Memorandum

TO: Faculty Teaching Research or Capstone Courses in Spring 2016

FROM: Sheree Meyer, Dean for Undergraduate Studies
On Behalf of the WASC Working Group for Core Competencies

SUBJECT: Solicitation of Student Work for Assessment of Critical Thinking and Information Literacy

DATE: 12/21/15

As you are likely aware, Sacramento State is currently in the midst of our accreditation review with WASC (Senior College and University Commission). One required component of our review is an assessment of core competencies. WASC identifies five core competencies, but in this review, we are responsible for providing evidence of our students' attainment of our standards for three of them: Written Competence; Critical Thinking; and Information Literacy.

Last spring, we collected student writing samples from our Writing Intensive Courses and reviewed them using a modified AAC&U Value Rubric for Written Communication. We will be doing that again this spring.

I am writing to you, however, because this spring we will also collect student samples to review for evidence of the attainment of the other two competencies: Critical Thinking and Information Literacy. It has been determined that in Spring 2016, you will be teaching a course in which students will produce either a research assignment, a capstone project, or senior seminar paper, etc. These genres typically require a high level of critical thinking and information literacy pertinent to your discipline. We realize that these genres vary widely in scope and presentation. We are, therefore, asking for two brief additional student assignments that should demonstrate the qualities identified in the rubrics across disciplines: a summary of the rationale and a reflection on the research process.

I. Write a summary of the rationale for your senior, capstone or final project? What did you hope your audience would learn and understand about your senior project? (target length = **500 words**)

II. Write a 500-word reflection in which you describe your research process in completing your senior, capstone or final project (target length = **500 words**):
- How did you determine when and how to cite sources?
- On what basis did you choose your sources?
- Why did you decide to use sources in the way that you did?
- How did you differentiate between your ideas and those of your sources?

We ask, therefore, that you include these assignments in your syllabus so that students are forewarned; they should be due along with the senior, capstone or final project, but you do not have to include them in your grading of senior, capstone or final projects.

The WASC Core Competencies Working Group will not be reviewing the students' actual projects or papers—just the summary and reflection assignments. We ask that you follow these guidelines in submitting these samples:

- Please turn in all students' work from your section. Do not select from the student work.
- Please identify all students' work by **student ID number** (Please assure the students, however, that the results of this assessment will not impact the students' individual records, grades, etc.)
- Please turn in one copy of the original project/paper/capstone assignment description to which the students responded. If you do not have a written assignment sheet, please write a brief description of the assignment parameters, criteria, etc.
- Submit hard copy or electronic copy to the Office of Undergraduate Studies (Sacramento 234)/Janett Torset: torsetj@csus.edu)

We realize that often these assignments are not due until the end of the semester; therefore, the deadline for submission of the samples to the Office of Undergraduate Studies is **May 23, 2016**. You may, however, submit them earlier if that is convenient.

Lastly, we are also including a copy of the rubrics that we will be using to assess the samples. The rubrics are broad-based so that they can be used to assess work from across the disciplines. Please feel free to share these rubrics with your students, so that they can see the connection between the assignments and the outcomes.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email me at 278-5344 or meyers@csus.edu.

On behalf of the WASC Core Competencies Working Group, thank you!