

DATE: August 15, 2025

TO: Jeff Bentley, Chair
Curriculum and Educational Policies Council

Neil Hultgren, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Loretta Victoria Ramirez, Chair 2024-2025
Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement Committee

SUBJECT: GVAR Committee Report for 2024-2025

The Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GVAR) Committee (GVARC) convened on September 6, 2024, and elected the following committee officers:

Chair: Loretta Victoria Ramirez, PhD, Assistant Professor, Chicano & Latino Studies
Vice Chair: Courtney Stammler, MS, Lecturer, American Language Institute; English
Secretary: Alexandra Wilkinson, MS, Lecturer, Family & Consumer Sciences

The committee met on the first and third Fridays of each month from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

GVAR Committee Membership

The following individuals served on the GVAR committee during the 2024-2025 school year:

- Eve Baker (Assistant Director, Testing Services)
- Nicollette Brant (Library)
- Lori Brown (GVAR Coordinator)
- Tom Do (English, sub for Matuchniak, Director, University Writing Center)
- Lisa Fascia (Enrollment Services)
- Lorenzo Gutierrez-Jarquin (Academic Advising Council)
- Kerry Johnson (AVP Undergraduate Studies)
- Henry O'Lawrence (CEPC, Health Care Administration)
- Loretta Victoria Ramirez (Chicano Latino Studies)
- Deepti Singh (Information Systems)
- Maiyoua Vang (Educational Leadership)
- Bruce Veal (Student Member, ASI)
- Alexandra Wilkinson (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Mark Williams (English)

Representation from COE, CNSM, and COTA was not established. COTA elected representative Katherine Guerra (Cinematic Arts) in April 2025 to begin service in Fall 2025. Guerra attended two GVARC meetings in April and May 2025.

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

GEAR Proficiency Exam (GPE) Testing Report

Eve Baker, Assistant Director of Testing Services, provided updates at the start of each GEARC meeting throughout the academic year. Her reports included GPE test dates, student registration data, and assessment procedures.

The GPE is a 75-minute timed writing exam designed to evaluate a student's ability to compose an impromptu analytical essay under standardized conditions. Each exam presents a prompt accompanied by two informational sources—one text-based and one visual (e.g., a graph or chart). Students must incorporate at least one source into their analytical response. Testing is available both online and in person.

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the GPE was administered on eight occasions:

- September 13 (online) and September 14 (in-person) – 2,600 students
- November 1 (online) and November 2 (in-person) – 2,235 students
- February 7 (online) and February 8 (in-person) – 2,042 students
- March 21 (online) and March 22 (in-person) – 2,215 students

In total, 9,092 students completed the GPE before its cancellation in April 2025.

The May 2025 GPE sessions had been scheduled and students had begun registering and paying when the April cancellation of the exam occurred. Testing Services was tasked with notifying registrants of the cancellation, responding to student inquiries, and issuing refunds.

GPE Advisory Committee (GPEAC) Chair's Report

Tom Do, Chair of the GPEAC, also reported at each GEARC meeting. As outlined in Section 4 of the GEAR 2012 policy, the GPEAC is responsible for overseeing the GPE's format and administration, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness.

In 2024–2025, the GPEAC designed, workshopped, and approved 12 new GPE writing prompts, prioritizing equitable access through legibility and relatability.

GEAR Coordinator's Report

Lori Brown, GEAR Coordinator, regularly updated GEARC on activities and responsibilities, including:

- Responding to student inquiries regarding GEAR procedures and requirements.
- Collaborating with advising units to research exception and transfer requests, and coordinating communications with Enrollment Services and Testing.
- Supervising approximately 20 GEAR portfolio course sections per semester, offering policy guidance and curricular support.
- Participating in CEPC GEARC policy review sessions and gathering committee feedback.

