

DATE: August 12, 2022

TO: Danny Paskin, Chair
Curriculum and Educational Policies Council

Pei-Fang Hung, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Lori Brown, Chair
Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) Committee

SUBJECT: GWAR Committee Report for 2021-2022

The Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) Committee convened on September 3, 2021 and elected the following committee officers:

Lori Brown, Chair
Sarvenaz Hatami, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Lindau, Secretary

The committee met on the first and third Fridays of each month from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

GWAR Committee Membership

The following individuals served on the GWAR committee during the 2021-2022 school year:

- Joseph Aubele (Library)
- Lori Brown (Information Systems)
- Jason Deutschman (Coordinator of Academic Advising, College of Engineering)
- Davdeep Dhillon (Engineering)
- Noah Golden (Teacher Education)
- Meghan Griffith (Enrollment Services)
- John Hamilton (AVP University Access and Retention, Interim Testing office director)
- Savenaz Hatami (Linguistics)
- Kerry Johnson (AVP Undergraduate Studies)
- Eileen Klink (English, sub for Matuchniak, Director, University Writing Center)
- Elizabeth Lindau (Music)
- Henry O'Lawrence (CEPC, Health Care Administration)
- Chris Padron (Student)
- Benjamin Perlman (Biological Sciences)
- Loretta Ramirez (Chicano Latino Studies)
- Alexandra Wilkinson (Family & Consumer Sciences)

The major activities of the GVAR Committee will be summarized in the following sections.

CSU and CSULB GVAR Policy

Academic Year 2021-2022 opened for the GVARC on September 3, 2021. GVAR Coordinator, Lori Brown, updated the committee that the CSU Chancellor's Office was forming a committee/task force to review the CSU-wide GVAR policy in fall 2021.

While awaiting direction from the CSU, the committee proceeded to move forward with compiling data, information from other CSUs, campus expertise, and experiences to move the GVARC toward readiness for a new GVAR Policy. Associate Vice President Kerry Johnson's office provided data regarding the GPE, WI, and LD composition courses. Several GVARC meetings included activity to stimulate ideas and potential pathways to improve upon current campus policy, including potential alternatives to the GPE as the starting point. Action on these ideas had to await word from the CSU.

The following GVARC meeting minutes reflect specific committee activities directed on future of the GVAR and GPE:

- December 3
- February 18
- March 4
- March 18
- April 14
- May 6

Late in spring 2022 semester, guidance memos from the Chancellor's Office and a new CSU GVAR policy were issued. Graduate Studies at CSULB then issued a memo in response to the new policy in June 2022; however, the GVARC had finished work for the academic year. A GVARC Summer Work Group was instituted to produce ideas for a new campus policy to submit to CEPC in fall 2022 for policy writing considerations.

March 24, 2022 – Memo from Executive Vice Chancellor, Sylvia A. Alva: *Upcoming revisions to the CSU Policy on the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GVAR) (formerly Executive Order 665)*

April 25, 2022 – Memo from Associate Vice Chancellor, Alison Wrynn: *Clarifications on the CSU Policy on the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GVAR)*

EO 0665 *Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement Determination of Competence in English*. Though effective April 11, 2022, our campus did not have knowledge of a revised policy until the end of April 2022.

June 7, 2022 – Memo from Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Dean of Graduate Studies, *Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) for Graduate Students*

GWAR Proficiency Exam (GPE)

Campus resumed the GPE in Summer 2021 as part of the GWAR Policy. The addition of online testing began in Summer 2021. Testing offered the exam five times both in-person and online throughout 2021-2022.

The GWARC discussed the GPE and its utility on our campus throughout the academic year. Specifically, in an effort to move the conversation forward, on November 19, 2021, the committee was placed into small breakout groups to answer the following questions:

- *If the GPE can no longer be used, would it be acceptable to have the WI course as the only GWAR requirement with no prerequisite?*
- *If that is not acceptable, what alternative would be?*

On December 3, 2021, AVP Kerry Johnson and Analyst Christina Goldpaint presented data on the GPE and the possibility to explore whether COMP 100B might be used as a placement tool. The committee was skeptical of the utility of data's strength to predict success in a WI course from a COMP 100B grade. The committee requested more data.

Throughout February, March, and April, 2022, GWARC resumed work in small groups and as a committee regarding potential CSU outcomes for the GWAR and how we might position our campus to respond. The committee was divided in regard to plans including vs removing the GPE. Including writing modules as a part of a new policy was something the committee agreed upon. Ensuring a way to capture students needing further writing instruction beyond the undergraduate composition course and before completing the WI (currently fulfilled by the GPE and GWAR Portfolio Courses) was also agreed upon. Without an official policy from the Chancellor's Office, the GWARC was hesitant to propose specific or major changes to campus policy.

After receiving the memos and new policy from the CO, at the last meeting of the academic year on May 6, 2022, AVP Johnson and Christina Goldpaint returned to share data with the committee and suggest movement toward new GWAR policy proposals to be presented to CEPC for policy writing in fall 2022. Being the final GWARC meeting of the academic year, there was little that could be done. A GWAR Summer Work Group was formed to marshal the ideas and work of 2021-2022.

BMAC Proctors for GPE (September 17 and October 1, 2021)

The Committee considered a written proposal from BMAC regarding GPE proctoring. Due to a shortage of trained staff to meet the demand for remote proctoring, BMAC Associate Director, Jessica Wood, proposed having trained students fill this gap. After reviewing the proposal and details over two GWARC meetings, the committee passed a motion “to authorize BMAC to use trained student assistants who have completed their GWAR requirement to proctor the GPE for BMAC students at the center’s discretion.

