

**Academic Foundations Committee
Minutes**

October 7, 2009

Present:	George Czyz Melinda Tilton Neil Suits Matt Redinger Mark Fenderson Michael Scarlett Richard Pierce Rita Kratky (ex-officio)	Bernie Quetchenbach Kurt Toenjes Mike Havens Tom Regele Neil Jussila Lorrie Steerey (via phone) Tyler Rutledge (student)
Absent:	Kathe Gable	Brent Roberts
Guest:	Leanne Frost	
Presiding:	Matt Redinger, Chairperson	

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. in the Missouri room.

I. ELECTION OF CHAIR ALTERNATE

- Kurt Toenjes nominated Neil Suits, and Tom Regele seconded.
- Neil Suits was elected Chair Alternate by acclamation.

II. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

A. Objectives for Each Category

It was noted that all the objectives have the same wording issue. How do you demonstrate knowledge? There is no way to measure such an objective. It was stated that we don't have to keep this wording if the faculty come up with objectives that work better. It was cited that the main issue is getting faculty from many different departments, as is the case in some categories, to agree on wording of the objectives.

It was stated that this is not supposed to be an onerous task for faculty. These objectives are supposed to describe what is already being taught in the course. We are already assessing students, we just have to show it in a different way. The question was raised as to why grades cannot demonstrate students meeting the objectives. It was noted that assessment should describe a level of achievement, and grades *represent* that achievement level. It was noted that we should not be creating new test questions or assignments to match a category objective. Really, we should define a current component of a course that meets an objective.

We are not assessing to make NWCCU happy. We want to see that our students are getting what we, as professionals, think they should be getting out of a course.

It was noted that History has completed their objectives. Information Literacy and Life and Physical Sciences are close.

B. Protocol for Vetting Courses

It was stated that the AFC needs to create a process whereby courses in Academic Foundations are reviewed to maintain appropriateness. As the course evolves, does it still meet the category objectives? This process would be a re-examination of what faculty do in Academic Foundations courses, and would also function as a guide as courses develop.

It was noted that we need to build an Academic Foundations curriculum that is free of the political issues associated with FTE. If the AFC took ownership of all the Academic Foundations FTE, it may eliminate the problem. Some institutions have a college that houses all general education courses, including the FTE. However, the issue of the AFC weighing in on faculty hiring for Academic Foundations positions would crop up. There is also the issue of transferability/common course numbering. We would have to make all of our Academic Foundations courses have the same rubric, which is not feasible with the BOR mandating common rubrics and numbers.

C. Confusion Regarding “Academic Foundations” as the Title

It was cited that many students, especially transfer students, don’t understand why our general education is called Academic Foundations. We should change the name back.

It was noted that all Academic Foundations instructions could put a statement on their syllabus to explain the program and its purpose.

D. COMPASS Testing

Guests: Rita Kratky, Director of Advising; Leanne Frost, Interim Director of the Academic Support Center

Ms. Kratky handed out a document profiling the students and who takes the COMPASS test. The test is taken by “freshmen,” but this term can mean a variety of things: students who don’t meet admission standards for the main campus and so begin taking courses at the COT, brand new students straight out of high school, Connections students (high school students taking college credits), and home school/GED students. It is a placement test to match up the student’s skills to our curriculum.

Ms. Kratky stated that the COMPASS test is just one component of each student’s placement in math and English courses. Success in the first semester is key to retaining a student, so an advisor meets with each student to better understand where he or she fits into the curriculum.

Transfer students often take the COMPASS test because they can’t transfer in a math or English course, or it’s been too long since the course was taken. MSUB handled about 1,100

transcript evaluations in the last year. Re-admit students (students who have left and then returned to MSUB) have similar circumstances. These students in particular may want to take developmental education courses to brush up on skills they have not used for some time.

Ms. Frost stated that COMPASS is a test made by ACT, and it is used nationally as well as across the Montana University System, including tribal colleges. Her book of the standards for the COMPASS test is available if anyone would like to read it. They matched the questions on the COMPASS to MSUB curriculum to aid in placement in math and English. Many of our students did not have algebra in high school and they need the developmental math course to be able to handle college courses.

It was noted that the AFC should perhaps have a discussion about students who feel the developmental courses are “empty credits” since they do not count toward GPA or graduation, as well as financial aid.

Ms. Frost noted that students can opt out of the COMPASS test and use their ACT or MUS Writing Assessment scores. However, the ACT and MUSWA are usually taken in the junior year of high school and often students will have improved scores after finishing their senior year. Students can take both and use the higher score.

The question was raised as to whether there is any tracking of COMPASS results, and if that data tells us anything. Ms. Frost stated that students who take the COMPASS are tracked, and students who take developmental courses do as well or better in WRIT 101 (formerly ENGL 150) than students who do not take the developmental courses. It was noted that perhaps the AFC should discuss a tier system for Academic Foundations courses so necessary math or English/writing prerequisites would be met before a student enters a course. Ms. Kratky noted that the Advising Center would find such a tool useful.

It was noted that MSUB is at least as far along or farther along than most institutions when it comes to assessment. We do not have to act out of fear of losing our accreditation. We certainly have a task to complete, but we have time to do it. It was noted that the AFC should discuss what it is we are working toward.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Rita J. Rabe Meduna.