

Subcommittee for Reading and Writing Proposal for Reforms to the Comprehensive Writing Program

The Subcommittee for Reading and Writing was charged by GE/GRPC 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 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. The proposal addresses 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

The following proposal presents the Subcommittee's vision for a revised Comprehensive Writing Program with ENGL20 still in place as a graduation requirement. Appendix A contains a flowchart outlining the proposed revised sequencing of the Comprehensive Writing Program.

The recommendations in this proposal are guided by the goals of the 2005 Reading and Writing Subcommittee's recommendations for reforms to the Comprehensive Writing Program, which include:

- 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

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

- 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 in this proposal 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; Caroll, 2002; Haswell, 1991; Herrington and Curtis, 2000; Sternglass, 1997).

The Subcommittee believes that the recommendations in this 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).

The Subcommittee recommends that the recommendations in this proposal be targeted for a Fall 2015 implementation date.

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, the Faculty Senate recommends that the Reading and Writing Subcommittee explore the requirement of an area-based writing genre in each GE course.

To begin the process of considering this requirement, representatives from courses in each GE area would meet to generate a list of genres commonly taught in that area (for example, book reviews, lab reports, reading response journals, etc.). Example assignments and student models could be collected and housed on a GE writing resource website. This collection could include types of writing assignments that are manageable for large courses. If the requirement is agreed upon, each GE instructor would be asked to choose at least one of the GE area-based genres to teach in his or her GE course. The list of genres would continue to expand as more instructors teach GE courses. The policy for this recommendation would be forthcoming after GE area meetings.

Budget Implications: None

B. Recommendations for the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)

Recommendation B.1: To align the first step of the GWAR process with current best practices in writing assessment and the Comprehensive Writing Program curriculum, the Faculty Senate recommends replacing the Writing Placement for Juniors (WPJ), a timed writing test, with a portfolio placement required of all students (see GWAR policy document).

Timed writing tests like the WPJ conflict with the curriculum taught in composition courses and WI courses, which emphasize writing in a variety of genres, writing as a process, and revising based on feedback from peers and the instructor. Portfolios are considered the current best practice in writing assessment and placement and are supported by national research (Belanoff, 1991; Black, 1995; Cushing Weigle, 2002; Eliot, 2005; Haswell and Wyche-Smith, 1994; Huot, 2002; Yancey and Weiser, 1997), local research (see Appendix B), and position statements on assessment from the National Council of Teachers of English and the Conference on College Composition and Communication. A portfolio version of the WPJ was successfully piloted by the COMPASS/COSA program. Setting the portfolio placement moment at 60-80 units would allow transfer students a full semester to compile a portfolio. Native students would have the option of compiling their portfolio in English 20. Students who do not submit their GWAR portfolio by 80 units would have a hold placed on their registration. The GWAR coordinator will pay and train volunteer faculty to score the portfolios. See Appendix C for a description of the proposed GWAR portfolio process and guidelines.

Budget Implications: Neutral. The fee that students used to pay for taking the WPJ will be used to pay for the portfolio placement. The placement distributions into English 109 and English 1X should remain the same.

C. Recommendations for the Writing Intensive Requirement

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

We currently allow students to self-place into ENGL1X, the small-group adjunct tutorial for first-year composition courses, but not 109X. Because they are facilitated by Instructional Student Assistants (ISAs), small-group tutorials are a cost-effective way to increase student writing success. 109X also provides more support for WI instructors and reduces their responding workload. This recommendation will not mean an increased WPJ placement in 109X.

Budget Implications: Based on a survey of students in WI courses, we anticipate the need for 4-6 new sections of ENGL109X each semester. ENGL109X is taught by an ISA and has a cap of 15 students so it meets College of Arts and Letters efficiency targets.

Recommendation C2: To bolster the WI requirement and GEAR certification, the Faculty Senate recommends including the GEAR Coordinator as an ex-officio representative on the GE/GRPC Course Review Subcommittee whenever a WI course or WID Major is approved.

Currently a task force of the Reading and Writing Subcommittee is part of the approval process for all Graduate Writing Intensive courses. This practice has allowed for increased feedback on GEAR course writing assignments, and a similar process should be implemented at the undergraduate level. Because the WI course and WID Major is connected to the GEAR certification, the GEAR Coordinator can help provide expert feedback on WI and WID Major proposals. GE/GRPC can include this change in its course approval process policies revision plan. GE/GRPC would need to revise its charge to reflect this change.