Global Studies Institute (GSI) Research Report on Writing at CSULB

On October 1, 2021 the committee was joined by Dr. Richard Marcus, faculty in the International Studies Department and Director of the Global Studies, Institute (GSI). In 2018-2019, Dr. Marcus included a survey of on-campus writing in the repeated campus syllabus study which reviewed all syllabi on campus, roughly 7,000 per academic year. (These data were not pursued in 2020 because of the pandemic). The results of this study were disappointing at best. Syllabi were reviewed for writing assignments, student learning outcomes related to writing, and other markers of writing intensive (WI) courses. Only 20% of courses had writing SLOs, only 3% required 5,000 words or more, only 10% had writing instructional activities, and only 10% required writing in the first three weeks of the semester. More disturbingly, the courses designated “Writing Intensive” did not fare well by Marcus’s standards. Of WI courses, only 21% required 5,000 words or more, only 56% included writing instructional activities, and only 69% had writing SLOs. Marcus also discovered discrepancies between SCOs and syllabi. In short, classes seem to change after they are approved as WI.

A question-and-answer session followed Dr. Marcus’s presentation. His recommendation was that this data warranted the opening of college conversations about writing.

A convincing case was made that we should not wait for more research to try to improve writing instruction on campus. The committee was urged to work to “create a rich ecology of writing practices,” and to shine a spotlight on best practices.

Discussions about best practices, practices at other CSUs, pending state legislation that could affect writing across the state ensued.

To that end, several committee members began discussing the possibility of workshops and trainings for WI courses. Workshops and online modules might be a solution. While there would be significant effort up front to create them, they would be a lasting resource.

Committee members praised the current GWAR committee and encouraged them to ask for resources. It was noted that other campuses have well-funded writing across the curriculum programs rather than a single overworked person organizing

workshops. GWARC can't take on everything, and we need guidance from the Chancellor's office as well as stipends and allocations.

The committee continued discussion and information seeking regarding campus writing in this meeting and throughout the academic year.

Writing Intensive Course Reviews and Approvals

As directed by Academic Senate procedural memo of July 2020, the GWARC continued to review Writing Intensive (WI) course submissions for the campus.

The GWARC Chair prepared a Writing Intensive submission and review calendar for the academic year. This calendar schedule coincided with the CEPC schedule for WI course approvals. The following courses were reviewed first by the GWARC ad hoc subcommittee and later presented for full review by the GWARC:

Philosophy 360 – October 15, 2021 – presented and denied approval with a request for clarification of the application from the submitting department. Course was resubmitted and approved via online voting noted in November 19, 2021 meeting minutes.

Health Care Administration 417 – October 15, 2021 – presented and approved.

Geography 309, October 15, 2021 – presented and approved

Geography 316, October 15, 2021 – presented and approved

Chicano and Latino Studies 411, October 15, 2021 - presented and approved

Linguistics 375, December 3, 2021 – presented and approved

Information Systems 301, April 14, 2022 – presented and approved

GWAR Coordinator's Report

The GWAR Coordinator regularly reported to the committee. The GWAR Coordinator served as a liaison between the GWARC and the campus administration, Enrollment Services, Testing and Evaluation, Academic Technology Services and other groups involved with GWAR review and the COVID response. The GWAR Coordinator also presented special circumstances waivers to the committee.

GPE Advisory Committee Chair's Report

The GPE Advisory Committee chair who typically presents data on the GPE as part of that committee's efforts to monitor the reliability and validity of the test needed to resign from the committee for personal reasons. The direction of this committee would change dependent upon the outcomes of the Chancellor's Office discussion of the GEAR across the CSU in fall 2021. Because the outcomes of the CO's discussion of the GEAR across the CSU were not revealed until late spring 2022, this committee's activity was largely curtailed.

GEAR Summer Work Group Report

A GEAR Summer Work Group met for four 2-hour sessions on the following days and dedicated extra time on task between meetings: June 23, July 12, July 28, August 4, 2022.

The following individuals served on the GEAR Summer Work Group:

- Joseph Aubele (Library)
- Lori Brown (Information Systems) Coordinator
- Meghan Griffith (Enrollment Services)
- Gary Griswald (English, for Eileen Klink)
- Elizabeth Lindau (Music)
- Loretta Ramirez (Chicano Latino Studies)
- Courtney Stammler (English and GEAR Advisor)
- Alexandra Wilkinson (Family & Consumer Sciences)

The summer work group was tasked with considering the Chancellor's Office new GEAR Policy EO 0665, data available, writing instruction expertise, and previous GEARC discussions to assemble proposals for new GEAR policy for CSULB to be reviewed by GEARC and then CEPC in fall 2022.

The work group focused upon the many considerations of writing pedagogy and campus implementation for each idea. Some of the ideas that found their ways into proposals included removing the GPE as a placement tool and replacing it with a more writing across the curriculum approach. This included adding writing modules to existing coursework, adding a disciplinary component to the writing intensive courses, and creating a CSULB Writing Program that bridges Freshman Composition to the WI courses, and up to graduation without adding new required units.

Other ideas included tracking writing modules completed by *skillsets* acquired in a course beyond a description of the course within a digital badging (gamifying) system on Canvas. This would support student engagement by building a connection between coursework and the workplace (practical application of coursework).

Another idea included a two-pronged WI system, one for disciplinary courses and one on general writing for departments that do not require a particular WI course for their major. A robust writing portfolio system was also submitted and can integrate into several other options. The group is completing write-ups of these ideas and more and will present to GWARC in fall 2022.