

**Academic Foundations Committee
Minutes**

October 31, 2006

Present:	Oliver Chen Mark Hardt Barb Pedula Tasneem Khaleel – ex-officio	Dan Gretch Connie Landis Jane Howell
Absent:	Abbas Heiat Sarah McIntyre (student) David Garloff – ex-officio John Cech – ex-officio Mary Susan Fishbaugh – ex-officio Stacy Klippenstein – ex-officio	James Ellis (student) Mary McNally – ex-officio Bob Carr – ex-officio George White – ex-officio
Presiding:	Mark Hardt, Chairperson	

Mark Hardt reconvened the meeting at 3:50 p.m. in the Bridger room of the SUB.

The minutes of October 24 were accepted as presented.

I. Discussion/Action Items

A. Schedule of Courses to be Assessed Spring 2007: with guest Dean Tasneem Khaleel

It was noted that Committee members should go over the courses in their category and see what is being taught next semester. It was noted that although we will be assessing general education courses and not Academic Foundations courses in the spring, the outcomes of the old general education and Academic Foundations are remarkably similar.

Dean Khaleel noted that in the early 1990's, the BOR demanded that the campuses come up with outcomes for their categories of general education. The BOR reduced those to common (among all the campuses) outcomes, and those became the minimum standards for general education. Our general education at MSU-Billings included an oral communication requirement, so we had the BOR core of outcomes plus some. Now we have the new Academic Foundations, which cover both the BOR core outcomes and roughly cover the extra that general education also covered. No matter how we do the assessment, we will have both an assessment of the general education program and the Academic Foundations program.

It was noted that no students will have completed the full Academic Foundations program by the time NWCCU arrives in 2008, so it is likely we will have to file an additional report a few years after the visit. This won't be a big deal, and by then we will have students who have completed the Academic Foundations program.

Dean Khaleel noted that we have student surveys from 2000 (education majors), 2004 (main campus students), and 2005 (arts and sciences students). It showed us that arts and sciences students understood general education better than most other students. The surveys also told us that many students thought general education is just a hoop to jump through and did not understand its full purpose. Jane Howell noted that it is important to show Northwest that we did these surveys and took action regarding the results.

Dean Khaleel noted that there is currently a MUS committee that has been charged to look at all the general education courses offered by all the campuses that fit into the MUS core. The committee will categorize them and then take another look at the outcomes for those courses and categories. The purpose of all this is to make transfer easier. We at MSU-Billings have to scrutinize the transfer students more carefully because we must make sure they meet our outcomes objectives for Academic Foundations. Some of the other campuses believe that general education courses should be easy, and so they are very loose about what course fits in a category. Also, at this time it is unknown who will decide or police the American Indian content.

It was noted that we will have to have some kind of summative assessment in order to hit those transfer students. We will need the assessment software to sort out the transfer students so we can see if there are differences in their assessment results compared to students who complete our full Academic Foundations program.

The question was raised as to whether we assess all sections of a course being offered in spring. It was noted that all the sections don't need to be done. Perhaps do one that is on campus and one that is online. Or, for the courses offered on the main campus and the COT, do those two sections. We could also do one section taught by a full-time faculty member, and another taught by a part-time faculty.

It was noted that NWCCU should be aware that we are not entirely in control of what happens to our Academic Foundations. Some changes are simply put upon us by the BOR. It was observed that this Committee was also led in so many directions that it took a while to get a grip on the issues.

It was noted that we really need to get the word out to students about the Academic Foundations package—what it's supposed to do for them and why we changed it. We should make sure that Academic Foundations is explained at orientation. Dean Khaleel noted that a presentation on general education is made at all the orientations.

The question was raised as to where the outcomes objectives and results will go. It was cited that the numeric results of the assessment should come to the AFC.

It was observed that the AFC should probably formulate some plans so that we are prepared for every result of the assessment. An "If this is what we find, we'll do this" plan.

The Committee agreed to find out what is offered next spring and then prioritize the courses for offerings in different formats (in class, online, COT).

B. Schedule Mid-November Academic Foundations Working Group Meeting

It was agreed that the Academic Foundations Working Groups and the Chairs would be invited to a meeting on November 16 at 3:40 p.m. to discuss the progress of the assessment tools. We will also ask those with courses in multiple categories to bring extra faculty members so all areas are represented in each group. We will ask Provost White to pay for some cookies and such to entice people to attend.

C. Minimum Grade for Academic Foundations Courses

It was noted that if we continue to accept a C- our overall GPA will drop. It was noted that we could recommend to the Academic Senate that the minimum grade in Academic Foundations be a C. It was noted that this comes down to what different instructors see as a D or a C.

The AFC recessed at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.