

## MINUTES

GWAR Committee

**Join Zoom Meeting**

**[Meeting Link for Every 3rd Friday of the Month](#)**

**1:30 – 3:00**

**Meeting Number 10**

**April 16, 2021**

**In Attendance:** Joseph Aubele, Eve Baker, Donna Binkiewicz, Lori Brown, Jason Deutschman, Annel Estrada, Sarvenaz Hatami, Kerry Johnson, Eileen Klink, Elizabeth Lindau, Tina Matuchniak, Cynthia Pastrana, Dina Perrone, Loretta Ramirez, Lizzet Rojas, Alexandra Wilkinson

The committee welcomed Dina Perrone, director of Graduate Studies, and new members of the GPEAC as **guests**. Matuchniak is to chair the newly formed GPEAC.

The **minutes** from the previous two meetings were approved after a small clarification about committee's ability to change GWAR policy. Golden moved, Aubele seconded, and the committee voted to approve the minutes from March 5, 2021. Aubele moved, Wilkinson seconded, and the committee voted to approve the minutes from February 19.

Matuchniak moved, Aubele seconded and the committee voted to approve the **agenda**.

The committee heard a **data analysis report from Lizzet Rojas**. Rojas discussed pass/non-pass rates for the GPE as they correlate to demographic characteristics of students. In particular, she focused on the fact that Asian American students had a higher non-pass rate, breaking that group of students into smaller sub-groups. She also examined whether performance in 100A-B predicted passing the GPE. Here are some of Rojas's findings.

- Graduate students had high non-pass rates of roughly 40%
- Men have slightly lower pass rates than women, but pass rates are relatively equal in terms of sex.
- International students have the lowest pass rates, followed by Asian American students, and Black or African American students.
- Rojas analyzed 22 different sub-categories of Asian American students. The largest sample sizes are for Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Chinese American students. All of these groups have non-pass rates that are higher than average.
- Students with AP English credit passed at high rates.
- Students who took English 100A had lower rates of passing (15% did not pass). Those who took the course and earned a grade of "C" or did not pass the course had even lower pass rates than those who did (30% did not pass the GPE).
- Transfer students have lower pass rates, but we don't have data to explain this trend.

The committee asked Rojas a series of follow-up questions. Matuchniak asked how we might use this data to respond to the Chancellor's demands to re-think testing. (Johnson later reiterated the Chancellor's aversion to testing, and how questions may be raised about the GPE even though it may not be technically high-stakes.) Rojas responded that students who don't pass 100A seem to still be having issues when they take the GPE, suggesting that performance in that course might be used to identify students in need of additional writing assistance. However, the sample for 100A is smaller (only 1500 students). Matuchniak suggested looking at 100B, which has a larger sample size of 32,000 students. Rojas responded that students who don't do well in 100B tend to perform more poorly on the GPE. Furthermore, students who elected to take 100B for "CR" had a 47% non-pass rate on the GPE. Rojas recommended looking at the correlation between 100B performance and WI. (Rojas also noted that students who earned grades of "F" in 100B actually had *higher* GPE pass rates on average. She thought that this could be because they had to repeat the course.) Brown asked whether a grade of "C" in 100B should be a cutoff for determining whether students need more writing courses. Rojas replied that a significant number of students who earn Cs in that course still do not pass the GPE.

Klink shared her experiences teaching English 100A-B, concerns for ESL students, and differing cultural attitudes about the value of writing. She said that it is difficult to place students into 301A-B based on 100B because they take the latter course in their first year. They don't take the GPE before their third year when too much time has elapsed. We used to have year-long writing courses taught at least in part by composition instructors in the CSU, but these have succumbed to budget cuts.

Committee members asked Rojas about the GPE as a predictor of future success. Hatami asked whether it correlated with success in WI courses. This is something Rojas plans to investigate. Klink asked whether the exam predicts eventual graduation.

Matuchniak clarified the GPE's goal of providing students with support and instruction for students so that they can succeed in WI, which is the final item that completes the GVAR. Brown asked whether we are preparing students to leave with upper-division writing skills. Passing a WI course might not necessarily prove that a student has that skill.

The committee members praised Rojas, who agreed to share her document and include the additional information about the GPE as predictor of future success in writing.

Brown asked for continued discussion on **whether to waive the GPE in Fall 2021**, and whether to use multiple measures. Brown, Estrada, and Pastrana are being bombarded with student questions about the status of the exam. Matuchniak asked Baker about possibilities for online or in-person administration of the exam. Baker replied that it depends on what the Chancellor decides about cameras. If we can test in person, that would be subject to health guidelines. Brown reports that limited on-campus testing seems like an option for students. This means that students who do not want to be on camera could come to campus.

The committee briefly discussed alternative methods for identifying students who need extra writing instruction. Klink said that "C" grades from community colleges often translate into "D" or "F" grades in writing courses here. This could be a "red flag" that should be taken into

consideration with multiple measures. Matuchniak said there was no time to implement multiple measures for the fall. Brown concurred: to waive or not to waive. That is the question.

Brown noted that suspending the GPE would mean that international graduate students would have no option but to take a course. Perrone thanked the committee for including graduate students in the conversation. She also shared the Executive Vice Chancellor's February 23 memo. Pastrana asked for clarification on when graduate students are required to take the GPE. She understood that the policy required them to take it in their first semester. Brown reported that 2/3 of graduate students did not participate in the online pilot. To accommodate them, testing has agreed at Brown's request to give another pilot in June. Brown moved and Golden seconded to administer a second pilot GPE. The motion was unanimously approved. Baker reported that there are not enough resources to continue to incentivizing graduate students to take the exam. Perrone assured her that she wouldn't need to.

Hatami asked about the logistical difficulty of waiving vs. not waiving the GPE in the fall. Brown replied that waivers require a lot of administrative work, where keeping the exam should work provided that we can offer students an in-person option to avoid the on-camera requirement. Baker clarified that Respondus is simply recording the students not a live person watching them.

Klink observed that academic standards are dropping during the pandemic—it has been a “lost year.” Brown concurred that leeway and compassion might be backfiring a bit.

Aubele moved to continue the GPE in Fall 2021, Klink seconded. The committee voted to continue the GPE with Deutschman casting one dissenting vote.

Pastrana asked whether she can tell students about the GPE in her capacity as GEAR advisor. Brown will report results of vote to Johnson, who will make the ultimate decision. Baker also asked Brown to ask John Hamilton in testing whether it is feasible to offer the exam. Brown clarified that the vote reflected the committee's recommendation for the fall. Whether it can be carried out is still depending on repopulation and other factors.

Brown told the committee about waiver requests from three graduate students, which were to be voted on outside the meeting. Two were from current students, and were similar to a recent spate of requests. Another is from a student who never completed his degree during the “bad old days” of the WPE.

Meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Ann Lindau