

**Academic Foundations Committee
Minutes**

October 14, 2008

Present: Oliver Chen
Dan Lennon
Jane Howell

Mark Hardt
Richard Pierce

Absent: Abbas Heiat – *excused*
David Garloff – ex-officio
Gary Young – ex-officio
Karen Heikel – ex-officio
George White – ex-officio

Tasneem Khaleel – ex-officio
Mary Susan Fishbaugh – ex-officio
John Cech – ex-officio
Stacy Klippenstein – ex-officio

Presiding: Mark Hardt, Chairperson

Mark Hardt called the meeting to order at 3:42 p.m. in room 216 of the College of Education.

The minutes of April 22 were accepted as presented.

- I. NWCCU Evaluation Visit
Guest: Dr. Jeanne Christiansen, NWCCU Evaluation Team

Dr. Christiansen inquired about the qualifications for faculty to teach in Academic Foundations. It was responded that we have many full-time faculty teaching in Academic Foundations, but there are lots of adjuncts (part-time) in the program as well. No courses are taught by TAs. The LS 125 course is taught by the professional library staff. It was noted that BOR policy (Policy 730) governs the minimum degree for two year programs—a masters in the field or a related field—but the minimum credits taken by the instructor is being reduced from 18 to 9. Generally, Academic Foundations instructors are required to have a terminal degree, or at least a masters. There are also limits to how many credits part-time faculty can teach in both the CBA and VTEM contracts.

Dr. Christiansen asked about the structure of the course approval process. It was stated that when the AFC was formed, its purpose had to be negotiated with the Academic Senate because the new Committee was “on the UCC’s turf.” The Senate agreed that the UCC would decide the acceptability of a course to be offered, and the AFC would decide if the course is appropriate for Academic Foundations. Courses go to the UCC first, then the AFC, and finally to Senate, which recommends to the Chancellor. Courses have been denied for inclusion in Academic Foundations for reasons such as the course being too specific or that it was an upper-level course. Those denials can also be appealed to the Senate.

Dr. Christiansen raised the question of the assessment of student learning in Academic Foundations courses across different sections and different branches of campus. It was noted that students must meet the criteria listed in the catalog for each category, and that data is collected through the online assessment collection database which was started last year. No matter who is teaching the course on any part of the campus, the data collection is the same. It was noted that COT and east campus faculty do have a lot of interaction regarding Academic Foundations courses. It was cited that for assessment purposes, if 70% of the students in a class are achieving an objective, the outcome is considered met. If less than 70% are meeting that objective, there is an issue. The assessment tool is up to the instructor, from exams to projects, to give the faculty flexibility. It was noted that the AFC has not been able to look at the assessment data so minimums or criteria have not been established.

It was noted that faculty were warned when they proposed courses for Academic Foundations they would have to assess their students. The AFC will use that assessment information to decide if a course should stay in Academic Foundations or not. Dr. Christiansen inquired what the AFC will do if the course is not the problem, but rather just one instructor. It was noted the AFC has not really considered that possibility. The AFC does need to send out a forceful letter to the faculty, reminding them that assessment is not optional. Dr. Christiansen asked if the AFC can say a faculty member cannot teach if they are not doing the assessment, and the Committee agreed that it can do that. The AFC would involve the faculty member's Chair and perhaps Dean in the process to work out the problem.

It was cited that since so many faculty did not enter their assessment data last year, the system is being re-opened. I.T. is also working on keeping the data-entry open all semester long, rather than just a few days at the end of the semester, and allowing partial data to be entered, so faculty can go back in again and again to add as they go (once entered, however, the data could not be changed).

Dr. Christiansen asked about the future goals of the AFC. It was stated the AFC would like to organize the Academic Foundations faculty, similar to the Graduate faculty. Faculty would have to apply to become a member, and meetings of the group could be held to resolve issues and circulate information. It was noted that the goal of the recently launched Academic Foundations program is to help students understand the importance of Academic Foundations, that it is not just a hoop they must jump through or a money-maker for the University. The AFC is trying to do something different than our previous general education program to make it make sense to students. It was further noted that another goal of the Committee is to institute a full-program assessment of Academic Foundations. The AFC is currently working toward that goal, which may be a capstone course. An issue with capstone course is that most of the two-year programs do not have one.

Dr. Christiansen inquired about the number of students who complete a two-year degree at the COT and then return to MSUB to complete a four-year degree. It was agreed the number must be very low, perhaps 15% of students graduating with a two-year degree. However, the 2+2 programs we are offering have enticed some students, those who have been out working for a few years and would like to complete a four-year degree. It was cited

that many students bounce back and forth from the east campus and the COT to take their Academic Foundations courses, mainly due to scheduling.

Dr. Christiansen asked for final comments. It was stated that the work of the AFC has been slow but very thorough and thoughtful. It was noted that students are self-selecting themselves out of assessment through the BSLS and the BAS, so we don't really know what education they are getting. The BSLS and BAS are not as stringent as a major, and it's unclear how those programs will be assessed.

Dr. Christiansen thanked the group for their time and departed at 4:25 p.m.

II. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2008-2009

Mark Hardt agreed to chair the AFC for 2008-2009.

III. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Assessment & Collection of Data for Fall 2007 & Spring 2008

It was noted the AFC should review the small amount of data we did receive for 2007-2008. We also need to work with I.T. to extend the data-entry window. One reason we had so little data submitted by faculty was because of the extremely short window. The idea has been discussed to leave the program open all the time, and the AFC could review the data on a continuous basis.

A letter to faculty reminding them of their agreement to assess—made by submitting an Academic Foundations course—needs to be sent soon. The question was raised as to whether the AFC can “punish” a course if the instructor will not do the assessment.

- Motion by Dan Lennon, seconded by Jane Howell that notification of faculty members be made, who have not completed their outcomes assessments, to the appropriate department chair and if compliance is not forthcoming, it may imperil the course as an Academic Foundations offering.

- Motion carried.

- Motion by Jane Howell, seconded by Dan Lennon that open access to the assessment data-entry is ideal, but each semester will have a deadline of 30 days after the end of the semester.

- Motion carried.

It was noted that another reason faculty members did not complete the assessment may have been because they simply did not assess their students because they didn't know why or how. There will likely be a recommendation from NWCCU that we need to get our assessment system running smoothly very soon. That's good because we will then have a timeline. It was noted that some training on assessment in general and specific training on

the Academic Foundations assessment should be added to the agenda for faculty orientation in August. It was noted this idea should be passed on to Senate.

B. Upper Level Academic Foundations Program Assessment & Department Chairs

It was cited that this is a pressing issue we should be working on this semester. It's likely we are moving toward all programs having some kind of assessment at graduation, especially if we have to cut programs in order to add new ones. It was agreed that what form the upper-level assessment will take and how we will implement it will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.