	WOs are in the third person
	WOs support the Course outcomes	WOs are articulated to students on the overview page, and written as, "At the end of this module, students will be able to...", followed by a bulleted list that begins with verbs.
	WOs describe what the students will be able to do at the end of the week (i.e., begin with an active verb)	
	WOs should mostly be higher level Bloom's taxonomy, but may be lower-level as the learning scaffolds	

	WOs are supported by instructional content and engagement/practice opportunities.	
Weekly Activities List		
	Activities list should include a bulleted list of things the student should be doing or preparing for that week, including things such as:	
	"Complete this week's readings and instructional videos,"	
	"Contribute to this week's class discussions/activity" (modality agnostic)	
	and any assignments students should preparing for or submitting that week,	
	Preparatory/logistical activities: selecting group project slots, signing up for a one-on-one meeting with the instructor, etc.	
Weekly Readings and Instructional Materials		
	Readings and Instructional Materials support all of the module-level learning objectives, and each reading supports at least one WO	PPT slides, templates, etc. adhere to Program-specific requirements or templates, are professional, accessible, and compliment the DU brand
	Instructional content is appropriate in scope and level, and is scholarly or professional	

	Materials require an appropriate amount of time (about 5 hours depending on assignment requirements.)	All textbook or reading chapters include title of chapter (e.g., Chapter 1: Introduction to Java Programming).
	All materials should be inclusive (honoring a variety of identities, perspectives, and learning styles)	Instructions or links to access the materials are provided
	Each week, there are at least 3 types of materials, one of which is a multimedia element. The multimedia element can be SME-produced or third-party (video lecture, interactive video, PPT or H5P slide deck, h5p interactive, third party video, diagram/image, or multiple choice)	If there is more than one resource, video, etc in each section make sure the heading and "About These Readings," etc are plural.
	There must be some SME-produced guidance / instruction (e.g., a PPT slide deck, knowledge check, video, text-based lecture interwoven with readings, or an assignment / lab tutorial) ~ 10 minutes worth	Reading and Instructional Materials page includes a reference section with all items cited in Turabian author-date style in alphabetical order
	If your "original instruction" does not already take the form of detailed readings context, all readings must still have context provided that highlight key takeaways or outline what students should look for while reading. E.g., an "About these readings" or "Consider while reading" blurb at the top of each section or with each reading.	Content is accessible including: alt text, OCR - screen-reader readable pdfs, captioning, transcription.

	Content is up-to-date and adheres to program-specific guidelines for publish date of materials	
	Content is organized into sections (reading type or topic)	
Weekly Engagement		
	Provide opportunity for 3-4 hours of student-to-student and/or student-to-instructor interaction. This is often two discussion boards or virtual collaboration or simulation activities.	
	Provide opportunities for students to think critically by practicing skills, solving problems, taking risks, challenging assumptions, and inspire true conversation (no yes/no questions or one, simple correct answer).	
	Weekly learning activities/engagements should offer an opportunity to receive formative feedback on weekly outcomes	Each engagement activity has consistent, clearly-stated expectations, such as frequency and timing of posts, and guidelines for engagement.
	Students should be supported in completing these activities by resources and readings, and should be prompted to reference those readings where appropriate.	Each engagement activity should have a consistent rubric.

	Each module should include an unpublished on-campus alternative, e.g., a "class participation" assignment. that is worth the same number of points as the online engagement activities for the week and would meet the same requirements.	The class participation assignment description includes information about what to prepare for class or what activities will be completed in class, for example, including this message, "This assignment will be used to capture points earned for your participation in our on-campus class session this week. To prepare for this class session, think about the following discussion questions: " then include the online discussion questions bulleted below.
Weekly Instructor Facilitation Notes		
	Some context or advice for future instructors must be included each week (minimum one sentence)	All sections that aren't filled in should be deleted, but keep the "Important Notes" section for future instructors to fill in as they teach
	Any technologies beyond the basic discussion board are explained and instructions provided	
	If not self-explanatory, all learning activities requiring context, set-up, or potential adaptation must be included. For example, on-campus adaptations, group set-up, guidance for facilitation, etc.	
Assignment Details		

	Assess whether students have met the aligned course learning outcomes	If Zoom or another software is mentioned as being required for the assessment, instructions on how to use that software must be included in or under the instructions.
	Assessments are "forward-looking" (i.e. simulate real-world applications of knowledge)	Assignments should appear in the module of the week they are due.
	Include the purpose of the assignment (explains to students what skills/outcomes they are demonstrating through the assignment and how it builds toward their overall skill development. Bonus: explains why students should care or be excited about this assignment).	Graded items are sorted into appropriate assignment groups in assignment settings. (Discussion/Class Engagement & Assignments at minimum. Assignments may be broken down into different sections if appropriate e.g., labs, and final project drafts)
	Include a clear description that makes all expectations and parameters explicit. This includes what questions must be answered, templates to complete, sections to include, and (where applicable) appropriate modeling (e.g., a video or examples) or guidance for students to be successful.	



