

## **Subcommittee for Reading and Writing Report: Reforms to the Comprehensive Writing Program**

### **Background: 2005 Reading and Writing Subcommittee Recommendations**

In 2005, the Reading and Writing Subcommittee was charged by the Faculty Senate with making recommendations for updating the Comprehensive Writing Program. The Subcommittee's recommendations were guided by the following goals:

- An emphasis on writing in a variety of genres
- Writing as a process of revising and editing
- Practicing writing at all stages of a student's academic career
- Writing as a campus-wide responsibility

The changes to the Comprehensive Writing Program that resulted from the Subcommittee's recommendations included:

- Revision of ENGL20 from an instructor-choice theme course taken at any point in a student's career to a sophomore course focused on introducing students to writing across disciplines.
- Revision of the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) from a high-stakes timed writing exam with a single essay on a single reading to certify the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) to a placement test—the Writing Placement for Juniors (WPJ)—with multiple essays on multiple readings that is a prerequisite for the Writing Intensive course.
- Certification of the GWAR through a C- or better in a Writing Intensive course rather than through a passing score on the WPE.
- Revision of the junior-level GWAR writing course, ENGL109W, from a generic academic writing course to a writing-in-the-major course.

### **Present Context: 2014 Reading and Writing Subcommittee Recommendations**

In 2013 the Reading and Writing Subcommittee was charged by the GE Policies Committee with considering ways to integrate ENGL20 learning outcomes throughout the GE curriculum in anticipation of the possibility of the graduation requirement being removed from English 20. Because ENGL20 plays a pivotal role in the vertical curriculum sequence of the entire Comprehensive Writing Program, the Subcommittee could not meet its charge without considering reforms to the entire writing program sequence. Although the graduation requirement was not removed from ENGL20, the Subcommittee feels that the rest of the proposal for improving the Comprehensive Writing Program is valuable.

This report presents an overview of recommendations to improve the Comprehensive Writing Program that have been endorsed by the Reading and Writing Subcommittee and GE/GRPC and will be forwarded to CPC and then to Senators—along with detailed explanation of each recommendation, policy language, and budget implications—at the first reading of the recommendations in Fall 2014. The recommendations address a number of the concerns expressed during the discussion of ENGL20 at the Faculty Senate:

- The need for more writing throughout GE and the majors
- The need for stronger oversight of Writing Intensive (WI) courses
- The need for better assessment of WI courses in order to achieve more consistency
- The problem of too many courses that have little or no writing

In addition to these goals, the Subcommittee added a number of themes:

- Creating a unified and comprehensive institutional culture of reading and writing
- Embedding writing throughout the curriculum
- Building a manageable assessment process into the Comprehensive Writing Program
- Providing more flexibility for students and for departments

The recommendations are informed by an analysis of award-winning university writing programs from across the country; the expertise of CSUS Composition faculty with Ph.D.'s in writing program administration; the perspectives of Reading and Writing Subcommittee faculty from across colleges, the perspectives of Subcommittee representatives from the administration and from the Office of Academic Program Assessment; and the longitudinal literature on how students learn to write in college (Beaufort, 2007; Carroll, 2002; Haswell, 1991; Herrington and Curtis, 2000; Sternglass, 1997).

The Subcommittee believes that the recommendations in the proposal will lead to more support for student writers (through increased group tutorials), more integration of writing throughout the curriculum (through WID Majors), more valid writing assessment and placement (through GVAR portfolios), and improved assessment and faculty development for the WI program and the University Baccalaureate Learning Goals (through the GVAR Writing Intensive Support and Exchange meeting and new WI outcomes).

## **Overview of Recommendations**

### **A. Recommendation for General Education**

Recommendation A.1: To ensure that students write in a variety of genres and to infuse writing more broadly throughout the GE curriculum, explore the requirement of an area-based writing genre in each GE course.

### **B. Recommendations for the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GVAR)**

Recommendation B.1: To align the first step of the GVAR process with current best practices in writing assessment and the Comprehensive Writing Program curriculum, replace the Writing Placement for Juniors (WPJ), a timed writing test, with a portfolio placement required of all students.

### **C. Recommendations for the Writing Intensive Requirement**

Recommendation C1: To provide more options for student support in writing, open up the small-group adjunct tutoring course ENGL109X (adjunct tutoring for WI courses) to any student enrolled in a WI or WID Major designated course.

Recommendation C2: To bolster the WI requirement and GVAR certification, include the GVAR Coordinator as an ex-officio representative on the GE/GRPC Course Review Subcommittee whenever a WI course or designated WID Major courses are approved.

Recommendation C3: To update and improve the WI course criteria, replace the current criteria with the new outcomes created from the WI focus group activities facilitated by the GVAR Coordinator, the University Reading and Writing Coordinator, and the former Director of the Office of Academic Program Assessment.

Recommendation C4: To insure that the new WI outcomes and the GVAR certification can be met without burdening faculty, recommend a hard cap of 30 on WI courses, so that the student-to-instructor ratio is 30 to 1.

Recommendation C5: To emphasize that intensive writing instruction can occur in more than a single designated course, allow departments to apply to become certified as a Writing Intensive Designated Major (WID Major), so that any student who passes a series of designated courses in the major with a C- or better in each course will satisfy the WI graduation requirement and GVAR certification requirement.

Recommendation C6: To bolster the reliability of GVAR certification and the evaluation students receive in WI courses and WID Majors, provide support for and consistency among WI and WID Major faculty, and provide university assessment for writing that integrates multiple course, program, and university outcomes, hold an annual WI/WID Major assessment meeting: the GVAR Writing Intensive Support and Exchange meeting (GVAR WISE).

<b>D. Recommendation for the Senate to task the Reading and Writing Subcommittee with exploring the creation of a University Writing Department</b>
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Recommendation D: To establish a culture of literacy on our campus by having a visible and tangible location to assemble and coordinate the writing efforts described in the previous ten recommendations, task the Reading and Writing Subcommittee with exploring the creation of an independent University Writing Department.

**The recommendations have been endorsed by the Reading and Writing Subcommittee and GE/GRPC and will be forwarded to CPC and then to Senators—along with detailed explanation of each recommendation, policy language, and budget implications—at the first reading of the recommendations in Fall 2014.**