A Brief History of the KCC Foundations Board

Initial meeting
On September 15th, 2004, the multi-campus foundations board, which consisted of Jerry Saviano, Tod Sammons, and Nathan Dwyer, met for the first time. Getting to this point had been a bit rough. UH Manoa’s commitment to the concept of campus foundations boards had seemed to be inconsistent. The file folder titled ‘Foundations Board’ has all the historical documents (memos and portfolios) leading up to this point. There is a memo from Jerry, Tod, and me that describes the agreements we came to. The most important results were:

1. We all approved each others processes and foundations boards
2. We agreed to adopt UH Manoa’s working interpretations of the foundation hallmarks for the time being, and agreed that these should be reviewed and formalized by the participating campuses.
3. We agreed to review and better define the annual review process for the boards.
4. We agreed to attend each others campuses’ foundation board meetings.

UHM, HCC review process
For the KCC foundations board’s first meeting, on 9/3/04, we invited Margit Watts from UHM to help up initiate a review process. Two foundations proposals had already been submitted to the board for review and the process needed to get underway. Since then a few of the KCC board members have had the opportunity to attend meetings of HCC and UHM foundations board with the goal of understanding each other processes.

My impressions from listening to Margit and visiting other campuses is that the ongoing discussion of what foundations requirements are and how we can fulfill them is the most important part of the process. Having our own board is beneficial to our students in that it smoothes the articulation process, but it is also beneficial for those faculty members who are invested in the nature of the education we provide. At its best, the review process not only accomplishes the practical matters of approving courses, but gives faculty an opportunity to collaborate on pedagogical issues across academic disciplines.

KCC reviews
The KCC board reviewed and eventually approved MATH 111 and MATH 203 as Symbolic Reasoning foundations courses. To reduce meeting fatigue we discussed the proposals online; I can provide the archive of this discussion if that’s needed.

Since the two applications were modeled after the UH Manoa courses that had already been approved, the discussions were brief. The biggest issues that we identified had more to do with the language and focus of the application than with the content of the course. The symbolic reasoning hallmarks are the hardest to interpret and apply. A recurring
misunderstanding is that the use of symbols in the course is equivalent to a course on reasoning using symbols.

The board asked for revisions for both applications, received resubmissions of the applications, and recommended their approval to the KCC faculty senate. All of these documents are in the file folder labeled ‘KCC FB Submissions’.

Since then, the board has received no other applications. This is probably related to the additional work necessary to apply for foundation status, as well as the absence of a well documented submission procedure. Both of these issues are being considered by the Curriculum Review/Revolution Committee.

Rewriting guidelines
The working interpretations of the hallmarks exist primarily in the activity of the foundations boards, and are not formally documented. This is an issue that needs to be addressed. Tod Sammons provided each of us with UHM GEC’s policies and practices manual, as well as a collection of notes from the past years of UHM’s foundation board’s deliberations. The intention has been to convene cross-campus committees for each of the foundation areas, and ask these committees to come to agreement on wording for interpretations of the hallmarks and guidelines for their application. Due to time constraints, Tod was not able to get this started.

Assessment
An important topic for this year is assessment. We need to understand how well classes are adhering to the hallmarks, and we need to determine if the foundations requirements are creating the desired educational outcomes. UH Manoa is considering a comprehensive assessment process for all its general education requirements. The individual campuses need to determine how been to incorporate assessment of individual classes into their own curriculum review process. This is necessary in a practical sense but is also mandated by the initial memo that defined the parameters of the foundation boards’ operations.

Going Forward
In the absence of multi-campus involvement with writing guidelines and interpretations, we run the risk of losing our voice in the deliberation process. Since Tod has stepped down from the UHM foundation’s board, I have not heard much talk about the community colleges involvement in writing these guidelines. In the 9/15/04 meeting, the multi-campus foundations board agreed that the campuses would review the interpretations on an annual basis to incorporate everyone’s input.

Helene Sokugawa has been instrumental in organizing meetings for the UHM foundations board as well as the multi-campus board. However, I am concerned that the distinction between the two is becoming blurred. All three members of the multi-campus
board from 2004/05 have stepped down, and I think explicit attention will be needed to continue the policies we agreed on. However, I think the new UHM chair, David Chin, has a broad, system-wide perspective and will be easy to work with in maintaining the community colleges as equal partners in this whole venture.

Prepared by Nathan Dwyer