Neil Hair and Therese Hannigan were present to provide an overview of the draft Letter of Agreement (LOA) in progress for the XSeries in Videogame Design between RIT and Interactive Games and Media/GCCIS.

T. Hannigan: We have been introducing new credit-bearing online courses for RIT for the past 2 years and have developed a process, so that we research the demand of the online course or program before it is offered, and then we follow an established work flow process.

We find that it is difficult to keep people (faculty) on course for deadlines and agreed upon deliverables in creating the online courses and programs. We can share with you the skeleton, but we can also share our experience.

Steve Jacobs is heading up the course development for a five course XSeries in Videogame Design to be offered by RIT on edx.org. Steve will teach the first course, but then he will serve as the “producer” for the other four courses in the series, in an effort to keep the same voice throughout additional courses in the series. These courses are asynchronous and self-paced.

The length of an edX offering is extremely flexible. It can be anywhere from 2 hours to 3 weeks to 10 weeks. It is really up to the university. However, the XSeries offering need a run of at least 3 courses and no more than 10.

D Blizzard: The courses in an XSeries, do you take 1 at any time? Are they in a sequence?

T. Hannigan: In this case they are sequential due to the nature of the content. EdX insists that students be able to complete the XSeries, start to finish, within 12 months, making it easier to track student progress and performance and appeal to the adult learner.
Although students can take the courses within the XSeries for free (anonymously), XSeries courses need to be offered as verified learning experiences so self-identified students can receive a certificate from edX upon completion of the five courses in the XSeries. It is not a credit bearing credential, but good to include on a resume. Typically, edX asks that the XSeries courses be 4-6 weeks long.

C Kray: 4-6 weeks, what is that in number of hours a student can be expected to work?  
T. Hannigan: 5-8 hours of content per week. (There is a slide deck that walks you through the process and it will be added the the EAC wiki space for EAC review).

**Walking through the sample “Letter of Agreement”**

What are the deliverables? What should funding be based on those deliverables? Is it by hours of content produced? This can be hard to decide and depends on the offering. (As there is a big difference between creating a 6 week course on videogame design that has fully interactive assessments and motion graphics incorporated in the experience vs a 2 week, static, timeline-based history course.)

There is a lot of front-load work to be done on asynchronous, self-paced courses vs synchronous. There is an edX outcomes assessment after each reading, video, lecture, etc. and each “question” on an assessment offers the learner a hint, resources to dig deeper to find answers and feedback. This work has to be done ahead of time. The course developer has to be thoughtful and predictive because the course runs on its own. While these courses are asynchronous, every course will need, at minimum, a TA that watches the course the entire time it runs with a faculty member to go to for help when necessary. So, if you have 5,000 students and a discussion session has gone wrong, you need to be able to have a faculty member available to intervene when necessary, even though TA's can typically police the discussions. There may also be times where a course is designed in good faith, but an element of the delivery of the content isn’t working and a faculty member needs to step in and correct that aspect of the course.

The example letter of agreement discussed is drafted to address the creation of a specific XSeries, so all five courses for that XSeries are listed in one document. However, single offerings (one off course on a topic) should have their own letter of agreement. This LOA is only being shown as an example, in confidence, to this group. The group is encouraged to come up with the solution they think is best.

An important thing to remember in the LOA is that we want an agreement in writing as to what the project milestones, deliverables, and final deadlines are. We need to deliver on time, every time to edX.

**Project Management**

Outlining who is responsible for various aspects of the project, such as; program & marketing coordination (includes RIT branding and execution of marketing strategies), course content & curriculum (includes execution of learning experiences ensuring consistency in the offerings and mentor others), and course technology & delivery (includes scheduling of photo shoots, video shoots, design of materials such as slides and other assets, voice over, etc.).
D. Blizzard: When you say “branded RIT”, are you looking for our group to establish “this is how it should look like”?
T. Hannigan: No. RIT already has established branding guidelines. We will follow and provide those.
J. Parry-Hill: We already have a process in place for us to enforce common guidelines.

D. Blizzard: Can a school, such as IGM, use their identity in these offerings?
T. Hannigan: Yes, but RIT should be the main focus (college/school is secondary to RIT for this audience as most are unfamiliar with the university) and we should follow RIT branding standards.

**Statement of General Principles**

**Sustainability:** Commitment to offer a course or program for a given period of time and understanding that courses in edX need to be monitored.

**Quality:** There are best practices from edX, as well as internally for RIT. We could create a template on developing a specific course, say 4 weeks, use this template, etc.

**Accessibility:** For RIT, accessibility could be more stringent because of our culture, such as closed captioning, etc., edX captioning is different, it appears on the right, top, bottom, etc.