	Format and Style Requirements Section: Reinforces UCOL Format and Style Requirements and Turabian Author-Date Citation Style for all academic writing where course- or program-relevant. (Exeptions can be made when using an industry-specific genre or format).	
	Word counts are included for written assignments in the format and style requirements section	
Portfolio Assignments (NFP, HCM, HINF, COMM, PWRI, ICT)		
	A portfolio assignment is an applied assignment that showcases student learning and could serve as an artifact that the student can present to potential employers and colleagues demonstrating what they can do with their knowledge.	For programs that requirement portfolio assignments, the appropriate program blurb/block is included on that assignment

	<p>The portfolio assignment aligns with program expectations regarding course outcome alignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ICT: The Portfolio Assignment is a larger final assignment that hits on all of the COs). If the assignments scaffold (such as building on one another to create a comprehensive plan or a working application) then students can revise, combine, and submit those along with a reflection on how they integrated the parts and what they learned or would do differently, and possibly include a peer feedback component. Alternatively, the portfolio can be a new assignment that pulls together all the course learning outcomes in a new way.</li> <li>-HCM and HINF: Each Course Outcomes should have one portfolio assignment</li> <li>-PWRI, NFP, COMM: The Portfolio Assignment is typically a larger assignment that appears at the end of the course.</li> </ul>	<p>For the portfolio assignment, the word "Portfolio Assignment" should precede the assignment name in the Assignment Title. (E.g., Week 10: Portfolio Assignment - Business Development Plan."</p>
Assignment Rubrics		
	All graded items in the course have a rubric	Rubric is built out accurately in Canvas, including appropriate rating categories and total point values.

	<p>All rubrics must use the following rating scale:            Excellent, A: 93%+            Proficient, B to A-: 83% to 93%            Developing, C+ to B-: 77% to 83%            Below Minimum Expectation, C or below: less than 77%            Missing: 0            Rating Headers may be Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Needs Improvement, Does not meet expectations, Missing. (NFP)</p>	Box is checked "Use this rubric for assignment grading"
	Each rating scale is completed with a description of the criterion at that level	
	<p>The grading criteria are clear, measurable, and appropriate to the assignment expectations and the course outcomes that assignment is meant to address (e.g., writing assignments shouldn't just assess writing style, but also grasp of course concepts/outcomes achievement). Good criteria offer a learning opportunity for students to develop the ability to assess the quality of work products in their field.</p>	

	Rubrics should include criteria specific to the particular LOs assessed by that assignment and the specific assignment requirements. (i.e., not just the generic writing assignment rubric). Some rubrics may be used for multiple assignments if they are repeated drafts of the same assignment, or are repeated lower-stakes assignments assessing the same learning outcomes or weekly discussion boards.	
	All rubrics associated with a writing assignment have a Grammar, Mechanics, and Style requirement - reinforcing Turabian and UCOL formatting.	
	Submitting assignments on time is not used as a criterion on major assignments (instead, a late policy is included in the syllabus).	
Grade Breakdown		
	Total course points should be 1000 points	
	Lower-stakes weekly engagement or discussion activities should typically be 15-25% (10-30% allowable) of the course. Most of the time, there are two activities for 10 points each per Weekly module.	Class participation assignment points add up to the same amount as discussion points if totaled.
Syllabus		

		The course syllabus is built into the Syllabus page in the Canvas Master Container, using the current syllabus template, with all fields completed.
		Syllabus indicates clearly what textbook(s) are required in Turabian Author-Date style, and includes ISBN.
		All textbooks need to be the most current edition
		Course Description matches the approved course description in the alignment map
		Course Outcomes match the approved course description in the alignment map
		Syllabus accurately lists weekly topics covered.
		Syllabus accurately lists and calculates all assignments and points, equaling a total of 1000 points.
		Course policies, including class participation expectations, are updated in the syllabus
		Course Pre-requisites are listed accurately

