

**Academic Foundations Committee  
Minutes**

September 28, 2004

**Present:** Mark Hardt  
Connie Landis  
James Nowlin  
Sandie Rietz – *ex-officio*  
James Ryan – *ex-officio*

Randall Gloege  
Noreen Lee  
Barb Pedula  
Amanda Mears – *ex-officio*

**Absent:** Abbas Heiat – *excused*  
John Cech – *ex-officio*  
Randy Rhine – *ex-officio*  
Joe Michels – *ex-officio*  
Janie Park – *ex-officio*

Tasneem Khaleel – *ex-officio*  
George White – *ex-officio*  
Carl Hanson – *ex-officio*  
Curt Kochner – *ex-officio*

**Presiding:** Mark Hardt, Chair

---

Mark Hardt called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m. in McDonald Hall room 306.

The minutes of September 21 were accepted as presented.

Dr. Hardt stated that Michael Dennis has resigned from the Committee.

I. Discussion/Action Items

A. Remaining Meetings with Departments: English and Philosophy—Wednesday, October 6 at 3:10 pm in LA 436  
Randall and James will attend.

B. Assessment Issues and Report to Senate This Thursday

It was noted that the Senate wants three things: an assessment instrument, a timeline (the Committee wants to clear up Chair Edgerton's timeline), and resolution of the double counting issues.

It was cited that we cleaned up the timeline last week. The double counting issue will have to be left up to advisors, and certain programs will get special dispensation to double count.

It was noted that the assessment instrument would be simplest as a matrix. Numbers could be used, but a verbal description of what those numbers mean would be included. This could help dissuade people from just using the numbers. It was noted that even if we use just descriptions and not numbers, someone will still find a way to make a quantitative measure of those phrases and reduce them down to statistics.

It was noted that even though we are trying to assess the quality of a course, one instructor may be evaluated badly. This brings up issues with the faculty contract, as the evaluation tool for faculty is already lined out in that contract. We can't conflict with that, and we are not empowered to say who can teach and who can't. It was noted that if an instructor does stand out as low quality, it's up to the department, not this committee, to decide what to do.

It was noted that a student assessment could be taken out of the classroom and tied instead to registration. After the student has finished the course, they can't register for the next year until they complete the Academic Foundations Assessment and then get their PIN. This way, there is less chance that the student would evaluate the instructor, when what we want is an evaluation of the course.

It was noted that another option would be to have someone other than the instructor come in with a firm set of questions and interview the class as to how the students feel the course is going. This will present a lot of work, but this process could be used in a sample of courses rather than all of them, just to get a feel of what is going on.

It was noted that a simple way to get some evaluation would be to use the contract-mandated faculty evaluation in conjunction with a faculty self-assessment. That would make it simple and easy for faculty and students.

It was noted that students say that the current faculty evaluation is too long. It's highly doubtful they would want to fill out another form in addition to the faculty evaluation. It was cited that you would get more information if someone met with the class in an informal interview.

It was noted that Northwest will want some tangible, real evidence to show that the faculty are doing their job. Just having the faculty fill out a self-assessment will not be enough. Keeping all this evidence is not easy for the faculty or students, but it really works for the accrediting bodies and the administration.

It was noted that to get really good data from students, they need to be reflecting back so they can see the value of Academic Foundations. When the students are in the course, they don't necessarily understand the value. If a benchmark of perhaps 72 credits were set, at that point students could be asked to look back and assess their Academic Foundations program (not individual courses). The students could tell us where they learned each thing listed in the matrix. If one course in Academic Foundations is never mentioned anywhere in the matrix by any student, perhaps that course needs some work or it may be inappropriate for Academic Foundations. It was cited that looking back on the program will also distract students from evaluating the instructor rather than the course. It was noted that this kind of sit-down reflection could be done in the capstone course.

It was noted that if the matrix can be tied to what the student does (evidence), it will fly with Northwest.

It was stated that we definitely need both a faculty self-assessment and a student assessment at the end of the Academic Foundations program.

It was noted that the assessment issue could be handed off to the core of Academic Foundations faculty that the Committee was talking about forming.

It was cited that we need both on-going and summative assessment. However, it is not this Committee's challenge to find funding for these programs.

It was noted that the students who are about to complete or have completed an AA or AS degree could be polled using the assessment tool about the current Gen Ed program. That would tell us if this kind of assessment might work.

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.