

MINUTES

GWAR Committee

1:30 – 3:00

Meeting Number 8

February 18, 2022

IN ATTENDANCE: Joseph Aubele, Eve Baker, Lori Brown, Jason Deutschman, Navdeep Dhillon, Noah Golden, Meghan Griffith, Sarvenaz Hatami, Eileen Klink, Henry O'Lawrence, Chris Padron, Cynthia Pastrana, Loretta Ramirez, Alexandra Wilkinson

Golden moved and Wilkinson seconded **approval of the agenda**. The committee voted unanimously to approve the agenda.

Aubele moved and Golden seconded **approval of the minutes** for the meeting of January 21, 2022. The committee unanimously approved the minutes.

Baker reported on the **recent GPE**, in which roughly 800 students tested. These numbers are lower than February in a typical year, making Brown wonder aloud whether many students will need the test in April.

Brown reported no news from **Chancellor's office's task force**.

Much of the meeting was spent discussing a recent **"no-fee" memo and its potential ramifications for the GPE**. Brown reported that we may no longer be able to administer the GPE because of a prohibition against charging fees for things students need in order to graduate. This is in response to a "groundswell" of student objections to fees. Baker reminded the committee that students pay a \$25 fee to cover GPE proctoring, reading, and supplies. Brown characterized the no-fee policy as part of a larger "death by a thousand cuts" trend for the GPE, saying that it has been under criticism during her entire time on campus.

Brown posed several questions to the group:

- 1) Do we want to defend the fee for the GPE?
- 2) If we cannot charge the fee, is there a way to continue using the test?
- 3) If there were a full-scale rewrite of the GWAR policy, are we able to do that as a committee? (Brown emphasized that she does not yet know if the Senate is going to open the GWAR policy for revision.)

4) Is this committee ready to retire the GPE as the mode of placement?

Committee members discussed possible alternatives to the GPE for placement. Brown reported that Kerry Johnson's office is looking at high school grades as a mechanism.

The committee discussed whether the redesign of GVAR policy and certifications of courses should be the purview of this committee. Brown said that she did not think the committee should bear the sole responsibility for such tasks. We need a task force, and that people from outside the committee should also contribute. Klink predicted that GVARC will continue to be the certification committee for any new WI courses, and reminded everyone about the moratorium on new GE courses from a few years ago, which occurred because that committee could not certify courses quickly enough.

Klink brought up numerous topics for consideration and comparison throughout the meeting. She asked whether the mathematics placement exam ALEC was subject to fee. (Deutschman replied that it was not, but that a similar chemistry exam does require students to pay a \$25 fee.) Klink shared her experience on committees for first-year students and fiscal affairs, observing that universities are increasingly picking up fees for students. She noted that GVAR will have to fit within the Guided GE pathway. Klink encouraged committee to read the text of AB 928, which gives community colleges power to award BA degrees. It reduces GE units from 39 to 34, and makes it possible to earn a degree in three years. During the debate over the requirement of Ethnic Studies, we had to open up Title V, which determined the purviews of community colleges and universities. Finally, she discussed the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS), which includes the CSU, UC, and community college systems, and is supposed to have a plan by 2023. The UC system is pushing "basic skills" and attempting to put the WIs within the GE categories. Klink lamented the dismantling and reduction of the American Language Institute, which has served international students and ESL students.

Several committee members expressed some frustration with the no-fee memo. Aubele pointed out the hypocrisy of charging for parking and student fees during the pandemic. He noted that we have repeatedly suggested changing the policy and been turned away.

The committee contemplated whether the exam could go forward without the fees. The committee considered whether reading exams could be presented as a "service" activity for lecturers or assistant professors looking to build their tenure

cases. Aubele wrote, “Regarding fees for test readers . . . this would not be popular but GPE test reading could become another service opportunity (one of many) with no additional compensation (not a great idea, but . . .)” Hatami compared it to the University Honors Program’s process, writing, “That’s also a service activity and includes reviewing hundreds of applications.” Brown asked Baker whether proctors would do it as a service. Baker doubted whether staff would work for weekends when the exams take place without compensation. Lindau wrote, “I’m glad we’re considering every angle here, but I strenuously object to implementing a system of unpaid labor.” Klink suggested that if the Chancellor’s office strikes fees down, *they* should be made to deal with the consequences.

The committee discussed alternatives to the current GVAR policy, including:

- removing the GPE and having coursework only (Brown)
- potentially adding required tutoring as an additional unit for four-unit writing courses (Klink)
- using ERWC courses developed by colleagues at the CSU (Klink)
- each department having a Lori-like figure who oversees writing (Klink)
- a writing across the curriculum model (Golden’s ideal)

Most or all of these would require support, resources, and investments that are unlikely to materialize.

Brown expressed interest in what the other CSU campuses are doing to fulfill the GVAR. Brown and Klink discussed the Stretch program, which Brown had hoped would be an alternative to testing. Klink reported that it was struggling from conflicts with students’ courses in their home disciplines. Either San Marcos or Channel Islands claims to have a writing across the curriculum approach to GVAR, in which every 3-unit class must have a standard of writing. Klink responded that CSU Channel Islands is an interdisciplinary campus.

Lindau asked whether some disciplines would have faculty that would be better equipped to incorporate writing into their programs than others. Brown replied yes, using her own college as an example. The College of Business is known for finance and accounting rather than writing. Since 2014, Brown has been trying to get one WI course certified in the college. The effort has been hampered by reticent instructors and the need for training and resources. But after a long effort, she has finally created a task force and secured funds.

On that hopeful note, the meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Ann Lindau