- Presenting GVAR policy proposals to the Academic Senate on February 6 and 20, 2025.
- Coordinating with the Provost's Office, Academic Affairs, GVAR Advisors, and Testing to implement a communication plan following the Provost's April 4, 2025 announcement regarding the cancellation of the GPE and the removal of English 301 and portfolio courses from the GVAR pathway.

GVARC Review of Student Petitions

The GVAR Coordinator presented to GVARC a total of 12 Special Circumstances Waivers of the CSULB Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. Two of the waiver requests represented program catalog errors in the designation of WI courses: a University Honors Program catalog error impacted 25 students and a Study Abroad catalog error impacted 9 students. During Summer 2025, while the GVARC was on hiatus, the Chair and Coordinator processed 3 additional waivers. The committee reviewed and acted on each petition, responding to a total of 47 student cases.

GVARC Review of Writing Intensive (WI) Courses

No applications were submitted by faculty to certify new WI courses for GVAR fulfillment.

GVAR Self-Study Report

On October 22, 2024, GVAR Coordinator Lori Brown tasked GVARC Chair Loretta Victoria Ramirez with completing the GVARC Program Review Self-Study, originally due December 2024. Since Ramirez was elected new GVARC Chair in September, an extension was granted until April 1, 2025.

This marked the first self-study since 2010, and the first review of the 2012 policy. Ramirez compiled a 30-page report based on:

- 15 years of year-end reports and meeting minutes
- Institutional data from CSULB's Office of Institutional Research and Analytics
- External trends in writing pedagogy

Data from the GVAR Coordinator as liaison between GVARC and Enrollment Services, Testing, and GVAR Advising was not available in time for Ramirez to meet the April 1 deadline. Consequently, GPE testing results beyond 2020 were not included, although Ramirez did locate pre-2020 GPE data from alternate sources, such as studies by data and program analysts for Student Success.

Key Findings:

- GVARC's practices align with national trends moving away from timed writing exams, which are increasingly viewed as inequitable and ineffective for assessing writing competency.
- The report emphasized the importance of fostering writing development throughout undergraduate education, aligning with the "Habits of Mind" framework endorsed by major writing organizations, such as the Council of

Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project. These habits include the following: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition.

Ramirez also emphasized in the self-study other GWARC priorities, which include establishing the GWAR Program's stance and response to using artificial intelligence in student writing and strategizing ways to update new and continuing WI course instructors about the GWAR Program's requirements and goals. This update would include information on emerging trends in the unit's field, best writing teaching and assessment practices, and GWAR's stance on AI usage in student writing. However, the primary focus would be on expressing the importance of centralizing writing in WI courses.

Data highlights from the self-study include the following:

- Annually, 7,000–9,000 students take the GPE.
- Since 2016, 2,190 GWAR courses have been taught, with 1,607 instructors assigned to teach them.
- Students who place at a low-range score of 7 or below on the GPE must enroll in English 301A. Between Fall 2016 and Fall 2024, 901 students have enrolled in English 301A. Since the full implementation of the 2012 GWAR Policy pathway courses in 2017, the number of English 301A classes has been stable, with an average of 4 sections per academic year. Student enrollments per class have also been stable, with an average of 29 students.
- Students who place at a mid-range score of 8, 9, or 10 on the GPE must enroll in 1 of 6 approved GWAR portfolio courses: ENGL 301B, ENGR 310, FMD 450, HIST 302, IS 301L, and LING 301. Between Fall 2016 and Fall 2024, 12,877 students enrolled in portfolio courses. Since 2017, the number of GWAR portfolio classes has decreased by approximately 29%. Student enrollments in portfolio classes have also decreased by approximately 25%.
- Students who place at an upper-range score of 11 or more on the GPE must enroll in 1 of 66 WI courses. Between Fall 2016 and Fall 2024, 60,945 students have enrolled in WI courses. Since the full implementation of the 2012 GWAR Policy pathway courses, the number of WI classes has increased by 52%. Student enrollments in WI have also increased by approximately 49%, though per-class enrollment average has steadily decreased as new WI courses develop. The current enrollment average is 23.72 students per section.

