

**Academic Foundations Committee**  
**Notes**

May 1, 2007

<b>Present:</b>	Oliver Chen	Mark Hardt
	Connie Landis	Brent Roberts
	Tasneem Khaleel – ex-officio	

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Since there was not a quorum, Mark Hardt began the meeting at 3:50 p.m. in the Bridger room of the SUB.

I. Discussion/Action Items

**A. Assessment Project Update: Brent Roberts**

Mr. Roberts stated that he has been getting many different messages about where the assessment project is going from the AFC, the Provost, and Information Technology. However, the outcomes matrix is excellent. The team of trainers for eCompanion, the shell component of eCollege, has gone out to all Academic Foundation instructors, and the software has been easy to adapt because of the matrix.

Mr. Roberts noted that the main issue in need of resolution is the grading scale. There are all kinds of opinions, from a five-point to a hundred-point scale. Regardless of the scale chosen, the technology can handle it. For this semester, we have only the assessment shells and not the manager software, so we will not be able to compare data across sections and across Academic Foundations categories. This fall we will purchase the manager software to do that data gathering.

It was noted that the AFC has always tried to avoid a labor intensive process, and this process is labor intensive. Faculty will be very resistant to this program.

Mr. Roberts cited that this semester just the Academic Foundations courses had the eCompanion shell, but this fall, all courses offered will have the shell available. Provost White stated at the general faculty meeting that programs do not have to use the eCompanion shell if they have some other kind of assessment, but the shell will be available to all instructors.

It was noted that once something is available, it will soon be required. Then the administration will be able to see into our grade books. Dean Khaleel noted that the administration can already do this with our current online courses, and they don't. Why would they take the time to read though that amount of data? Nobody is going to look at faculty grade books.

Mr. Roberts stated that MSUB has sent a proposal to the Board of Regents to add an assessment fee for all students, which will be tacked onto the Library fee. Assessment will become self-supporting.

## **B. Scale for Assessment Results**

It was noted that there is a problem trying to put the results of multiple choice questions and essay/project assignments into the same scale. If a different scoring mechanism is used for each kind of assignment, it will be a two step process to enter the scores into the eCompanion grade book.

It was suggested that outcomes simply be listed as met or not met. For a multiple choice question it works, but it will also work for essay/project questions. The instructor would establish what constitutes meeting the outcome, such as a C. If a student gets a C or better, they have met the outcome. If the student gets a D, he or she has not met the outcome. Standardizing across courses or categories whether a C equals “met” would only lead to grade inflation. Faculty have to be allowed to decide what grade has met the outcome.

It was suggested that the AFC should hold an all-faculty meeting to discuss how different faculty assess their students’ success.

## **C. Final Edits on Press Release**

The finalized press release will be sent to University Relations. It follows:

### **Press Release: General Education Program Transitions to Academic Foundations Program at Montana State University Billings in Fall, 2007**

In response to concerns expressed in an accreditation review in the late 1990s, Montana State University Billings undertook a critical examination of its general education program. An empirical survey of student opinion in 2000, combined with student input from open meetings in 2000 and 2001 suggested that the purpose of general education was not well understood by those it was to serve. While its objectives were identified, they were not readily measured.

An ad hoc committee was formed in 2000 to address these issues. The Academic Senate at MSU Billings formally established a standing committee in the Fall of 2001 to begin to address issues pertaining to general education and to propose changes to the program. Committee efforts, along with faculty input and administrative support, have pared the number of courses, defined the outcomes, and specified how the outcomes will be measured. As a result of these efforts, the revised general education program was re-titled Academic Foundations and will be implemented Fall semester 2007.

Measurements of student learning outcomes, or assessments, were developed by professors with expertise in their particular disciplines. These assessment

instruments will be utilized to determine whether courses are meeting the requirements of placement in Academic Foundations. Dr. George White, Interim Provost & Academic Vice Chancellor at MSU Billings, recently lauded the efforts of the Academic Foundations Committee by stating that “the committee has done excellent work designing an assessment component of remarkable quality.”

For more information, contact Dr. Mark Hardt, chairperson of the Academic Foundations Committee, 657-2991.

**D. Conference of the Association for General & Liberal Studies, October 18-20, 2007**

Dean Khaleel stated that AGLS addresses reforms in general education, and we may apply for an award for our revised program. She will use information pulled from the AFC minutes for the application. Dr. Hardt may attend the conference in fall.

The meeting ended at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.