Budget Implications: None

Recommendation C3: To update and improve the WI course guidelines, the Faculty Senate recommends replacing the current WI guidelines with the new guidelines and shared learning outcomes created from the WI focus group activities facilitated by the GEAR Coordinator, the University Reading and Writing Coordinator, and the former Director of the Office of Academic Program Assessment (see WI policy document).

The facilitators mentioned above met with multiple focus groups of WI instructors from across the curriculum; drafted a set of revised learning outcomes and guidelines for WI courses based on feedback from the focus groups and the university outcomes for written communication, reading, information literacy, and critical thinking; emailed the draft to all WI instructors; and made further revisions based on feedback from the WI instructors (see new criteria and outcomes below). The current WI guidelines are limited and don't reflect current practices in WI courses (see <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/acad/fsg00020.htm#WritingIntensive> for current WI guidelines).

Writing Intensive/WID Major Requirements

Students must pass a series of Writing Intensive Designated Major (WID Major) courses with a C- or higher in each course or pass a course designated Writing Intensive with a C- or higher. The Writing Intensive requirement is a graduation requirement that can be satisfied in one of three ways: a) Departments/programs may apply to be approved as a WID Major; b) Departments/programs may specify that the Writing Intensive requirement must be met in the major; b) In cases where the requirement is not specified as required in the major, the department/program may allow students to take a Writing Intensive course outside the major. Departments/programs wishing to have courses approved as Writing Intensive or wishing to be approved as a WID Major must submit the proper forms and supporting materials to the General Education Course Review Subcommittee, which shall review and approve the course for listing as Writing Intensive or approve the WID Major with the GEAR Coordinator as an ex-officio member; c) If a student is not in a WID Major or not allowed or required to take the Writing Intensive course in the major, the student must take the course from the list of approved G.E. courses.

Writing Intensive/WID Major Course Criteria

Students will:

1. Practice revision and self-editing based on feedback from the instructor and from peers in WI and WID Major courses that include peer response
2. Make appropriate rhetorical choices about the context and purpose for their writing: genre, audience, visuals, format, evidence, tone, organization, and conventions to meet the expectations of audience members in the discipline
3. Use reading and writing to think critically about disciplinary content (for example: to make and support arguments, to understand key concepts, to summarize and synthesize information, to reflect on personal experiences, to explore ideas, etc.)
4. Practice the analytical approaches and credible use of sources of the discipline in WI courses required for majors and WID Major courses
5. Write at least 5000 words

Instructors will:

1. Require student revision based on instructor feedback and from peers in WI and WID Major courses that include peer response
2. Focus response on higher order concerns such as content, analysis, and organization but also ask students to edit for lower order concerns such as syntax and mechanics
3. Integrate writing throughout the semester and not just in a final term paper
4. Assign both formal and informal writings
5. Assign a variety of disciplinary genres or a single, larger project broken down into smaller assignments
6. Assign a minimum of 5000 words of writing, including formal and informal writings, and also including graded and ungraded writings

Writing Intensive/WID Major Course Outcomes

By the end of the Writing Intensive course, or by the end of the Writing Intensive Designated Major courses, students will demonstrate that they can:

1. Engage in writing as a process that includes invention, revision, and editing based on feedback from the instructor and from peers in WI and WID Major courses that include peer response (University Written Communication Outcomes);
2. Compose documents which respond critically to disciplinary contexts and purposes and signal the writer's credible participation in disciplinary conversations with attention to a wide range of genre and discipline-specific conventions including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices (University Written Communication and Critical Thinking Outcomes);
3. Display evidence of careful editing with skillful control of syntax, grammar, and mechanics appropriate to the assignment (University Written Communication Outcomes);
4. Research relevant sources, evaluate their credibility, and effectively integrate sources and evidence into the text in ways that are appropriate to the discipline (University Information Literacy Outcomes);
5. Critically read and interpret texts which reflect the values and standards of their discipline (University Reading Outcomes).

To achieve these outcomes, Writing Intensive courses should be capped at no more than 30 students. Because WID Majors integrate writing throughout a series of required courses rather than a single course, class sizes for WID Major courses may vary.

