

## MINUTES

GWAR Committee

### ZOOM Conference

1:30 – 3:00

Meeting Number 5

November 20, 2020

**In attendance:** Joseph Aubele, Eve Baker, Lori Brown, Jason Deutschman, Annel Estrada, Noah Golden, Isaac Julian, Elizabeth Lindau, Tina Matuchniak, Henry O’Lawrence, Cynthia Pastrana, Benjamin Pearlman, Shabnam Sodagari, Alexandra Wilkinson.

The meeting was called to order at 1:35 p.m. The committee approved the agenda and the minutes from the October 16 meeting.

**GPE Online Updates:** Brown reported that an online GPE seems increasingly difficult due to technical issues and privacy concerns. There is no possibility of offering an on-campus testing given the continued dangers posed by the spread of COVID-19. ATS decided that they will no longer offer Respondus on-camera exam monitoring after a number of students complained about the system in regular coursework. As a result, testing has no way of identifying students. Finally, ATS is not available for tech support on weekends when the GPE, is typically taken. It may be possible to take the test on Friday, but this isn’t certain either.

There are also complications with hiring and training readers. We can’t recreate the old system of blind evaluation, where each reader scores a batch of 100-125 essays, and each essay is read 2-3 times. D2L has no way to allow multiple readers to score the same exams, or to keep students’ names and information confidential. ATS discussed the possibility of using outside vendors, but that would require additional resources. We hope to have an update on the effort to create this protocol before our final committee meeting in the first week of December.

Committee members brainstormed ideas for administering an online GPE with integrity. Pearlman suggested having students sign in to Zoom via their smartphones as a means of identifying the students, but Baker saw problems with this, as we typically discourage smartphone use during testing. Golden suggested a digitally signed statement of integrity. Matuchniak argued that honest students who don’t “pass” the exam will get the help they need. She argued that we should still go ahead with an online pilot and test, and suggested pulling a report from the backend of Zoom to verify students’ identify and attendance at the test. Baker expressed skepticism about having 3,000 students on Zoom at one time.

Other committee members thought the nature of the GPE could change to suit the new format. Wilkinson suggested simply asking the students to write an essay in 75 minutes. Lindau suggested sanctioning the internet as a source of information for writing the essay, and evaluating the students in part on their information literacy and ability to incorporate sources into their writing. Matuchniak argued that changing the exam dramatically would open us up

to problems with fairness. Golden concurred that the exam may need updating, but that that question should be tabled for a later date. We should do the same exam we've always done, only online.

The committee discussed other technical considerations. Brown asked Baker whether they should leave the exam in Quizzes or move to Dropbox. Matuchniak asked whether Qualtrics could be used in conjunction with BeachBoard for the purposes of scoring the exams. Pastrana shared her experiences reading English placement tests for Educational Testing Services. Digital testing technology must be out there!

Brown shared information from CSU systemwide GVAR Coordinator meeting. Roughly 12 campuses were represented, and Brown summarized the range of their responses to the pandemic. Two campuses are "leading the way" in innovation: Sacramento State (which originally inspired our own plan) and CSU Stanislaus are using portfolio assessment as their placement. Students put together a portfolio of their writing from various sources that are assessed by readers. 1, 2, or 3-unit add-ons are required depending on quality of portfolio. Fees that once went toward administering the exam are now charged for the portfolio. Another strategy is one of "mixed measures" based on high school work and other factors. At CSU Fullerton, students can take an UD class similar to our WI, or they can take 2 courses that each require 3,000 words with 30% of the grade based in writing. Using the WI course alone is one short-term solutions and a couple of Cal State campuses simply have no GVAR currently. We are the only campus trying to maintain a test, and there's a strong systemwide movement to move away from exams entirely.

Committee members discussed the other campus's responses as potential models for our own. Matuchniak liked idea of portfolio assessment, but noted that it can be expensive. She also encouraged us to think about our end goals: What does it mean to be writing proficient by graduation? Do we want summative assessments of quality? Or formative assessments, based on word counts over time? Do we want to emphasize process or product? O'Lawrence suggested coordinating with CEPC in addressing these questions, mentioned overlap between that group and the Academic Senate.

Finally, two issues with policies and requirements were raised during this discussion. GVAR could be impacted by the new Ethnic Studies course requirement. And an instructor recently alerted the administration about an error in our policy. It states erroneously that our WI courses are General Education capstones. That policy must now be opened up to change.

**Student waiver request.** The committee voted against waiving the GVAR for 20-21-XX, but Brown will follow up with student about what courses remain in his program.

Matuchniak subsequently asked about the grounds for waiving the GVAR. Brown replied that this has always been difficult. We offer them for people who took the WPE multiple times and did not pass prior to the era of portfolio courses. If those students have updated their degree requirements, and the GVAR is the only thing standing between them and a degree, then we have historically waived. Deutschman elaborated that if a student is functioning in their profession, if they show proficiency in writing, or if they have exhausted all other avenues, we typically waive.

The meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Ann Lindau