

**Academic Foundations Committee
Minutes**

October 23, 2007

Present: Oliver Chen
Lea Zoltowski
Barb Pedula
Tasneem Khaleel – ex-officio

Mark Hardt
Kathy Kelker
Jane Howell

Absent: Abbas Heiat – *excused*
David Garloff – ex-officio
Mary Susan Fishbaugh – ex-officio
John Cech – ex-officio
Stacy Klippenstein – ex-officio

Gary Young – ex-officio
Karen Heikel – ex-officio
George White – ex-officio

Guests: Bryan Duncan
Matt Redinger

Presiding: Mark Hardt, Chairperson

Mark Hardt called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m. in the Missouri room of the SUB.

The minutes of September 11 and notes of September 25 were accepted as presented.

I. Items – First Reading

Item 7.b AF Course: HON 281 Humanistic Thought of the United States to 1877 for Category V.B. Humanities.

Item 7.c AF Course: HON 282 Humanistic Thought of the United States since 1877 for Category V.B. Humanities.

Bryan Duncan, Director of the University Honors Program, noted that a problem has arisen with the corequisite courses HON 181 & 182 (The Ancient and Medieval Worlds and The Renaissance and Modern Worlds) and HIST 106 & 107 (History of World Civilization). The History Department, due to staffing, can no longer offer HIST 106 & 107 every year. The proposed courses shift the 181 & 181/106 & 107 to an alternating year basis. The second year will be HON 281 & 282 with HIST 204 & 205 (U.S. history) as corequisites. Thus Honors students, and in fact any student, can take HON & HIST courses every year. The hope is that this alternating process will also boost enrollments in the program.

Matt Redinger, Chair of History, stated that there was always a “hole” of missing humanities in HIST 204 & 205 that they tried to cover. These new HON courses will fill that hole. The History Department also hopes to boost enrollments by requiring these honors courses in the history major. Another goal of these Honors courses is to catch possible history majors earlier in their college career.

It was cited that these courses are great proposals, but the AFC has agreed in the past to make every attempt to keep the total number of Academic Foundations courses down. We do not yet have assessment data to decide if any of our current Academic Foundations courses are not meeting the needs of students and should be removed. It was cited that a simple limit on course numbers should not keep a great course out of Academic Foundations.

- Motion by Kathy Kelker, seconded by Barb Pedula to **approve Items 7.b and 7.c on first reading.**

It was noted that if the courses satisfy all the objectives and expectations of an Academic Foundations course, they should not be denied approval.

It was stated that the History Department is stuck—they simply cannot offer the HIST classes every year. These new Honors courses are probably the easiest solution.

The question was raised as to whether any student can take an Honors class. Dr. Duncan noted that they will accept any student into the Honors program on a “probationary” basis, and they can stay in the program as long as they maintain a B in the Honors courses. However, students can take the Honors courses and never enter the Honors program, so the courses are open enrollment (with consent of Dr. Duncan or Dean Khaleel).

- Motion carried.

- Motion by Barb Pedula, seconded by Kathy Kelker to **waive second reading of Items 7.b and 7.c.**

- Motion carried.

It was noted that we can't really strictly limit the number of courses in Academic Foundations because we are a living University and we need to be flexible.

II. Discussion/Action Items

A. Assessment Issues

- 1. How do we deal with students who do not complete the assignments tagged as Academic Foundations assessments?*
- 2. How do we deal with class-related score reductions?*

It was noted that the assignments that are considered Academic Foundations assessments should not be optional. It was cited that if a student does not complete a required Academic Foundations assessment assignment, that is, in effect, an assessment of the student's effort. The same goes for grade reductions due to late assignments. It might be a good idea to assess each objective in more than one place. A consistently low score in a given Academic Foundations class would indicate a problem.

It was noted that faculty can track two things: the student's performance on Academic Foundations objectives and the student's performance on the class-only objectives that are not part of Academic Foundations. The two come together for the student's final grade. This works very well, but it's difficult to grade two different ways for each assignment.

3. Does a separate assignment have to be made to address each of the Learning Objectives under each major category?

It was noted that there may be some confusion as to whether it was one assignment per Academic Foundations objective. It has been presented as the easiest way, but it does not have to be that way. The AFC has always held that one assignment can cover two or even more Academic Foundations objectives. In fact, a well-designed final exam could cover all objectives in one fell swoop.

B. Report to Academic Senate: How the AFC Understood Assessment to Work

It was noted that the most important step forward the AFC made on assessment was the idea of "embedded" assessment—not an add-on, but an assessment that is part of a course. Dean Khaleel noted that eCompanion is the tool used to get the embedded assessment data. She also stated that she has Dan Gretch's PowerPoint presentation on embedded assessment, which could be a valuable part of the report to Senate. We are not far from what Dr. Gretch proposed. We didn't want to create a platform for data gathering, so we are using eCollege.

It was noted that there is a big gap of information between how eCompanion gets the data and how it is pulled out. There is also not an agreed-upon scale. It was noted that it's possible we will not need the same scale for every class. As long as it's a numerical scale, a 1-5, 1-10, or even 1-100 scale can all be translated into the same data.

It was noted that ultimately judging a course by judging a student may not be valid. It was noted that we will not get a perfect judgement, but if a course is consistently not effective for students it needs to be cut from Academic Foundations. The problem comes in the grey areas between a good course and a bad one.

C. Assessment Software & eCompanion Technical Problems

It was noted that the Math Department had devised a separate program for gathering their assessment results, but they are having to use both their department system and the eCompanion system. Faculty are also continuing to have trouble with eCompanion. It was cited that there are still faculty out there who think they can ignore this and it will go away.

D. Fall 2007 Retreat for Academic Foundations Faculty: Additional Training on Assessment

It was noted that faculty may not really have time to come to another retreat/Q&A session during this Fall semester. It was cited that the faculty who are having serious problems with eCompanion and also those who are ignoring the whole process need another reminder *this*

semester that the assessment has to be done. They are uncomfortable with the assessment process and we should review it again and stress the importance of assessment.

It was noted that the first part of the retreat should be a review of embedded assessment. Dr. Khaleel stated she would be happy to do this part.

It was stated that another session in January, before classes start, might also help. Faculty could review what they did in Fall 2007 and collaborate on what to change for Spring 2008.

It was stated that part-time faculty in particular need to be at the Fall 2007 retreat. It was cited that each part-time faculty member has a mentor and we should get the mentors to the retreat also.

Agenda items for the retreat included:

- What assessment is all about
- How eCollege works (Brent Roberts)
- What the mock accreditation evaluators said about assessment (we have a good start but we need results)
- What people are reporting

It was noted that after the AFC presents information, an additional hour (or more) could be used for question and answer for those having problems with eCompanion.

The Committee agreed to the following dates & times:

Friday, November 16 during the noon hour on the main campus

Monday, November 19 at 9:00 a.m. at the COT

E. AGLS Conference: Dean Khaleel

Dr. Khaleel stated that she made an hour and fifteen minute presentation on the MSUB Academic Foundations program and development. The presentation was so well-received, many people asked her for a copy of our program. She also took notes on several of the presentations which she will talk about at the next meeting.

F. Mock Accreditation Visit

Jane Howell stated that the evaluators were mostly very complimentary. They noted that we have lots of pieces for assessment, we just need to bring them all together and show our results. We are incredibly far ahead of most places one year before an accreditation visit. Our major issue is that we have trouble telling the story of who we are and why we do what we do. Our perennial problem is communication across campus.

The meeting ended at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.