Budget Implications: None

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

A literature review and campus survey conducted by the Senate Class Size Task Force in 2003 revealed that a significant decrease in assigning writing and feedback on writing is the most pronounced result of class size increases (see also Cuseo, Horning, and Light in the bibliography of this proposal). The national norm for WI course caps is 20-25, and the majority of CSUs with a WI requirement also fall within the 20-25 cap range (see Appendix D). The WI course is both a graduation requirement and the certification for the undergraduate GVAR, and the one writing-intensive course all Sacramento State upper-division students take. The national

norm for class sizes in WI courses is twenty to thirty. A number of colleges and departments have raised/are considering raising class size to up to forty in WI classes. The WI course requires 5,000 words of writing from students and extensive and timely feedback from the instructor, which is not realistic in a course of more than thirty students. The statement of the recommended hard cap can be added to policy (see recommendation C3) and the WI proposal form found at <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ge/GE%20forms/wrtngIntnsv.html>. Because WID Majors integrate writing throughout a series of required courses rather than a single course, class sizes for WID Major courses may vary.

Budget Implications: Based on WI class size data from Spring and Fall 2013, we estimate the need for 7-9 more WI courses each semester, although this should be fully or partially offset by the creation of WID Majors.

Recommendation C5: To emphasize that intensive writing instruction can occur in more than a single designated course, the Faculty Senate recommends allowing 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.

Current best practices in Writing Across the Curriculum have moved away from single-course requirements and toward embedding writing in disciplinary curriculum. To be certified as a WID Major, departments will need to meet the WI outcomes with a series of required upper-division courses rather than a single course. This recommendation does not replace all WI courses with WID Majors, but does allow departments the option of becoming a WID Major. The GE/GRPC Course Review Subcommittee, with the GVAR Coordinator as an ex-officio member, will be responsible for certifying WID Majors using the WI/WID Major requirements (see recommendation C3) and the guidelines in Appendix E. WID Majors will have the option of receiving a University Reading and Writing Center tutor or a one-unit adjunct writing tutorial for one designated WID major course each semester and a certification letter from the GVAR Coordinator that can be used for program review or outside accreditation purposes. See recommendation C3 for proposed WI and WID Major outcomes.

Budget Implications: It is difficult to predict how many departments will create WID Majors, but the end result will be fewer WI courses. The additional adjunct tutorial courses for WID Majors will not represent an added cost since they are taught by ISAs and most will be larger than the current adjunct tutorial courses (1X and 109X).

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, the Faculty Senate recommends holding an annual WI/WID Major assessment meeting: the GVAR Writing Intensive Support and Exchange meeting (GVAR WISE).

Current assessment of the WI program does not look at student writing or provide feedback for students or instructors. In addition, as a university-wide requirement the WI program and future WID Majors are a logical place to gather data for WASC assessment *before* we are forced as a campus to use an external assessment method. Writing samples from the WI program and WID Majors can provide information about program and university written communication, critical thinking, reading, and information literacy outcomes. The GVAR Coordinator will facilitate an annual assessment and faculty development meeting, the GVAR Writing Intensive Support and Exchange meeting (GVAR WISE), and pay a faculty member from each department that offers a WI course or is a WID Major to attend. Faculty members will bring sample student work and participate in calibration and faculty development activities. GE can include this requirement in its assessment policies, and the assessment data can be used for department assessment activities, required WASC university assessment, and to assess the revisions to the Comprehensive Writing Program included in this proposal.

Budget Implications: Small stipends for faculty members and costs of food for the event.

D. Recommendation for the Senate to task the Reading and Writing Subcommittee with exploring the creation of a University Writing Department

Recommendation D1: 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 recommendations, the Faculty Senate recommends tasking the Reading and Writing Subcommittee with exploring the creation of an independent University Writing Department.

A University Writing Department could house not only the current GE writing requirements but also provide a disciplinary home for faculty development and student support for disciplinary-based writing. It would centralize the writing work that is now spread out among individuals and within different programs to better shape that work and to be more responsive to the needs of students and faculty. It could continue to offer and expand innovative and interdisciplinary coursework in writing for majors, minors, and writing support at the undergraduate and graduate levels. It could coordinate university assessment of writing and assessment of the recommendations put forward in this proposal. It would also provide a location to celebrate writing done on our campus as a means of showcasing how student and faculty writing impacts our culture. The Reading and Writing Subcommittee would consult with affected stakeholders, conduct a cost analysis, consider the impact on other programs, and recommend the best location. The Subcommittee would report its finding to the Senate via the Curriculum Policies Committee by the end of the Spring 2015 semester.

