

2013-14 FACULTY SENATE
GRADUATE STUDIES POLICIES COMMITTEE
MINUTES
03 December 2013
Approved 04 Feb 2014

Members Present: Rob Wassmer, Ed Barakatt, Julian Heather, Ann Blanton, Christine Miller, Jonathan Kaplan, Ken Sprott, Mary Reddick, Tracy Hamilton, Geni Cowan, Sheri Hembree

Members Absent:

Guests:

1. **Call to order:** Called to order at approximately 8:30 a.m.
2. **Minutes of 03 September 2013:**
3. **Information Items:**
 - a. From the chair –
 - i. Spoke to Stephanie Biagetti about input on the graduate program on curriculum committee.
 - ii. SacCT course set up for information exchange on current projects.
4. **Report from Dean of Graduate Studies:**
 - a. No report at this time.
5. **Report from Statewide Senator Chris Miller:**
 - a. No report at this time.
6. **New Business** – Technically not new business but continued discussion of GWAR, Eternal GWAR.
 - A. Ed: Our charge is to identify the meaning, quality, integrity of graduate education. The overall philosophical statement. Progress last time was affected by that. We didn't have that piece.
Jonathan – If we're talking about quality, we've found a way to evaluate it. Integrity means we show we have pieces in place to show that we have programs and review processes to insure we maintain that integrity. The philosophy has to be backed up by tools.

Ed: Looking at the WASC, would it not be appropriate to use their guidelines, what they think quality and integrity looks like? Chevelle is saying that we need to show how Sac State, with an across-the-board concept, is meeting those goals.

Jonathan – Other institutions have wrestled with this as well for undergrad and grad, so we can piggyback off of the language of others. Have rough material gleaned from other institutions so we can look at it.

Tracy – can't be here on the 17th. Ad hoc group can meet that day because the room is available. GSPC doesn't feel that we need to meet.

GWAR – we need to decide what the writing policy will be for grad students.

Paired course policy – need feedback from programs that use this tool.

Credit hour policy – need feedback from credential program.

WASC – waiting for ad hoc group to give input.

GWAR – we have an idea about what we want our students to be able to do.

We want them to be able to write in the discipline. We shouldn't be working on remedial writing skills. A department that wants to use a diagnostic to determine the level of writing can do so, and then use it to determine admission or whether a given student needs intervention.

One of the concerns would be that for students that needed intervention, a department would be advised to not accept that student.

Ed – But the department should decide on how to diagnose and on what to do with the diagnosis.

Jonathan – Whatever we develop needs to be somewhat uniform across departments. The easiest way to achieve uniformity would be a class.

Graduate writing intensive classes would be the way to go because there's a product that's measurable. Then the cumulative experience proves the product in its final form.

Rob – But it can't just be discipline-specific. If we're certifying that everyone with a graduate degree reaches a certain level of writing, then we need to have writing that's not just field-specific.

Sheri – Do we have to document students are ready when they come in, or can the writing diagnostic be later?

Tracy – The first step seems to be key for some departments. They need an early finding.

Ed – Could make it a university-wide policy where there's a diagnostic. Then any given department could accept an unprepared student and send them to an intensive writing course that not only has subject content but overall goals as well.

The department determines the interpretation of the diagnostics.

Tracy – Grad coordinators and grad council, especially for those who do theses, are needing that early step. Do we have to diagnose or is it resources to remediate?

Sheri – If you have a student that needs writing support, where do you send them? Grad writing center or workshops that are relatively self-supporting.

Tracy – Explicitly , there has to be some sort of writing requirement:

1. Exam – If you passed, on you go. If not, you take the class. The rubric of the exam is then really important. And the design of the class is also really important. In the past, the exam has been ridiculously easy and the class didn't teach much. It was seen as just a fee the student paid.
2. Class
3. Exam and class

Mary- What are we going to take forward to the senate? We need to decide the options and send it forward.

Group agreed we need to be pro-active and send our ideas forward.

Jonathan – Presumably, there is a funding problem with providing the exam. Grad programs can't get their writing proposals passed because they're not doing something right. Departments want autonomy to offer a class, but the department proposal is not being approved.

Julian – If we're going to look seriously at a diagnostic and intervention, we need to decide what they're looking for and what they intend to do.

Chris – Other universities: San Marcos has a policy that says you satisfy GWAR before advancing to candidacy. GRE acceptable test score or paper that receives passing score. Faculty in a department looks at the paper with a rubric. The department has to have a remediation plan on file. This situates the GWAR in a home-rule requirement.

Julian - GWAR is certified by the culminating experience at Sac State.

Sheri – Doesn't meet final experience. That should be the step to advance to candidacy.

Chris – Each master's program will file its own remediation plan. Provide the OGS with annual aggregate student performance data. Number of student attempts at satisfying GWAR.

Tracy - Having a writing center isn't a policy, it's a resource.

Mary – But it will never pass if the remediation support isn't satisfied.

Tracy – WPJ and WPG were the tests that are self-supporting from student fees. WPJ is likely to be dropped and WPG doesn't generate enough business to support itself.

