

Minutes of Math Issues Committee Meeting
Friday, November 22, 2002, 10:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.
Faculty Dining Room, Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, CT

Present: Larisa Alikhanova (Three Rivers), Kathy Bavelas (Manchester), June Decker (Three Rivers), Elaine Dinto (Naugatuck Valley), Miguel Garcia (Gateway), Alice Grandgeorge (Manchester), Kathy Herron (Capital), Patricia Hirschy (Asnuntuck)

Minutes of the October 24, 2002 Meeting were approved unanimously, with changes (revised copy is posted on the MATYCONN website).

Next meeting: December 13, 2002, 11:00, Central CT State University, Faculty Dining Room.

Regarding Common Numbering and other common issues --

1. Miguel still has not had any word from the System Office regarding implementation of the common numbering project.
2. The Committee will again try to initiate contact with the System Office; Miguel will phone Paul Susen to set up a meeting with him at the beginning of the Spring 2003 semester. Committee members agreed that a discussion of common numbering with the System Office should include common grades and placement practices as well, and other common issues as they come up.

Announcements --

3. Miguel shared information regarding **Gateway's proposed new downtown campus**, to replace the North Haven and Long Wharf campuses.
4. Elaine asked those who attended the AMATYC 2002 Conference in Phoenix to please write a few lines, for the MATYCONN Newsletter, about sessions they attended and whatever else interested them.

Discussion of grading policies and Banner issues --

5. Discussion of the **new system-wide grading policy** made Committee members aware that what is supposed to be a system-wide common grade of "N" means different things at different campuses. The change in the audit grade also is causing some confusion. The idea of common grades is defeated when different colleges are defining common grades differently; there is not uniformity among the campuses, and Committee members hope to get clarification.
6. **Changes in Banner:**
Student transcripts on Online Banner for Faculty list any Tech Prep credits received.

Any faculty member can now waive a course prerequisite for a student.

7. Discussed **practices at the individual campuses when students register for a course without having met the prerequisite**. Since students register before receiving final grades, and Banner does not yet do a second prerequisite check, some faculty check each student's transcript in Banner and speak to those students prior to or on the first day of class. Alice G. gives students a form that they must complete and return.
8. **Minimum grade requirements necessary to progress to the next sequential course** are local, not system-wide. Some require C or C- grade, some say "pass." MCC requires a B- for developmental courses to advance, plus an English requirement.

Discussion of possible alternatives to Intermediate Algebra and whether or not such alternatives are a good idea --

9. MCC offers an alternative for a limited number of students:

MCC offers Math 110, Quantitative Literacy (commonly known as "Baby Stats"), billed as a course that probably will not transfer. They discuss surveys, samples, population, the parts of an algebra course that will be needed in statistics. The course is used by students in early Childhood Education, General Studies, Criminal Justice, Allied Health, Graphics Arts; it is *only* for those who wish a terminal two-year degree. The textbook used is *Quantitative Literacy* by David Moore and requires heavy-duty reading.

At MCC, PreAlgebra (Math 098) grade must be B- or above in order to place into Elementary Algebra (then Intermediate Algebra) or Elementary Algebra and Quantitative Literacy. In their Math 098, they do not review arithmetic of whole numbers, but rather begin work with decimals and bar graphs on the first day of class (they begin by computing costs on an electric bill). In addition to concentration on problem-solving involving arithmetic of rational numbers, ratios and proportions, and percents, their course also contains a geometry unit. They use *Mathematics in Action*, by the Consortium for Foundation Mathematics (Addison Wesley).

Note: at MCC, if a student cannot earn a B- or above in PreAlgebra, he/she may repeat the course to try again, or he/she is asked to take an arithmetic course at Adult Basic Education and then to come back. The cut score that MCC uses for their Elementary Algebra is higher than the score used at other colleges.

The group all agreed that, while Quantitative Literacy may be a good alternative for a limited number of students, one huge **problem with offering this alternative** is scheduling. Most schools are not large enough to even consider this alternative. And for the schools that are sufficiently large, scheduling for students can still be problematic. In addition, Liberal Arts majors need to take two college level math classes in order to transfer to 4-year institutions; since most colleges do not offer a Liberal Arts Mathematics, that second course that most students take is College Algebra. Students who choose the alternative of Quantitative Literacy for Elementary Statistics would then have to go back and take Intermediate Algebra as the prerequisite for College Algebra.

What might we be able to do to support our students in Intermediate Algebra, to help them to pass, rather than trying to change the course or to find an alternative?

10. Concerns:

Students take too many courses and have no time to do homework.

To be eligible for financial aid, students must be full-time.

Work is a priority.

Many students do not understand that "doing homework" and "studying" are not the same.

Many students do not know how to study.

Many students do not accept that learning is hard work.

At the Community Colleges, we are getting many students in the lowest percentage of their high school classes; much of this population has no thirst to learn.

Many students want training, not education; they want only that paper that will get them that job they are after.

Many students do not understand that the college gives credit for something other than what they are expecting.

11. Suggestions:

Students have every right to make decisions concerning their own lives, but we need to help them understand that there are repercussions to decisions they make.

We need to help students understand that success alone in one course does not guarantee success in the next sequential course; in addition to academic preparedness, *study skills* are extremely important for success.

We can be proactive on the first day of class: To help students decide if they are in the right course, some give a pre-test including basics from the prerequisite course. One then tells students that if your score is not in this band, you are not in the comfort zone.

Discussion regarding common finals --

12. "Common finals" was a major topic at AMATYC 2002 in Phoenix.

One instructor who attended that session said half of those in attendance at the large session taught at colleges where they gave computerized, common finals.

Part-timers liked the idea of common finals, as it gave them a reason to tell students I

cannot skip this topic, I have to teach you this because it will appear on the common final exam. "De-emphasizing" certain topics in one course can lead to problems in the next course.

13. For developmental courses, it was suggested that maybe the first hour of a two-hour exam could be spent on a common final that included key concepts and multi-step problems. The second hour could reflect the individuality of the class.
14. Central Connecticut State University does have common finals for Elementary Algebra and Intermediate Algebra. (The department members meet one day to grade; for consistency, one person grades particular questions on every exam.)
15. Three Rivers CC will try a common final as a gateway exam for Intermediate Algebra this semester.

Math Issues Meetings for next semester:

February 21, 2003, Gateway CC, North Haven Campus, 10:30-12:30

March 28, 2003, Central Connecticut State University, Faculty Dining Room, 11:00-12:30

April 25, 2003, Gateway CC, North Haven Campus, 10:30-12:30

Submitted by Elaine Dinto