Some examples of university writing departments can be found at the following websites:

Cornell: http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/

DePaul University: <https://las.depaul.edu/departments/writing-rhetoric-and-discourse/Pages/default.aspx>

Grand Valley State University: <http://www.gvsu.edu/writing/>

Hofstra University: <https://www.hofstra.edu/Academics/Colleges/hclas/WRITING/index.html>

James Madison University: <http://www.jmu.edu/wrtc/>

San Diego State University: <http://rhetoric.sdsu.edu/>

Syracuse University: <http://wrt.syr.edu/visionandmission.html>

University of Arkansas, Little Rock: <http://ualr.edu/rhetoric/>

University of California, Davis: <http://writing.ucdavis.edu/>

University of Central Arkansas: <http://uca.edu/writing/>

University of Central Florida: <http://writingandrhetoric.cah.ucf.edu/>

University of Massachusetts, Amhurst: <http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/>

University of Minnesota, Duluth: <http://www.d.umn.edu/writ/>

University of New Hampshire: <http://www.unh.edu/writing/>

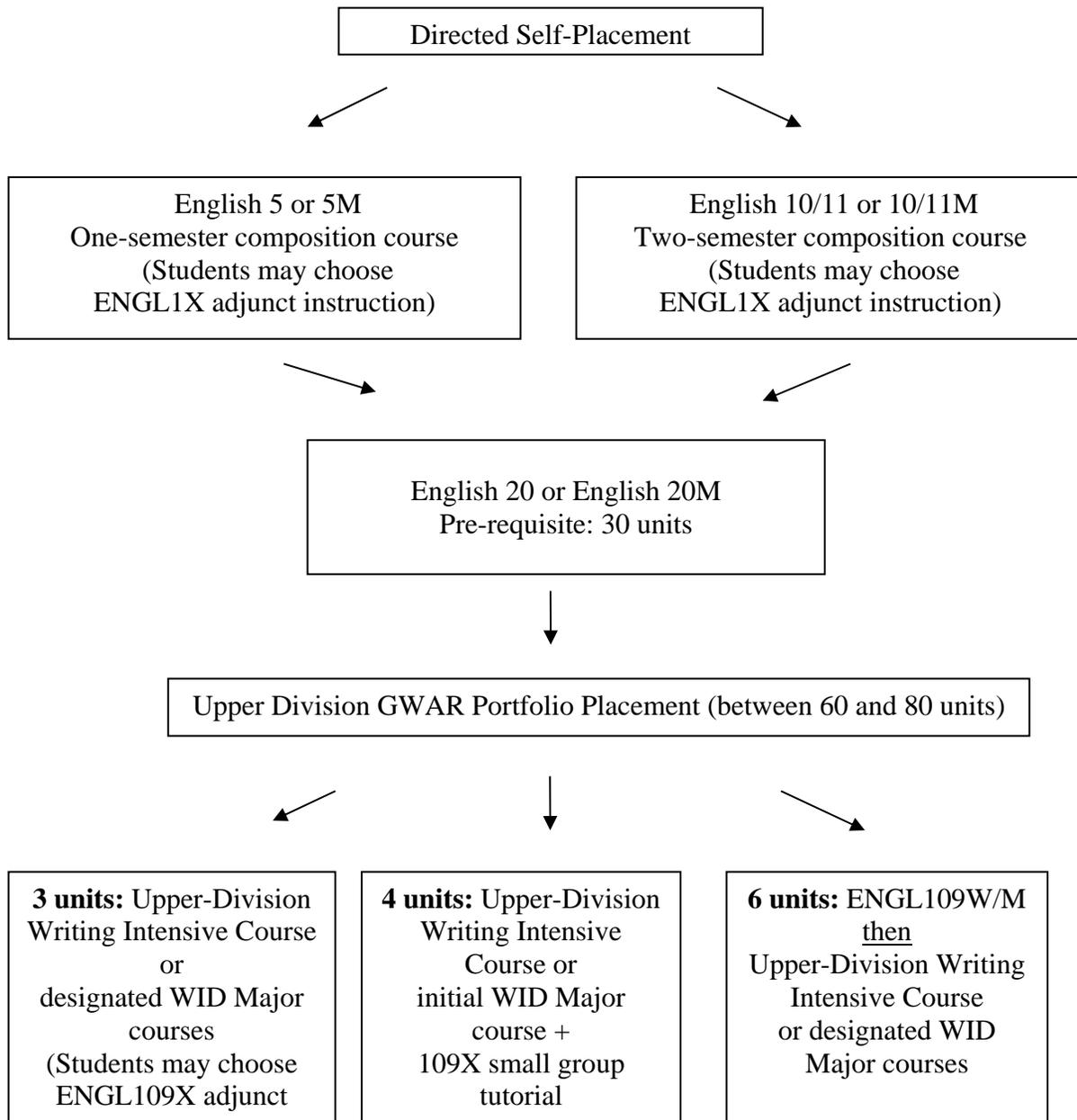
University of Rhode Island: <http://harrington.uri.edu/undergraduate-program/writing-rhetoric/>

