

Minutes of the GVAR Committee Meeting

March 18, 2011

Number 11

1:30-3:00 PM USU-311

In attendance: Rebekha Abbuhl, Lori Brown, Marilei Denila, Karin Griffin, Susan Platt, Linda Sarbo, Rick Tuveson, Mark Wiley, Bron Pellissier, Rosi Grannell, Colleen Dunagan, Gary Griswold, Carol Zeitzer-Comfort and Diana Hines

1. Approval of Agenda: Approved. MSP.

2. Minutes of meeting on March 4, 2011:

- a. Amendment: Item b. c. and d. – instead of “seems important” change to something like “was discussed as being important”
- b. Approved. MSP.

3. Announcements:

- a. No announcements at this time.

4. Meeting with Lisa Vollendorf

a. Summary of meeting:

The committee discussed with Vollendorf our proposed sequence of courses. She said that perhaps we should concentrate on requiring a GE capstone certified as WI (writing intensive) and then make the second WI course optional. They also discussed our writing intensive definition, and she recommended we raise the course cap to 35 students and indicated that the training of instructors might not be enforceable. Also, she recommended that we allow the GE policy revision to continue along its path and then once it is in the Senate we can make an amendment along the lines of the following: require a GVAR capstone course or a capstone course (1 of the 3 already required) that has been certified as writing intensive and that these courses must meet GVAR policy’s standards for writing intensive courses. She noted that we would then need to include in the policy amendment additional details regarding what constitutes writing intensive. The subcommittee had the feeling after the meeting that it wasn’t necessary to invite Kieth Freesemann to the GVAR committee meeting right now and that instead it might be good to have a smaller subcommittee meet with him right now. They told her we should be through with our revision of policy this semester at which point we will forward it to the CEPC committee. The subcommittee got the impression that it would not make sense to try and slow down the GE policy but rather that the best approach would be to wait until that policy is done and then propose an amendment.

b. Questions raised

Why do we have to raise the enrollment cap when there will be other capstone courses that departments can offer without an enrollment cap? And why can’t we require instructor training, since departments aren’t required to make a writing intensive course

and so if they don't want to require this kind of course then they don't have to? Linda feels like it won't be hard to enforce and that faculty will come willingly. Response: Lisa just thought maybe it would be difficult to enforce. There isn't a lot of incentive for faculty to teach these courses, so it becomes just one more requirement and doesn't it make sense to make offering a WI/GWAR capstone seem like less work. Carol thinks that raising the cap, reducing it to one course, and getting rid of the second course starts to really take away the power of what we are trying to accomplish. Another member stated that it feels like there are instructors who are willing to teach the course without having to make it appealing. If only one class is required, then it needs to be really effective. Despite the deductions from our initial ideas, if we follow Lisa's suggestions at least we end up with one solid writing intensive course. Question – Can departments convert discipline specific writing intensive courses in the major into the capstone category? Mark thinks yes, particularly if the LEAP capstone passes because it opens the category up to a more degree/major-specific course. Linda wants to know if we should phase things in. We would need to add language for staggered implementation because we will need to account for the time it will take to get the policy approved and then for departments to take action. How many capstones would already pass our writing intensive requirements? Mark looked at the capstones above 35 and below; there are roughly 39 out of 107 that are capped at 35 and below. So there are about 30% that are at the right cap. If we write our policy to require students take one WI capstone course, then we could amend the capstone policy so that non-WI courses can exceed 35 and maybe have a lower writing requirement.

So, do we try to go for a second course? Linda wants to know if we have figured out how to certify the WI thing. Why don't we recommend the second WI course, and then create a policy that has staggered implementation?

Are we requiring a minimum grade? The committee agrees that we should require a C or better in order to have met the GWAR requirement and to be seen as passing the course. If they receive a D or F, they will need to retake the WI course or take another WI course.

When we bring the GWAR policy forward, we need to bring amendments to the GE policy.

Points of contention:

1. Enrollment cap and instructor professional development.
 - a. Enrollment cap – we are asking for 25
 - b. Professional development – could we have these sessions once during the winter and once during the summer through the Center for Faculty Development. What about doing this work in an online course, so that they could do it online and/or at home. It could include a chat room and an online moderator. Could do a combination: part in person and part online.

Wording of the WI criteria:

1. Are we satisfied with 1-6 as written right now? Do we want to develop the wording right now?

2. Criteria include:

- a. 25 student enrollment cap (propose that current cap of 35 on other capstones be raised substantially).
- b. Shall be taught by faculty who have participated in professional development approved by the GWAR committee. (state what training might be later in policy).
- c. 70% of the student's final grade shall be based on multiple writing assignments (with any one assignment not being worth more than 30% of the course grade).

Keith Freeseemann – Rebekha will contact him today to see if he can meet with the subcommittee (Linda, Mark, Gary, Rebekha). They are going to share with him where we are at in terms of policy and its content and get his feedback.

5. Current Policy Revisions

a. Section 3A: Undergraduate pathways

Pathway I – complete the following course:

1. WI Capstone

Pathway II – complete the following course sequence:

1. GWAR course
2. WI Capstone

Pathway III – complete the following course sequence:

1. 301A or equivalent
2. GWAR course
3. WI Capstone

b. Need to revise the WPE/DWE name so that we have a better acronym:

We like the GWAR Placement Exam (GPE). MSP.

c. Do we need to do a workshop with samples of grades A, B and C, so that we are able to clearly define what is not C level writing in order to ensure that course integrity is strong. We need to figure out how to maintain quality control. This concern is part of implementation and not policy. During this training we need to address assessment types. What about allowing students to appeal a D or an F and having the appeal come to this committee? This idea separates the writing from other course activity, so it is not a good idea. We do need to know how we are going to account (to the Senate) for how we are going to maintain the standard in the grading? We could offer to do sampling, so the committee and/or coordinator could read sample essays from each course on a regular basis. Maybe since this is part of the GE policy, we could work with CEPC to establish a form of assessment that they take part in. The subcommittee will talk to Keith about this.

d. Section 5 revision:

Instead of the DWE Committee it will be called the The GPE Advisory Committee.

6. GWAR Coordinator Report

a. Lynn met with Cecile and Sharlene to ask about modifying our self study to depart from the template. They said no we can not diverge from the template. So Linda is using the template but is telling them what they need to know rather than what they are asking

for. The self study will be long. Linda will forward a draft to Rebekha so she can distribute to us prior to our meeting, so that we can read through it and bring any suggestions with us to the meeting.

b. GVAR instructors workshop – She is working hard to align classroom practices, particularly on the in-class writing assignments because that is where there is the most discrepancy. It was a good workshop. They need to revisit the in class writing issue again at the next meeting.

c. There were 38 pilot project students who had not done what they needed to do in terms of meeting an advisor or enrolling in a GVAR course and that number is now down to 8. A few, but very few, were given the option to take the test a second time, and if they do not do well, then Linda suggests dropping that option. Right now she is encountering students who have a perception of unfairness due to some students being allowed to re-test. There have been students who are moving from one office to the next trying to find an advisor that will say Yes. Criteria for retesting – an advisor reads the student’s WPE essay, and if convinced that the student would be likely to pass, then the advisor will allow her/him to retest. Based on this experience Linda really can see how we need to eliminate the repeated attempts.

Next meeting April 8, 2011 from 1:30 to 3:00 PM.

Adjourned 3 PM

Submitted by
Colleen Dunagan

These minutes were approved on 4/8/11