

Minutes
GWAR Committee
USU 311
1:30 – 3 PM

Meeting Number 3
October 7, 2011

In attendance: Gary Griswold, Linda Sarbo, Rick Tuveson, Yu Ding, Diana Hines, Colleen Dunagan, Rebekha Abbuhl, Bron Pellissier, Mark Wiley, Nathen Jensen

1. Approval of agenda: MSP
2. Minutes of meeting on September 16, 2011: MSP
3. Announcements:
 - a. WPE reading on October 15, 2011.
4. External review
 - a. Fiona Glade, the reviewer, recommended:
 - i. More faculty development
 - ii. More options for students
 - iii. Include another piece of writing in the portfolio
 - iv. Expand GWAR committee oversight to include the GE capstone courses. She suggested that instead of having a subset of GE that is writing intensive (hurdles to graduation etc), we should simply have more oversight in terms of enforcing what is already in the policy regarding writing. One way of doing this would be having periodic sampling of those courses and that there should be more faculty development and that we could take a role in that.
 - b. A couple of concerns and questions were raised:
 - i. English 301B may not be the best place for 1.5 generation and native speakers who fail the WPE. She was looking at the GPE and our ideas about increasing its difficulty and how that might affect pass rates for native speakers and generation 1.5 students.
 - ii. How would we create more course offerings or designate courses that would be more appropriate for native speakers and generation 1.5 students?

- iii. Why did she suggest not certifying a subset of the GE capstone courses as writing intensive but rather having oversight over the current GE coursework? She suggested this idea in order to avoid bottle-necking and also to not make requirements more complicated by adding yet another hurdle.

5. Policy Draft

- a. Discussion of adding writing intensive designation vs. increasing oversight over GE Capstones.
 - i. How are we going to enforce departments reducing the enrollment and increasing writing standards across the board in their capstone courses.
 - ii. At external review, a suggestion was made to make “soft” caps and implement changes over time gradually.
 - iii. Discussion of how many capstones existed as of Writing Task Force Assessments’ summary of enrollments in courses. Approximately 50% have more than 30 students in them, though only 5% or so are in the 100s range. Approximately 74% have 50 or less.
 - iv. Maybe if we lower enrollment caps (instead of offering more courses), there would be enough capstones being offered that students would just end up better distributed across courses.
 - v. How many sections of writing intensive courses would we need in order to meet the demand of requiring at least one writing intensive course?
 - vi. There is concern that there really is no way to enforce GE policy, in part, due to the pressure to keep enrollments up.
 - vii. Can we make part of our argument the idea that lowering distribution across the capstones would just lead to a better distribution of students across the capstones (and departments), and then modify policy to state students finish the GWAR by completing three capstone courses. This idea would require putting prerequisites on all of the capstone courses.
 - viii. We need to keep in mind that we are also trying to better connect the GWAR to the established curriculum.
 - ix. How would we actually enforce any standard in instruction, since we are talking about something in the range of 150 capstone courses?
 - x. At least we would be able to monitor enrollment caps.

- xi. Right now the recertification process has been put indefinitely on hold, so there isn't even a process that we can piggyback on. If this process existed, there would be a system for monitoring standards.
- xii. Lack of incentive to develop writing intensive courses.
- xiii. Advising students might be simpler if we did not add the writing intensive thing as an additional component.
- xiv. If we decide to write oversight responsibilities into the policy, we still need to define procedures for ourselves. How would we evaluate the writing intensive component? Who would we report to? What actions could we actually take?
- xv. If we go with oversight, we don't need to specify enrollments and such in the policy because it is in the GE policy and we can just draft language that we are enforcing the capstone policy as it currently exists.

b. What do we want to do?

- i. We could simplify completely and get rid of WPE and simply say we are requiring the three capstones (C or better) as they are currently defined as writing intensive and then add our oversight power and start to work toward making the capstones more truly writing intensive.
- ii. Maybe get some more information. Look at other campuses. Maybe talk to Lynn Mahoney about the dilemma. UCI requires a writing intensive course in their discipline to be taken by all students.
- iii. Can the university budget capstone courses differently? So that the expense is not dependent upon enrollment size.
- iv. What if we can allow big enrollment courses so long as they have smaller sections led by well-trained graduate students in addition to the large lecture.
- v. We could just require GVAR courses in each major or college and leave it up to departments to make them. So the positive thing would be departments could gain FTE by offering a GVAR course and keeping it open to non-majors. We could require a C or better. And we could have oversight over these and dictate requirements. Would serve as a backdoor to writing in the major. Could have more than one course in a major. We seem to like this idea. In order to make this work, we would need to eliminate the WPE.
- vi. Fiona also thought departments could monitor requirements for entering the GVAR course.

- c. Rebekha will invite Mahoney for next time and bring materials regarding other campus systems.
6. GWAR Coordinator's Report
- a. Associate Dean of health and human services sent Sarbo the syllabus for a GE capstone course that they would like to have certified as a GWAR course: Recreation and Leisure 430I: Leisure and Contemporary Society. Several items that may need to be adjusted.
 - b. Discussion of request for a special circumstances waiver.
 - i. Waiver granted - MSP
7. Adjournment at 2:59 pm

Next meeting to be held October 21 at 1:30 pm.

Submitted by

Colleen Dunagan, Ph.D.

GWAR Secretary

(These minutes were approved on 10/21/11)