L. Elliott: What about narration for those with vision issues?
J. Parry-Hill: There are 2 guides from edX on wiki.
D. Blizzard: We will need to make sure that is a part of ours.

T. Hannigan: As a side note, I like the way edX handles the script as you can have it to the right of the video or at the bottom (your preference). It allows you to click on the text to go back to a specific point in the video rather than using the scrub bar.

C. Kray: Voice over narration, can you build in pauses into a video, a break for the narrator?
J. Parry-Hill: That is an example that benefits everyone.

**Scope of Responsibilities**

Determine what faculty receive as a result of their course creation and what a faculty member receives for running the offering. Do they get a stipend? Course release? Both? Revenue sharing when applicable?

N. Hair: The IIL does not tell colleges how to manage funds for return on students seated in courses, but it is recommended that it go back to the department/faculty that did the work.

D. Blizzard: Beyond that, we could follow a process we already have in place, such as Intellectual Property, Patents, etc.
T. Hannigan: Patents, etc. are interesting because the curriculum is owned by RIT. A lot of the curriculum will come from existing content and programs.

D. Blizzard: Yet a lot of this is where IP is not really what we do, we help build ideas, not patents. The process would be very foreign.

T. Hannigan: The faculty member who builds an asynchronous, self-sustaining course, should receive some of the variable return, because they did the “heavy lifting.” However, we have been told that the faculty member must still be an employee of RIT to receive the funds.

As far as technology, establish guidelines for use and support of technology and services. The ILI, including RIT Online and TLS, is well-versed with the edX platform and can help produce offerings. There is also an opportunity for creating interactive engagements and more technology-enhanced assessments.

24x7 support is provided to all edX students. There is 24x7 support provided by edX for course development. TLS will serve as the technology support liaison between edX and all faculty creating edX offerings.

J. Arena: Would you recommend that the content creator populate content on the edX platform (LMS) or the TLS team?

T. Hannigan: This is new ground so we need to evaluate how best to do this at RIT. It would be nice if we could offer the option, as some people will want to experiment with a new platform (other than D2L - myCourses). Part of this group’s charge is to come up with goal(s) that all edX offerings coming out of RIT need to follow. Here are some goal examples from other universities:

- Exploring how large scale and emerging technology can change the face of education
- Recruiting potential students to attend your institution in person.
- Underlining which disciplines at your institution are world-class.
- Focusing attention on the educational goals your institution aspires to.
- Engaging non-traditional learners in ways that most educational institutions struggle to provide.
- Presenting insights in ways and locations that it is simply impossible to do when you have classrooms full of students who need to bodily move from one place to another.
- Radically changing and enhancing on-campus education.

This group needs to identify goals that all offerings need to meet. Having this goal(s) in the letter of agreement will give us a “check” for every step along the way in the course development process to make sure we stay on track with university goals.
M. D’Arcangelo: Do we have any documentation as to the edX mission statement and what the goals of edX are? Whatever we design needs to be in that direction.

T. Hannigan: Yes

The edX mission is to:

- Increase access to high-quality education for everyone, everywhere
- Enhance teaching and learning on campus and online
- Advance teaching and learning through research

The following goal examples as in the EAC Charge (Group 1, Section c.i.1) are taken from edX

- Propose goals that should be reflected in all public RIT offerings developed for edx.org
  - Goal Examples: Improve RIT’s visibility and underline key disciplines, assist in transforming global education, collaborate with major universities around the world, recruit students for on-campus and online programs at RIT, etc.

Demand assessment should be part of the process so that we can identify and prioritize offerings for development. In our experience at the ILI, it is important that these high touch offerings (they each get full TLS & RIT Online course design, development, and marketing support) prove demand as we need to make sure the resources are available (lots of time spent across units to design offerings, on technology to produce/deliver, and marketing to promote online offerings).

Within this LOA draft, marketing lists everything that will go into the promotion of the offerings, such as, faculty interviews, blog posts, press releases, paid media, intro videos, etc. Descriptions need to clearly identify who will do this and what will they get out of it. The best person to promote offerings are the faculty from that program who are excited about it.

J. Arena: Does support scale up as more students take a class? If there are many people in a course, who is fielding the questions?

T. Hannigan: A TA can be hired to sit each course to keep an eye on discussion forums, etc. to make sure things are running smoothly. However, in most cases, a faculty member should be available while an asynchronous course is running in case something needs to be tweaked or needs more attention. The TA needs to have someone to consult with when they encounter things beyond their comfort zone or knowledge base.

M. D’Arcangelo: Can you put a cap on course enrollments?

T. Hannigan: Yes

Assessment can be automatic in asynchronous courses.

