

Meeting Notes for Foundations of Science Course
Thursday, August 7, 2008

Meeting convened at 2:05 PM and ended at 4:00 PM.

Members present: Marcus Gillespie, Li-Jen Shannon, Solomon Schneider, and Matt Rowe.

1. Minutes from the meeting of 31 July 2008 were approved unanimously.

2. Marcus provided an update on Dr. Barry Stein's (TN Tech) and NSF's critical thinking assessment test, the CAT. Marcus recently spoke with Dr. Stein, who volunteered: (1) that the CAT would be a very appropriate tool for our course; and (2) that the course (as we had presented it to him at the QEP conference in Orlando) was an exceptional approach that should lead to significant improvements in our students' understanding and application of the tenets of scientific thinking. Marcus mentioned that the CAT training session scheduled for this fall in Chicago was full, but that NSF was hoping to hold a spring '09 workshop in either Santa Fe, Boulder, or Nashville. Li-Jen asked that she be considered for the workshop, along with Marcus, given her passion for and expertise in assessment; there was unanimous endorsement of Li-Jen's request.

3. Based upon his recent conversations with Dr.'s Muehsam and Eglsaer, Marcus summarized the status of Chemistry and Physics's possible participation in the QEP. In his discussions with Mitchell and Dick, Marcus stressed how the SACS Visitation Team might view Chemistry's & Physics' withdrawal from the "Foundations" course as a red flag. Alternatively, the QEP might be strengthened by Chemistry and Physics developing their own courses, as the University would then have several different, yet assessable, approaches for improving scientific literacy. Chemistry has begun developing their course and has selected a text. Marcus confirmed that each of the new science courses will employ the same assessment tool(s) for measuring student improvement.

4. Attention then turned again to our course's Form B, initially focusing on whether to list the course as 3 credit hours with a separate, 1-hour lab (e.g., BIO 136 and 116), or instead opt for a full four-hour course (i.e., couple the 3-hour lecture with a required, non-optional 1-hour lab). After lengthy discussion regarding the costs and benefits of both options, the committee voted unanimously for the latter (e.g., BIO, GEL, & GEO 146). Marcus then called attention to several small changes he made this week to the Form B; each change was accepted unanimously by the committee. The final issue dealt with labs – both in terms of what the Form B might require and what we hoped to accomplish with this component of the course. Brainstorming ensued, with each member offering exercises/discussions/experiments/group projects that could be used to

reinforce the topics presented during each week's lectures. Marcus will summarize and append these ideas, as necessary, to section III c of Form B.

5. Given the lateness of the hour, we tabled for a future meeting Marcus' tabulation of how each of us ranked the questions on our "home-grown" assessment tool. We will review and discuss these rankings at our next gathering, whose date and time will be determined. There will not be a meeting next week.