

New Program in Computational and Applied Mathematics (CAM):

Over the past semester, an ad hoc committee was formed by the Dean of NBS to work on curriculum development for a new program in Computational and Applied Mathematics (CAM). The outcome of their work, while not yet finalized, will be a number of “streams” which will have a common core together with several focus areas, including life sciences, business, and applied physics.

Faculty Searches:

As a result of the early retirement package, as well as other departures or transfers of NBS faculty, there are a number of ongoing searches in NBS. In particular, the Department of Mathematics has several searches ongoing. Some of these are aimed at recruiting faculty for the abovementioned CAM program, as well as a search for a more senior person who would serve as Department Chair in math.

New Science Building:

We are looking forward to the opening of the new Forbes Hall this coming fall. We have worked together with the Dean to develop a fair and equitable schedule for the use of the large lecture theatre in Forbes for the large NBS classes that we have in BCES, PCSE, and Psychology. The Dean has also worked closely with the Chairs of BCES and Psychology on the assignment of office space, as well as other classroom space.

IDEA Student Evaluations

There have been a number of discussions within NBS departments, as well as with the Dean of NBS, concerning IDEA evaluations. The NBS chairs, along with NBS faculty, have a number of concerns related to the plan to go to online IDEA in the fall:

1. Initial analysis at CNU indicates that the overall scores will be lower. How will this affect administrative decisions for individual faculty? The response from the administration to date on this has been that the IDEA website indicates that there are no significant differences in scores between online and traditional IDEA evaluation. This is at odds with our experience thus far at CNU, and essentially we are very skeptical of this claim.
2. We have concerns about the lack of ability to control WHEN a student fills out the form. We are concerned that the tendency may be for the student to fill out the form when they are in a moment of frustration or having a negative feeling because of not understanding a lecture, a homework assignment, or have just received a low test grade.

3. We are concerned about the overall response rate, which is expected to be lower than when giving the IDEA evaluation in class.
4. We are concerned that, on average, students who are struggling with the class will be more likely to complete the evaluation than students who are doing well in the class.
5. We would like to understand what mechanisms might be available to faculty to encourage students to complete the evaluations. Will faculty be allowed to offer a “bonus” to students for completing the evaluation? Can faculty make completing the evaluation part of the grade in the course? Will faculty have access to this data (that is, whether or not a student has completed the evaluation)?
6. Will faculty be able to request that certain students, e.g. a student that has been caught cheating, not be allowed to complete the course evaluation? What about students that have not been attending class? If students subsequently withdraw from the course, will their evaluations be excluded?