

**Academic Foundations Committee
Minutes**

February 12, 2008

Present:	Oliver Chen Kathy Kelker Jane Howell	Mark Hardt Abbas Heiat Tasneem Khaleel – ex-officio
Absent:	Lea Zoltowski Jay Shaw – <i>excused</i> 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
Presiding:	Mark Hardt, Chairperson	

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

The minutes of January 22 were accepted as presented.

I. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Item 27 HON 281 Humanistic Thought of the United States to 1877. Change title to The American Intellectual Heritage (1620-1877).

Item 27.a HON 282 Humanistic Thought of the United States since 1877. Change title to The American Intellectual Heritage (1877-present).

- Items 27 and 27.a were accepted for information by acclamation.

II. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Academic Foundations Whole-Program Assessments

Guest: Valerie Martinez, Associate Dean of the COT

Ms. Martinez stated that all universities are dealing with the problem of whole-program assessments. The VSA (Voluntary System of Accountability) was formed as a group to help standardize the way in which universities report assessment information. MSUB is now at a point where we can consider whole-program assessments.

At Ms. Martinez's previous position at Mount Hood Community College, they were also beginning to wrestle with program assessment. Just like MSUB, the process at Mount Hood began to bog down after faculty identified the learning outcomes. What is the next level? It was decided that the next step would be a standardized assessment instrument that can be used in conjunction with entrance testing.

There are three major choices endorsed by VSA: CAAP (Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency) created by ACT which can be used in conjunction with the COMPASS entrance exam currently used by MSUB, MAPP (Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress) created by ETS, and CLA (Collegiate Learning Assessment), created by CAE with the RAND Corporation. MSUB does not really need to consider CLA because it only measures four-year programs. Ms. Martinez also noted that these tests ask for a random sampling of students, but it can be an entire class, not just some of the students in a class. At Mount Hood they randomly selected sections of a course and that worked just fine.

At Mount Hood Community College, the faculty actually went back and fine tuned their outcomes as a result of the data from the standardized tests.

CAAP seems to be the best bet for MSUB because it is moderately priced and works with COMPASS, which can be used as a baseline. Both MAPP and CAAP allow us to choose our own administration date and write our own questions which can be added to their standard questions.

The question was raised as to how we motivate our students to both take the test and do their best on it. Ms. Martinez noted that at Mount Hood, they thought about paying the students, but in the end they settled on explaining the whole process to students, emphasizing the importance of the data. Basically, they asked the students to buy into the testing program. The test itself was given during class time, so students would not have to go to a different place at a specific time. The issue for MSUB may be how to entice online students to take the test.

It was noted that our main issue right now is finding a way to assess only the Academic Foundations program. These tests endorsed by the VSA cover everything the student has learned, but we still need something separate just for Academic Foundations. It was cited that these testing products should be brought to the Academic Senate as yet another way to get much needed assessment data for our NWCCU accreditation visit. It was cited that if MSUB uses these VSA tests as *program assessments*, there will be a lot of resistance from the faculty because the tests are not integrated.

It was cited that we may not have a choice whether we report this data or not if major organizations like AASCU or the Montana Board of Regents adopt the VSA tests.

It was noted that no matter which test we choose, we need to be able to identify transfer students as a separate sample from other groups. It was stated that the ideal is that students will be tested twice, as freshmen and seniors.

It was stated that the main reason for using these tests is to show how the institution as a whole is performing. The point of these tests is not to make a department or program look bad, but instead to have transparency and show what a good job we are doing. It is possible, however, to use this test to show the effectiveness of Academic Foundations.

It was noted that if we make one a test part of all the major capstone courses, the sample will not be random. Ms. Martinez noted that CAAP agreed it's fine to test all capstone courses; the data will still be valid. It was cited that we have such a high attrition rate from freshman to senior year that our numbers may look great. If we start out testing 200 freshmen and only test 60 seniors, our numbers will likely look very good. It was stated that the problem with requiring this test be part of a capstone course is infringing on faculty members' academic freedom.

It was cited that the bottom line is, it's good for us to have this data. It's also good to have it compared against nationally normed data. The whole reason VSA began this effort was to forestall a No Child Left Behind act for higher education. The U.S. Department of Education has made it clear that they will be holding higher education accountable.

The question was raised as to our next steps. It was agreed the Academic Senate needs to be made aware of the possibilities and provided with some information on the various tests. It was noted that this is just one part of our whole assessment plan. It is most important that the faculty are involved in moving this effort forward.

B. Results of Academic Senate Presentation: Alternative Assessment System (IT Spreadsheet)

Dr. Hardt noted that IT explained that faculty would log into the web-based system using their regular username and password. The program then displays just the courses that faculty member is teaching. After selecting a course, the assessment objectives are displayed, and the faculty member simply enters the percentage of students who passed. For each objective, there will be a drop-down box to select what kind of assessment was used: an exam, a project, etc. IT would like help with expanding that list as much as possible. Finally there is another drop-down box for "next steps" to be taken as a result of the student scores. IT would also like help populating that list.

C. Possible Info Session for the Spring 2008 Semester

It was stated that we should have an Info Session after IT has their reporting tool up and running so faculty can be shown how to use it. Faculty should also be reminded that they agreed to assess their course by submitting it for Academic Foundations. It was cited that perhaps a General Faculty Meeting on this topic would be in order, followed by an Info Session on how to report the data.

D. WR & TN Courses Audit/Creation of Assessment Objectives

It was noted that we have already created assessment objectives for the writing and technology courses.

- Motion by Kathy Kelker, seconded by Jane Howell to **forward the writing (WR) and technology (TN) policies to the Academic Senate to have them implemented.**

- Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.