University of San Francisco: <http://www.usfca.edu/artsci/rhetlang/>

University of Utah: <http://writing-program.utah.edu/?pageId=38>

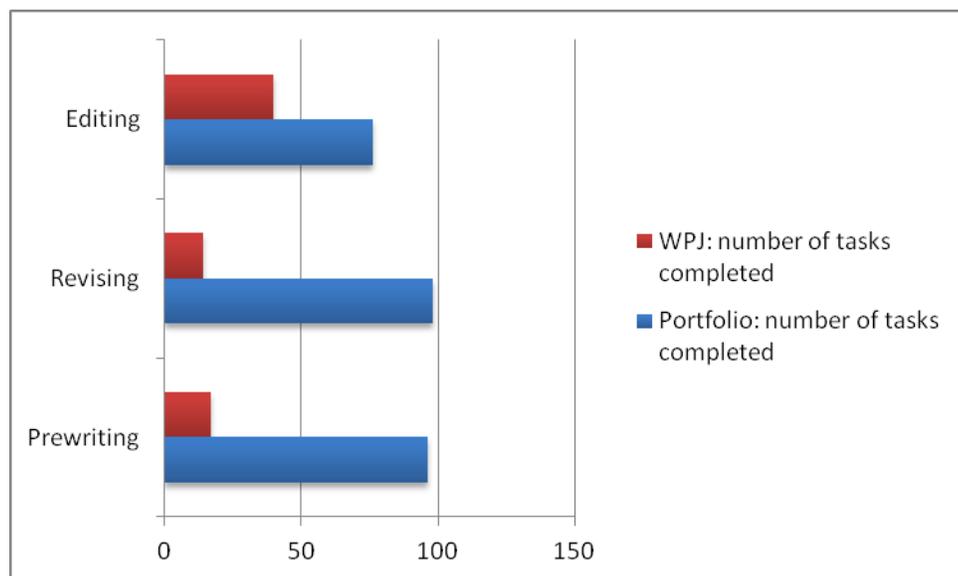
Budget Implications: The Reading and Writing Subcommittee can present a cost analysis of the formation of a University Writing Department to the Senate.

Appendix A: Proposed Comprehensive Writing Program Flowchart



Appendix B: Local Research on the WPJ versus Portfolio Assessment

A comparison study of the revising and editing processes of students taking the WPJ versus students completing the ENGL109 portfolio GWAR writing course was completed by Rhetoric and Composition graduate student Brittany DeAvilan in 2012 for her thesis. DeAvilan analyzed 60 WPJ exams and 60 ENGL109 portfolios and coded them for acts of prewriting, revising, and editing. The figure below shows DeAlva's results for all exams and portfolios.



The results of DeAvilan's study mirror the scholarly research on timed writing assessment, which has found that in timed writing situations students engage in limited prewriting and revising and focus most of their efforts on editing sentences and fixing spelling errors and typos, while in portfolio assessment students engage in extensive prewriting, make significant revisions, receive feedback from peers and the instructor, and edit with more care (see bibliography).

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Appendix C: Proposed GVAR Portfolio Process and Guidelines

Every student buys a GVAR Portfolio Packet at the campus bookstore. Packet includes:

- Instructions for collecting their written work and assignment sheets
- Specifications for number of assignments/pages, genres, etc.
- Cover Sheets for faculty to confirm that the assignments were completed in their class
- Suggestions and discipline-specific examples for reflecting and for selecting assignments
- Portfolio Evaluation Rubric
- Information about Portfolio Placements

Student keeps hard copies of writing assignments, along with Assignment Sheets and signed Cover Sheets

Student submits to GVAR program at 60 to 80 units. Native students have the option of compiling their GVAR portfolios in English 20.