		PENDING: A table is present showing the alignment between each weekly topic and the Course Outcome
		"Show Course Summary" box is checked under syllabus page.
Additional QA Checks		
Container Organization		
		Course Home Page uses the UCOL template
		Course Files are sorted into 10 weekly folders
		Naming conventions: Week X: Discussion A - Topic or Week X: Overview - Title
		Weekly topic titles are consistent on main module level, the overview page
		Week #s in the header of each page are correct
		All materials are organized into CIDI Labs "Blocks"
		The default Master set-up is for online delivery: make sure class participation assignment and instructor facilitation notes are unpublished.

		Include a due date for all discussions and assignments. This should align with the 10-week quarter in which it will first be taught. Typically, discussions are due at 11:59 p.m. MT on the Sunday at the end of the week. Week 10 assignments and discussions should be due at 11:59 p.m. on the final Friday. Don't add due dates to the Class Participation Assignment
		There are no unused pages or files in the course container
Program-Specific Expectations		
		Specific color themes, page format, and PPT templates are used
		Industry standards articulated in the pre-development meeting are met.
		Specific reference pages and content requirements are met
Copyediting		
		There should be no reference to term-specific dates. Language such as "Select an organization for your Leadership Analysis Assignment due at the end of Week 6" is preferred.

		With the exception of learning objectives and course description, all writing should be in second person, speaking directly to students.
		Grammar notes: Use Turabian (Chicago) style conventions. Frequent items: use Oxford commas; United States is abbreviated US (not U.S.), avoid passive voice, hyphenate multi-part adjectives, all acronyms should be spelled out for the first use.
Accessibility		
		Text from PDFs can be copied and pasted into another document (the text is not just a picture)
		All links should be hyperlinked title or phrase (but avoid using “here” or “click here”)
		Make sure all videos have captioning or transcription
		Where images are used, ensure that there is an alt-tag
		In Powerpoint- Make sure all images have an alt-tag



		In Powerpoint- Make sure text is high-contrast to the background (you are able to see text clearly)
		Headers and CIDI blocks are used to organize content (rather than text formatting)
		PDFs are readable by screenreader - OCR
		Don't use color or underlining to indicate meaning

## University College Course Design Alignment Map

<b>PART 1</b>	<b>Course number and title</b> <b>Course Outcomes</b>
	<p>Course Description:</p>     <p>Course Pre-requisites:</p>     
<b>CO 1</b>	
<b>CO 2</b>	
<b>CO 3</b>	
<b>CO 4</b>	
<b>CO 5</b>	

<b>Instructor Competencies:</b>				
	<b>Instructor Competencies (3-4 high-level must-haves for instructors teaching this course.)</b> *See existing competencies if a redesign. *Phrase as: "Knowledge of.." or "Experience with..." *Avoid specific degrees (Master's degree already required)			
<b>Materials:</b>	Fill in any materials that fall in the categories below. Put N/A for those that do not apply.			
	<b>Major Textbooks for purchase (if any) - Please include Turabian Citation and ISBN - *Must be the most current edition*</b>			
	<b>Major Textbook available in full, electronic text, unlimited copies at the DU library (if applicable)</b>			
	<b>Other Required Materials (if any): HBR coursepacks/ software/subscriptions for purchase, etc.</b> *Note: this does not include weblinks, ereserves, or pdfs provided in Canvas - only materials students must acquire in advance or pay for separately.			

**PART 2****Course****Outline:**

Week	Topic/Assignment Title	CO 1	CO 2	CO 3	CO 4	CO 5
1	Week 1 Topic					
2	Week 2 Topic					
3	Week 3 Topic					
3	Assignment - Title					
4	Week 4 Topic					
5	Week 5 Topic					
6	Week 6 Topic					
6	Assignment - Title					
7	Week 7 Topic					
8	Week 8 Topic					
8	Assignment - Title					
9	Week 9 Topic					
10	Week 10 Topic					
10	Final/Portfolio Assignment - Title					

<p>The types of instructional materials this course will use (e.g. textbook, articles, lectures, case studies, documentaries, industry materials, demos, guest speaker interviews, etc.)</p>	
<p>The types of learning activities and student engagements you will include (e.g., groupwork, discussions, peer review, student-expert presentations, flipgrid, scavenger hunts, interviews, mind maps, wiki labs, etc.</p>	

