

Minutes of the GVAR Committee Meeting
October 1, 2010
Number 3
USU 311

In attendance: Colleen Dunagan (COTA), Susan Platt (Testing, Evaluation and Assessment), Linda Sarbo (GVAR Coordinator), Rick Tuveson (Health and Human Services), Rebekha Abbuhl (Linguistics), Gary Griswold (CLA), Carol Zitzer-Comfort (English and Liberal Studies), Rosi Grannell (Geological Sciences), Karin Griffin (University Library), Mark Wiley (Academic Affairs), Bron Pellissier (Advising Council)

1. **Welcome Back**
2. **Approval of Agenda: MSP**
3. **Approval of Minutes from September 17, 2010: MSP**
4. **Announcements:**
 - a. WPE on September 25 and had 700 students. Reading on October 9 and results out in December.
 - b. Transfer applications closed on 9/27 and predicting 1400 transfer students in spring and all will need to take the WPE that first semester.
 - c. The September test administration might have been inflated since SOAR advisors were telling students to take the test in September, so maybe December won't be as big.
5. **GVAR Waivers:**
 - a. L. Sarbo: She shared the guidelines for special circumstances waivers. Students download the guidelines along with the petition form. The guidelines clearly emphasize the "special" nature of the circumstances that must be documented. She read off what is listed on the guidelines. They also explain how to document special circumstances and then explain how else students might fulfill requirement for GVAR instead of a waiver. Whenever students say they want one they are told to contact L. Sarbo. If she thinks they are not qualified for waiver she recommends that they take a GVAR course (especially 301B for non-matriculated students because they are often people who have been out of school for years and have completed everything but GVAR). She wants to make sure we know that there is extensive screening that goes on before a petition makes it to this committee. She also wanted to demonstrate that there was a system for bringing petitions forward. All petitions that have been approved fall into one of two categories: students provide alternate demonstration of their writing or communication skills; and students who have consistently made efforts to improve their writing and no longer have access to campus and cannot enroll in GVAR course. We have never approved a waiver for currently enrolled students because the feeling is that they should enroll in a GVAR course since they are here and have that option to improve their skills. These parameters were not dictated by Sarbo, but are what has evolved out of this committee's decisions regarding individual waivers. Prior to Sarbo taking over, waivers were approved by a waiver committee but we do not have access to how they made decisions. The waiver policy originally said that they would be phased out once there was a GVAR course, but we petitioned to keep them open until more courses are available. Platt and Sarbo wrote the guidelines and this committee approved them.
 - b. G. Griswold mentioned the desire to be fair and equitable to students who left the campus many years ago. He is asking if the criteria for special circumstances really fit granting waivers to students who have been out for a number of years (for example, since 1990s) but who don't have medical issues related to writing or disabilities or physical conditions or other unusual circumstances beyond the control of the students). Nathan and Colleen brought up that the institution's inability to provide available resources for the student at the time that they were in school constitutes a special circumstance. So now we are

discussing whether or not counting that as a special circumstance would open us up to simply granting degrees to whoever doesn't have a degree simply because they haven't met the GVAR. Griswald is suggesting the decision-making process is somewhat arbitrary because it is merely about people taking the time to petition. Ultimately, he is asking if there is a deadline by which students have to petition before it becomes no longer possible. Right now several on the committee feel there should not be a deadline. N. Jensen thinks they should be approved if the student sought all means of meeting the GVAR while a student, even if they haven't done anything since then (off campus). S. Platt agrees and feels like it is based on individual circumstances. S. Sarbo noted that granting the waiver doesn't guarantee that they get a degree since the courses have to be recertified by the department and the department grants the degree. She advises students about this process and recommends that they begin that process so that she has some idea of possibility of them getting the degree prior to bringing petition to committee. We are still discussing various aspects of the issue.

- c. Three petitions were discussed and two were granted.

6. Assessment models for discussion:

- a. R. Abbuhl passed out handout with other assessment models and at the next meeting she wants to discuss if they might serve as a source of new ideas to be brainstormed further to see if we want to make a plan for researching these ideas. There are footnotes on the bottom so that we can look at additional source information about them.

7. WPE name change:

- a. R. Abbuhl spoke with Lynn Mahoney, who spoke to the executive committee and they did not care if we changed the name. The committee was considering changing it to Writing Placement Exam.
- b. M. Wiley brought up the idea that placement implies that they will only be taking the exam once, which is not true at this time. The test is still a graduation writing requirement.
- c. We will revisit the issue at a future meeting.

8. Plan and timeline for policy revision:

- a. Important to have a plan for the policy revision so that we can make the process as transparent as possible and what steps we need to take and deadlines to set.

9. GVAR Coordinator's Report:

- a. GVAR advisor's training workshop this morning.

10. WPE Development Committee Chair's Report:

- a. Postponed until next meeting.

11. Next meeting is October 15, 2010 from 1:30 to 3:00 PM.

12. Adjournment: 3:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Dunagan

(These minutes were approved on 10/15/10.)