J. Arena: Have you heard of “The Kerning Game”?

T. Hannigan: Yes, so to that example, you could do something cool and fun with it, collaborate with faculty to create. (link to the kerning game: http://type.method.ac/#)
L. Elliott: Auto grading?
T. Hannigan: The edX platform gives you the opportunity to provide real-time feedback to students through a variety of interactive assessment types. As the course creator you can decide if you want students to get a hint before giving their final answer. As the course creator you need to build all that in ahead of time when building the course.

C. Kray: Democratizing education, give them as many times at they need to get it right.

T. Hannigan: When at edX training, I gave the example of “The Kerning Game”, as Jason just mentioned, but they said we need to be mindful about making graded assessments accessible for disabled.

M. D’Arcangelo: I don’t know tons about distance learning, but colleges provide readiness assessments. Is there something like this to take a course?
N. Hair: Yes, we have self-assessment, readiness
T. Hannigan: RIT Online uses SmarterMeasure (http://ritonline.smartermeasure.com/) to help prospective students determine whether they are ready for online learning. Not sure what edX has though.

M. D’Arcangelo: So many students start here in game design and drop, will this be the same?
T. Hannigan: Steve Jacobs has focused on this XSeries being career-focused. The outcome is not credential based in the traditional sense. He will be preparing students to apply to a college by the end for further education. However, the student will have a better understanding of the industry to know what program would be best suited to their career goal. Even at RIT, so many students choose a major or area of study (when they are 18-19) and then realize once they get here that there are other options more appropriate for them. We can offer samples of the program, to generate awareness for both students and parents in order to help them make more informed decisions.

M. D’Arcangelo: Like a mandatory open house, “take this course”?
J. Arena: Graphic Design could develop a course for those not ready for graphic design.
T. Hannigan: In the LOA, we can require that faculty share all edX learning data with the RIT community as a way to get faculty/staff/students/alumni excited and involved. Get those who teach the first courses to come back and share what they experienced.

Make them do it as part of the agreement.

J. Parry-Hill: Does group 3 know that is in there?
N. Hair: I will make sure they do.

Another option is to collect student success stories in the discussion area.
N. Hair: We need a portfolio of potential offerings, no course release, no overloads, you are free to determine that.

C. Kray: Summer can usually accommodate something.
J. Parry-Hill: Not all faculty are as good as you at meeting deadlines.

T. Hannigan: We made it very clear that we do not believe you would want to take an overload during the school year.

J. Arena: If building 5 courses simultaneously, that is a lot on our video people, etc.

T. Hannigan: Yes, a 30 sec. intro. video for each offering can be very time consuming. TLS and RIT Online will work together to create assets. The ILI will outsource if necessary to handle bandwidth/requests.

D. Blizzard: We have 8 minutes left, I want to keep us on track. Should we consider a move into subgroups to take a look at agreements?

T. Hannigan: Some things we might want to add to the agreement:
- Demand Assessment
- Goal (program awareness, RIT awareness, etc.)
- Timeline for milestones, deliverables and deadlines
- Offering schedule and lifecycle

D. Blizzard: What I propose we do, create 3 sub groups to generate a skeleton document
  1. Review policy at Dartmouth
  2. Review Policy at MIT
  3. Review the document Therese showed us today (confidential and not to be shared outside the EAC)

How do you feel about that?

J. Arena: Yes, I have already created a skeleton out of Therese’s
M. D’Arcangelo: Agreed, for me it is even more helpful to cross reference with the other 2.

D. Blizzard: Maybe if people feel they have time, the sub groups could meet independently, say 2 weeks out and then we can come together? (If I’m on Dartmouth, I can communicate with MIT, etc.)

L. Elliott: Where will we find these documents?
D. Blizzard: We will just have dig around their websites.
T. Hannigan: This draft LOA is a work in progress. Currently, we have people going rogue with online course development (curriculum does not match demand assessment), so we wanted a LOA to keep everyone on the same page, every step of the way, in order to produce high quality online learning experiences. We are hoping to create a wiki based system (so that it is dynamic/changing) rather than a brochure (static). The wiki allows us to do the back and forth and keep track of all deadlines and deliverables.

D. Blizzard: OK, we will look at what exists and adapt it to make our own.

Next Steps:

• Deb forming groups that to begin gathering information to start creating a skeleton document for RIT (if you want to change your subgroup let Deb know). For those not assigned, please let Deb know if you would like to participate and for which one.
  
  o Review edX policy at Dartmouth (Kray, Marini, Wahl, Yacci)
  o Review edX policy at MIT (Elliott, Bryant, D’Arcangelo)
  o Review sample (CONFIDENTIAL) LoA as provided by Therese (Arena, Blizzard, Parry-Hill, Craig, Hannigan)

Next Meeting: Monday, May 16, 2016

Agenda:

• Review findings from the sub-groups formed on May 2 to begin to pull together the skeleton document for RIT.