## Course Design QA Checklist

<b>Instructions:</b>  -Note items that need ID work in red text  -Note changes you made in black text  -No need to mark items as "OK" if no changes were made or needed  -Save file with course identifier and name of QA reviewer, e.g. "ICT-4000 QA spreadsheet (Lindsay)"  -Note the course (e.g. ICT-4000) in cell 3A below  -"Essential" items must be checked, others can be skipped only if time is running short	
	<b>General Comments</b>
<b>Course:</b>	
<b>Syllabus</b>	
Course Description Populated	
Course Outcomes - third person Students will...	
Syllabus indicates clearly what textbook are required	
Textbook is in Turabian Citation format and includes ISBN	
Ereserve Textbook column populated	
Syllabus accurately lists weekly topics covered (Compare to the modules section)	

Syllabus accurately lists and calculates all assignments and points, equaling a total of 1000 points (Compare to the "assignments" section of the course)	
<b>Pages</b>	
All pages start with Week #: ("Course Home:". Don't delete if unsure, just make a note)	
Remove "[template]" pages	
<b>Files</b>	
Sorted into 10 weeks	
<b>Discussions Section</b>	
The weekly header on each page has been updated to reflect the current week	
Prompt is completed (no latin text)	
Rubric is attached	
If Zoom or another software is mentioned as being required for the assessment, instructions on how to use that software must be included in or under the instructions.	
<b>Main module page</b>	
All Modules are published (see the button at the top of the module by the title)	
Instructor facilitation notes are unpublished	
Weekly topic titles are consistent on main module level, the overview page, and lecture page (if applicable).	
All items (discussions and assignments) have points and due dates populated and seem correct	
<b>Weekly Overview</b>	

The weekly header on each page has been updated to reflect the current week	
Weekly objectives: students will be able to... (no mention of “you”)	
Weekly objectives should total 2-4 per week	
Includes narrative weekly overview and activities list (reference to assignments due that week have been updated - doesn't have placeholder language: "Submit Assignment - Title")	
<b>Weekly Readings and Instructional Materials Pages</b>	
The weekly header on each page has been updated to reflect the current week	
Items are sorted into topical or content type sections (Articles, textbook OR The Water Cycle, and Mapping Tools)	
Includes a reference section with correct references matching the readings	
Has at least two types of materials - one multimedia (including H5P, video, internet articles, PPT)	
In Readings and Instructional Materials sections, if there is more than one resource, video, etc in each section make sure the heading and “About These Readings,” etc are plural.	
All readings and resources have context - either individually or for each block	
All textbook or reading chapters include title of chapter (e.g., Chapter 1: Introduction to Java Programming).	
<b>Instructor Facilitation Notes</b>	
The weekly header on each page has been updated to reflect the current week	
Instructor facilitation notes page is included in each module	



There is no yellow highlighted text - only relevant sections are included	
Something is included in every week.	
<b>Assignments Section</b>	
Assignments page- assignments are sorted into groups	
Assignments page-All assignments in modules	
Assignments page- Delete templates	
<b>Assignment Prompts</b>	
The weekly header on each page has been updated to reflect the current week	
Includes a purpose statement, detailed instructions, and format and style requirements sections	
Has a rubric attached that matches the point values	
If labeled "Portfolio assignment" it has the correct program "portfolio assignment" blurb at the top of the instructions	
If Zoom or another software is mentioned as being required for the assessment, instructions on how to use that software must be included in or under the instructions.	
All assignments have a rubric attached, points match the assignment points, and make sure box is checked "Use this rubric for assignment grading"	
<b>Rubrics - Rubrics section of course</b>	
Ratings scale roughly reflects the new scale - excellent 100, proficient 93-100 (85-100 is ok), there are no huge jumps. (We'll all move fully to the new scale next cohort)	
3000-level courses say "Below College Level" instead of "Below Graduate level"	