Portfolio consists of the following:

- 3 or 4 (or 15 pages) writing assignments
- a faculty-signed cover sheet (GVAR will provide a form) for each assignment
- a 2-page Cover Letter with a description of the writer's approach to the writing assignments and arguing for a particular placement (GVAR will provide guidelines).

GVAR Coordinator:

- trains and pays faculty readers to score portfolios
- provides support to all stakeholders

Support for Students:

Portfolio preparation workshops led by trained peer tutors

Optional GVAR portfolio compilation in English 20 for native students

English 109X small-group tutorial concurrently with WI course or WID Major courses

Writing Tutors in WID Major courses

Portfolio preparation and submission guidelines have multiple distribution venues:

Transfer Orientation/handbook

English 20

local community college Deans and Chairs

Writing Programs website

GE WI faculty

University Reading and Writing Center

Department Chairs

Support for WI Faculty and WID Major Faculty:

Portfolio guidelines handout

Portfolio support workshops offered each semester

Writing Tutors (WID Majors only)

Faculty may make individual appointments with GVAR Coordinator

GVAR Sourcebook

Faculty invited to be paid GVAR Portfolio readers

GVAR Writing Intensive Support and Exchange (WISE) annual meeting

GVAR WISE: WI course faculty and faculty from WID Majors are paid to bring a few samples of students' work to this exchange; participants read, discuss, and calibrate (Dynamic Criteria Mapping and other methods) for program assessment using WI outcomes.

Appendix D: Writing Intensive Course Cap National Data

CSU Chico: 20
CSU Dominguez Hills: 25
CSU Fresno: 25
CSU Long Beach: 35
CSU San Francisco: 20
Drew University: 20
Fairmont State University: 20
George Mason: 35
Lehman College: 22
Lincoln College: 25
Louisiana State University: 35
Loyola University: 18
Muhlenberg College: 20
Murray State University: 20
Oregon State University: 25
Radford University: 18
Rutgers: 25
St. Ambrose University: 18
Stetson University: 16
Texas A & M: 20
University of Connecticut: 19
University of Hawaii: 16
University of Missouri, Colombia: 20
UNC Greensboro: 25
UNC Pembroke: 20
Utica College: 20
William Patterson University: 25
Winthrop University: 20
Western Oregon University: 25

Appendix E: Writing Intensive Designated (WID) Undergraduate and Graduate Major Guidelines

Students in undergraduate and graduate WID Majors meet the GVAR by completing a designated set of approved core courses that they take as part of the major requirements:

- ✓ This pathway is a good option for programs in which writing or a portfolio is a significant component, as well as programs in which classes for the major are clearly sequenced and/or in which students are closely cohorted.
- ✓ Students in the undergraduate GVAR track would submit a GVAR portfolio to initiate their GVAR sequence, and would take any coursework required by the GVAR Placement Score. The GVAR would be certified when they complete each of the designated set of upper-division courses in the WID Major with a grade of C- or higher.
- ✓ The GVAR will provide a University Reading and Writing Center tutor or a one-unit adjunct writing tutorial for one designated WID major course each semester in each undergraduate WID Major.
- ✓ The GVAR Coordinator will write a letter of support for WID Majors that can be used for program review and external accreditation.
- ✓ The GVAR Coordinator will be available to work with departments to establish their WID Major outcomes for a specific set of classes and to provide support for faculty teaching those classes.
- ✓ Departments could also offer undergraduate WID Minors.
- ✓ WID course Student Evaluations would be administered in each section offered.
- ✓ Majors and Minors seeking WID approval will submit the following documentation to the GE/GRPC Course Review Curriculum Subcommittee (GVAR will provide a Form):
 - explanation of how program is structured to guarantee that all students will take all the pertinent courses
 - explanation of how program will ensure that completing the designated set of courses will enable students to produce the required number of pages and meet the articulated writing outcomes
 - description of outcomes assessment for the writing component of the program, including components from relevant AACU rubrics
 - mission statement or program goals specifically addressing the use of writing
 - description of faculty development opportunities to work on writing assignments
- ✓ Reading and Writing Subcommittee will complete 5-year review of all WID Majors and Minors to ensure consistency of requirements.

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