

**Academic Foundations Committee
Minutes**

January 24, 2006

Present:	Randall Gloege Susan Gilbertz Sandie Rietz Bruce Brumley	Mark Hardt Connie Landis Abbas Heiat
Absent:	Dan Gretch David Garloff – <i>ex-officio</i> John Cech – <i>ex-officio</i> Mary Susan Fishbaugh – <i>ex-officio</i> George White – <i>ex-officio</i>	Noreen Lee – <i>excused</i> Tasneem Khaleel – <i>ex-officio</i> Kirk Lacy – <i>ex-officio</i> Mary McNally – <i>ex-officio</i> Curt Kochner – <i>ex-officio</i>
Guests:	Walt Gulick	Lisa Kemmerer
Presiding:	Mark Hardt, Chair	

As a quorum had not yet been reached, the Committee agreed to informal discussion.

Susan Gilbertz stated that she asked her Philosophy colleagues to join the meeting to articulate their issues, rather than trying to communicate them herself.

Walt Gulick stated that he wished to discuss including some philosophy courses that meet some kind of criteria. The Philosophy department was originally started as the core and basis for gen ed. The unit doesn't have majors and cut backs in the number of philosophy courses in Academic Foundations will be harmful.

Dr. Gulick noted that philosophy courses fit very well into Bloom's Taxonomy, which is part of the Committee's proposal. Philosophy includes evaluation and values—students learn to conduct rational evaluation. It includes synthesis—students in Philosophies of Life write a paper about their philosophy. Dr. Gulick noted that this area has been neglected somewhat. It includes analysis—students must learn to express clarity of thought in their papers. It includes application/problem solving—students learn the thinking processes used in class can be applied to all kinds of situations. This is the heart of MSU-B's philosophy department. Philosophy includes interpretation—it is an interpretive art where evaluation and interpretation merge. It finally includes translation—students must put philosophies into their own words and understand them. Dr. Gulick stated that what the Philosophy unit proposes is to take this set of criteria as the standards to judge the philosophy courses to be included in Academic Foundations.

Dr. Gulick agreed that there are courses that don't meet these standards, and those courses will need to be fixed. They ask, however, for consideration of a block of philosophy courses in humanities and a few in cultural diversity. Dr. Gulick stated that the Committee should

not worry about giving philosophy special treatment when other areas don't receive it, because philosophy is the core of any gen ed program. They are also willing to move Business Ethics from 300 to 200 level.

The courses they would like included are:

Cultural Diversity (Cat IV. B.)

PHIL 105 The Religious Quest..... was remanded back to the department

PHIL 233 Philosophies and Religions of India was not submitted

PHIL 234 Philosophies and Religions of China, Tibet, and Japan..... was not submitted

Humanities (Cat V. B.)

PHIL 107 Philosophical Inquiry was not submitted

PHIL 115 Ethics approved

PHIL 117 Philosophies of Life approved

PHIL 200-level Business Ethics..... was not approved because it was 300 level

The Committee thanked Dr. Kemmerer and Dr. Gulick for joining the meeting.

It was noted that the three existing 300-level ethics courses are a good basis for an ethics minor. Changing the Business Ethics course to 200 level would cause problems for that possible minor.

It was noted that adding several new courses that are focused and narrow will only open the door to similar proposals.

Mark Hardt called the meeting officially to order at 4:12 p.m. in the Bridger room of the SUB.

The minutes of November 29 were accepted as presented.

I. Discussion/Action Items

A. Report to Academic Senate this Thursday

The Committee agreed to ask to postpone the report since we don't have a lot to report at this time.

B. Memo from the Provost regarding AFC Report

It was noted that Dr. White wants the assessment component finished and ready to implement at the end of this semester. It has been the Committee's goal to do it this semester anyway. Dr. White has rejected the work in progress report, and we can't do anything about that. It was suggested that the Committee read the standards Dr. White references in his memo.

Some investigation was conducted over the break about other institutions' assessment instruments. Jeff Adams in Bozeman is having success with their accreditation using a system where all their courses are approved on a trial basis and are reviewed every six years. They also have steering committees for each of their gen ed areas who design evaluations that students fill out—not course specific but category specific. They are also careful to make sure students understand they are not evaluating the teacher and these assessments are completely separate from teacher evaluations. They use a staggered schedule because assessing every class every semester was too much work. They also have a “red flag” system where any course can be reviewed as needed.

It was noted that if you want meaningful assessment, you have to do something that gives the faculty valuable feedback. Otherwise, it's just data, and possibly misleading data at that.

It was cited that our assessment should be based on our program goals and objectives, which were the first things this Committee put together. Bozeman is not measuring the program, but you can't really measure an entire gen ed program because there will always be seniors still taking gen eds. If you assess at that point, you will get data about their entire college careers, not the Academic Foundations program. We have goals and objectives for Academic Foundations, but we have no instrument to get them from students. It was noted that we can assess the courses and the components of Academic Foundations.

It was noted that we said we would get together with the people who teach these courses—the Academic Foundations faculty. They can decide what the questions for our instrument should be for each category. The question was raised as to whether it is possible to organize the Academic Foundations faculty. The Graduate faculty have never met. It was cited that if the Academic Foundations faculty are tasked to do something, they can and will get together to create questions to get valuable answers. It was noted that if we use questions like Bozeman's, we could ask students to give a one-sentence explanation of why they answered as they did. Perhaps now is the time to start getting people who are interested in general education together. They may even volunteer.

C. Additional Submissions

The Committee agreed to divide into subgroups to read the new and resubmitted courses.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.