Make sure all rubrics associated with a writing assignment have a Writing Mechanics criterion and UCOL format and style criterion - there can be combined (usually the last criterion on a rubric)	
Rubric points match discussion points (e.g., all discussions are 10 points, and the discussion rubric is also 10 points)	
<b>Class Participation</b>	
Class participation assignment is included in each module	
Total class participation points match the total points in the discussions	
Each includes the on-campus rubric with points that match what the assignment is worth	
<b>Grammar</b>	
All content (except for CLOs and WLOs) should be in second person.	
All acronyms should be spelled out for the first use.	
Any materials used are cited in Turabian on the same page – even if a video is embedded on a discussion page, for example.	
Avoid passive voice	
Oxford commas are used	
<b>Course Home (Do this after completing all 10 modules because then you will have seen what kind of tech and resources are in the class and can know if the instructor notes section has what is needed)</b>	
Includes a course overview with details about the course that are not just a re-pasting of the course description	
Course Overview page Includes pre-class activities	

Course Home (in course overview or separate page) Includes notes on technology if applicable.	
Includes a "Course Set-up and Instructor Notes" page - unpublished	
Course set-up page is populated with information. The yellow-highlighted text has been replaced or the block removed if not populated. HBR (Harvard Business Review) Course Pack section removed if not applicable.	
Course set-up page is includes e-reserves list or a note that no e-reserves are required for this class. In an ICT course, it says that the ereserves will be requested for them.	
Course Home module includes a student self-introduction discussion board (or week 1's discussion board includes a self-intro component)	
<b>Links</b>	
Run Link Checker in Settings (Items on course home page and Zoom instructions will warn they link to other Canvas courses and that's ok)	

## Rubric Template

Criteria	Excellent (or Exceeds Expectations)	Proficient (or Meets Expectations)	Developing (or Needs Improvement)	Below Minimum Expectations or "Does not meet Expectations"-NFP)	Missing	Point Value / Weight of Criteria
Percentage of points	(100%-93%)	(<93%-83%)	(<83%-77%)	(<77%-0%)	0%	
Context and Purpose of Assignment	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s).	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).	Missing	10
Demonstration of Learning Outcome X or Section of Assignment (Rephrase to use actual language from the assignment instructions and/or learning outcome):	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling information to illustrate mastery of the <b>subject</b> , conveying the author's creative application and integration of the <b>course concepts</b>	Uses appropriate and relevant <b>content</b> to explore ideas within the context of the <b>discipline</b> , making valid connections among <b>ideas to address the assignment's focus</b> .	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore <b>ideas</b> through most of the work.	Some relevant content is used to develop <b>simple ideas</b> in some parts of the work.	Missing	15
Demonstration of Learning Outcome X or Section of Assignment (Rephrase to use actual language from the assignment instructions and/or learning outcome):	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling information to illustrate mastery of the <b>subject</b> , conveying the author's creative application and integration of the <b>course concepts</b>	Uses appropriate and relevant <b>content</b> to explore ideas within the context of the <b>discipline</b> , making valid connections among <b>ideas to address the assignment's focus</b> .	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore <b>ideas</b> through most of the work.	Some relevant content is used to develop <b>simple ideas</b> in some parts of the work.	Missing	15
Development of Ideas	Main idea is strong and clearly articulated; The topic is critically analyzed in an organized manner, taking a clear, thoughtful, and evidence-based approach to the major issues. Original and creative thought is evident.	Main idea is clearly articulated; The topic or question is consistently analyzed in an organized manner; writing is clear and evidenced-based. Some original and creative thought is present.	Evidence of a main idea present; The topic or question is addressed throughout, but may lack clear organization or weak support. Ideas developed may be obvious.	The topic is addressed, but a clear and consistent development of ideas is not present. Ideas developed may be simplistic or inconsistent.	Missing	15
Conclusions	Presents a compelling conclusion or recommendation based upon the evidence and argument presented in the assignment.	Reaches a consistent and valid conclusion based upon the evidence and argument presented in the assignment.	Articulates a conclusion mostly relevant to the evidence and argument presented in the assignment.	The writer attempts to articulate a conclusion, but it may be loosely connected to the argument.	Missing	15
Integration of Sources	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.	Missing	20
Grammar, Mechanics, and Style	Engaging and consistent style and voice, nearly free of errors in grammar and mechanics, and adheres to University College format and style requirements, including Turabian Author-Date citation style.	Consistent and appropriate style and voice, few grammatical mistakes which do not distract from the writing, and adheres to University College format and style requirements, including Turabian Author-Date citation style.	Style may be weak or inconsistent, grammatical mistakes are distracting, or inconsistent application of format and citation guidelines.	The style is inappropriate for the audience, grammar is weak, incorrect formatting used and/or citations are missing.	Missing	10
					<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>100</b>