

DATE: September 7, 2021

TO: Danny Paskin, Chair
Curriculum and Educational Policies Council

Neil Hultgren, Chair
Academic Senate

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

SUBJECT: GWAR Committee Report for 2020-2021

The Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) Committee convened on September 4, 2020 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 2020-2021 school year:

- Joseph Aubele (Library)
- Lori Brown (Information Systems)
- Jason Deutschman (Coordinator of Academic Advising, College of Engineering)
- Noah Golden (Teacher Education)
- John Hamilton (AVP University Access and Retention, Interim Testing office director)
- Sarvenaz Hatami (Linguistics)
- Kerry Johnson (AVP Undergraduate Studies)
- Isaac Julian (Student (ASI))
- Eugenia Kim (Director, Center for International Education)
- Eileen Klink (English)
- Elizabeth Lindau (Music)
- Tina Matuchniak (Director, University Writing Center)
- Henry O'Lawrence (CEPC, Health Care Administration)
- Benjamin Perlman (Biological Sciences)
- Shabnam Sodagari (Electrical Engineering)
- Alexandra Wilkinson (Family & Consumer Sciences)

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

Academic Senate Writing Intensive Course Approval Procedural Memo

On July 22, 2020, the Chair of Academic Senate, Jessica Pandya, sent a procedural memo from the Academic Senate Executive Committee informing that “because the General Education Policy (19-08) no longer includes writing intensive courses as General Education requirements, and because the GEGC will likely be inundated with new and revised course proposals now that the GE Moratorium is over... the Graduation Writing Assessment Committee (GWARC) shall be the body that reviews new and revised Writing Intensive courses to determine whether they satisfy the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement.” The GWARC was also tasked with designing a review plan. This Academic Senate Procedural Memo was originally to be in effect for the 2020-2021 school year only; however, this procedural memo was renewed in spring 2021.

Writing Intensive Ad Hoc Committee

The GWARC Chair created an ad hoc committee from within the GWARC to spearhead the design of the WI course review plan. This WI course review plan and the application for the initial approval of a WI course were completed and approved by the GWARC in spring 2021.

Under the GWARC Chair’s direction, the WI ad hoc committee also created the WRITING INTENSIVE (WI) COURSE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE: A guide to assist faculty seeking guidelines, suggestions, and examples for developing Writing Intensive (WI) courses. The 18-page guide includes

- Important Criteria for WI Courses
- WI Course Approval Stages
- Examples and Suggestions for Developing WI Courses
 - College of Education (CED): Example Based on LST 400
 - College of Health & Human Services (CHHS): Example Based on GERN
 - College of Liberal Arts (CLA): Example Based on LING 472
 - College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics (CNSM): Example Based on BIOL 447

After two semesters of GPE waivers due to the pandemic, the GWARC began addressing the need for more WI courses on campus to meet the demand for the thousands of students who would pass through to the WI course requirement sooner than usual without the GPE semester. The committee examined statistics for the needed WI seats in spring 2020 and fall 2021 and approved its first WI course application in spring of 2021.

Pandemic GPE Waivers and Online GPE Pilots

Due to the pandemic and campus shutdown, the GWAR Proficiency Exams (GPE) were paused for fall 2020 and eventually also for spring 2021. All incoming transfer undergrads and native students who had earned 30 units were granted GPE waivers. The committee evaluated several scenarios for moving the GWAR forward after the pause and decided to continue the transition to an online GPE for spring 2021 which would need to be piloted before a university-wide rollout. Academic Technology Services was brought in along with Testing and Evaluation to inform the decision and create the online GPE. The GWAR Coordinator, AVP of Undergraduate Studies, Vice-Provost, Graduate Studies Director, Enrollment Services, GWAR Advisors, Major advisors throughout campus, and the Testing Office were tasked to collaborate once again (as in spring 2020) with

- (1) ensuring the imminent graduations of students impacted by the GPE cancellations were not delayed due to GWAR.
- (2) executing the waivers of the GPE for fall 2020 and spring 2021.
- (3) messaging the ongoing changes and guidelines to various advising and student groups.
- (4) creating a secure and effective online GPE test capable of piloting in spring 2021.

The collaborations proved successful and, after a few hurdles, the Online GPE was piloted first with graduate students needing to fulfill GWAR for imminent graduation. In February of 2021 the first pilot took place and in June a second pilot exam was completed. The Online GPE pilots provided insights and data into the execution and scoring of the online version of the GPE. The GWARC left the spring 2021 semester feeling confident that a hybrid GPE (Online and In-Person options) would be well suited for fall 2021.

Continued Review of the GPE

The committee continued to review the GPE as a placement exam for the GWAR Pathways. In October 2020, Lizzette Rojas, Data Program Analyst for the AVP of Academic Affairs Office, was invited to join the committee and present on “pass” and “fail” rates of the GPE by demographic. Rojas took questions from the committee and a lengthy and robust discussion ensued. The committee requested further data on the GPE and student writing on campus to

help determine correlations of GPE results and success rates in Upper Division coursework, graduation rates, and success in WI courses. The committee also requested data on Freshman Comp grades as predictor of GPE scores and the impact GEAR Portfolio courses have had on WI course grade success.

Improved versions of the GPE, writing prompts, resources students are allowed to access during the exam, and various versions of a placement instrument were discussed throughout the academic year. The Chair met with GEAR Coordinators and Writing Directors of other CSU's to learn and share about how campuses are adapting their GEAR requirements to the Chancellor's Office memo and "suspension of single examinations that fulfill the GEAR." Because CSULB uses an exam as a placement instrument for more writing instruction, our GPE was allowed to remain, but improvements are being considered in the GEARC and the Graduation Proficiency Exam Advisory Committee, a sub-committee to GEARC. The committee continues to look at other campus responses as potential models for our own. End goals - These questions were discussed as the GEARC continues to look for ways to improve writing assessment for graduation: What does it mean to be writing proficient by graduation? Do we want summative assessments of quality? Or integrate formative assessments over time? Do we want to emphasize process or product?

The Chancellor's Office shared with all CSU AVP's that a discussion of the GEAR across the CSU system will take place in fall 2021. The dialogue will include many stakeholders and campuses will be invited to participate and have a voice in consultations.

GEAR Coordinator's Report

The GEAR Coordinator regularly reported to the committee. The GEAR Coordinator served as a liaison between the GEARC and the campus administration, Enrollment Services, Testing and Evaluation, Academic Technology Services and other groups involved with GEAR review and the COVID response. The GEAR 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 was not very active through much of the academic year due to the pause on the GPE for the year. In spring 2021, the AS appointed GPE Advisory committee met and were briefed on the status of the GPE and began planning for the fall 2021 academic year when the committee will return to creating new prompts for the GPE, piloting those prompts, and examining the results of those pilots in order to make recommendations concerning prompt use to the testing office. 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.