Sheri – If the test doesn't self-support, then that won't work. The workshops may be the answer because it's an experience they get, not just the test.

Group decision: Talk to Dan about what that resource, workshop, would be and cost. GSPC doesn't want to have remediation pawned off on the departments. The central question is, are students ready to write at the grad level?

Jonathan – Sounds like the charge is more than just writing in the department, it's a more general writing requirement.

Sheri – Departments complain that they 'don't have anything to work with. The student is writing word salad.'

Mary - Need a campus-wide process.

Tracy - San Marcos either has high enough GREs or writing this paper.

Mary – The CCE class is still there. It would be good if we had statistics on how that class is working. It would be useful to know.

Sheri – Our department designed the GWI class and stopped sending students to CCE.

Geni – Sounds like the San Marcos design mimics GWIs. I don't want to see the GWIs scrapped, in part because of the work that's gone into it. Our program has writing throughout the program. Every course has writing in it. San Marcos has a framework.

Sheri – The GWI model works. It's just what standards do we use university wide? The GWI process requires departments to do the work and to report on it.

Tracy – Some departments don't want GWI courses or requirements. But the paper and an overall rubric for all departments would be a way to deal with that. The approval of this would be the curriculum committee, not the reading and writing committee, because Reading and Writing is a policy committee, not evaluative.

Geni – Have options for departments to choose. Having a course means providing remediation. Writing a paper means having to come up with a way to fix it.

Tracy – But the options would mean some could choose not to have the student and others would choose just to have the paper.

Geni – But if the paper's not good, what are you going to do about it.

Mary – But the rubric – style and format, integration, ideation – would be looked at.

Rob – The GRE score bar is set very high. The paper bar would be set low.

Heather – A rubric for a paper showing grad-level writing above undergrad-level writing, and using it as a tool to assess growth in writing, applied at different stages, would show improvement.

Chris – Assign rubric numbers. In program review, ask departments and programs to apply the same rubric to the culminating experience. This gets you comparative assessment data. If the paper is applied before advancement to candidacy, that gets you the GEAR-WASC requirement. If it's done twice, then that helps in program review.

Mary – Contact San Marcos to see if they feel it's working.

Rob – Departments are not getting classes approved and that's a problem. Part of the intent of the ruling was to force departments to do that. Part of WASC quality and integrity desires is to get programs to do that.

Jonathan – Do we want math professors to develop writing courses? Are they the ones that should be teaching written communication? Part of the discussion still needs to be an overarching writing goal.

Rob – Can people read and summarize, communicate, read the journal articles and write them and communicate?

Tracy – In math, students can't read journal articles, maybe one out of 12.

Ken – It's difficult to read any kind of research article and get something out of it. There's other things Master's-level students should be able to do. Be able to write a memo, communicate an idea. Need to have a standard. Will there be a push-back in demanding quality?

Tracy – Grad writing should look very different from undergrad in terms of content. Undergrad looks like it will retain writing intensive.

Ken – Even with the paper, a lot of programs complain they don't have a class for writing.

Chris – They need to add a paper.

Jonathan- A department has to have a class that requires a paper.

Ken – The GWI classes have to have some kind of editing and some kind of review, feedback of the paper.

Chris – A rubric for a paper is different than giving feedback all the way along in a class.

Geni – The foundational level is important, critical thinking and analytical abilities in writing. Every grad program needs to have one paper assessed with a general rubric, but what to do with results is a different issue all together. GWI courses are probably already doing it. WPG and WPJ exams have such a low threshold. There's danger in trying to apply a standard across the board. But it may be at their entry, we need to assess grad level writing. Each discipline knows what they need to teach their students. But they also must have something that satisfies WASC. If you don't want a paper, then use the score on the GRE.

Sheri – Departments decide on meeting requirements for GWAR. GRE or GPA, defining the standard. Maybe the GWI.

Mary – Raise the standard, GSPC decides the standard. Eliminate the WPG.

Chris – The paper option, if a department takes it, means they have to decide what the student will do if the paper isn't good enough.

Geni - The GWI courses would address that, potentially. Departments need help deciding on the alternatives. Grad writing workshops would be one answer to that. A remedial pathway for people who don't pass on the paper. Structuring a sentence, writing basics, writing workshop offered once or twice a semester. Standards haven't been high enough.

Chris – If a student didn't get a high enough score on the paper, require the student take the GRE and get a certain score, or take the workshop.

Geni – The student has to pay for it one way or the other. The workshop has to have an entrance-exit instrument to prove efficacy. It's reasonable to

expect this of an instructor. Demonstrate some level of competence in addressing what got students into the workshop in the first place.
Julian – Then resubmit the paper applying what they learned.
Genie – The worst writing I've ever read was from a student who passed the WPG.

Geni would like to take a closer look at this, think about it, and report back to the committee.

Tracy will put together a first draft using these ideas, put things in an optional form that GSPC can look at in the first meeting of next semester as a starting point. She will also look at what's happening on the undergrad side, philosophical and concrete together.

7. **Other Business:** There was no other business.
8. **Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:15

Ann Blanton, Vice-Chair, GSPC