Impact of the GWAR Self Study Report

At its March 7, 2025, meeting, GWARC initiated discussions on the assessment of WI courses and the implications of AI on campus writing.

Mary Adler from CSU Channel Islands agreed to serve as external reviewer for the CSULB GWARC Program Review. The on-campus review is scheduled for November 6, 2025.

Summary of GWARC Meeting Activities

The following meeting highlights reflect GWARC's ongoing efforts to shape the future of the GWAR and GPE:

- **September 6, 2024.** GWARC elected officers for the academic year, reviewed current trends in its charge, discussed the potential impact of Cal-GETC and the GWAR policy proposal, and voted on three student waiver petitions.
- **September 20, 2024.** The committee examined the implications of Cal-GETC on the GWAR policy proposal, emphasizing the importance of sustaining writing throughout the undergraduate experience. The GWAR Coordinator reported on CEPC's September 11 review and noted interest from the Geography Department in developing additional WI courses.
- **October 4, 2024.** GWARC voted on one student waiver petition and discussed CEPC's September 25 and October 9 reviews of the GWAR policy proposal. Concerns were raised about the removal of two proposed writing courses that would have bridged Composition II and upper-division WI courses. GWARC formally expressed concern about reduced student support and hoped the Academic Senate would eventually address this gap when the policy reaches the Senate.
- **October 18, 2024.** GWARC reviewed and voted on two student waiver petitions and discussed the integration of modules in the revised GWAR policy proposal. The committee strategized ways to support sustained student writing development in light of the two removed writing courses that would have bridged Composition II and the Writing Intensive course.
- **November 1, 2024.** GWARC voted on one student waiver petition and reviewed CEPC's revisions to the GWAR policy proposal. The Committee discussed GWARC's potential role in overseeing the development and implementation of online writing modules in collaboration with Academic Affairs.
- **November 15, 2024.** Continuing its review of CEPC's revisions, GWARC examined the ambiguity surrounding its new charge to "manage" the online writing modules. The Committee also expressed desire for a grace period for the implementation of the new policy. This will allow instructors, students, and staff to adjust to the new policy. The Committee also stated that there needs to be a plan for the many faculty that teach portfolio classes before canceling the classes and a plan for the staff fulfilling GWAR student advising and testing before canceling the GPE.
- **December 6, 2024.** GWARC reviewed and voted on one student waiver petition. The Committee continued discussing its anticipated new charges, such as approving more WI courses.
- **February 7, 2025.** GWARC reviewed and voted on two student waiver petitions. GWARC also discussed the GWAR policy proposal's progression from CEPC to the

Academic Senate. Both the CEPC-revised draft and GWARC's original proposal were presented for Senate consideration.

- **February 21, 2025.** With no new business, GWARC continued its discussion of the Academic Senate's review of the GWAR policy proposal.
- **March 7, 2025.** GWARC reviewed a draft of the GWAR Program Self-Study, prepared by Chair Loretta Victoria Ramirez. The committee emphasized future priorities, including the assessment of WI courses and the development of writing policies responsive to AI technologies.
- **March 21, 2025.** GWARC approved a waiver petition from the University Honors Program (UHP) affecting 25 students who were misled by a UHP catalog error listing a non-WI course as fulfilling the GWAR WI requirement. The committee also continued its exploration of AI's impact on campus writing.
- **April 18, 2025.** GWARC discussed the Provost's April 4 announcement regarding the cancellation of the GPE and GWAR pathway courses (English 301A, 301B, and equivalents). WI courses remain the sole component of GWAR. The committee expressed concern over the abrupt transition. The Committee determined to push back misinformation about the changes in current GWAR policy. Committee representatives committed to providing updates and clarity to their respective colleges.
- **May 2, 2025.** GWARC approved a waiver petition from a Study Abroad Program affecting 9 students, based on a Study Abroad catalog error that incorrectly listed a non-WI course as fulfilling the GWAR WI requirement.