University Writing Committee (UWC): End-of-Year Report to the Senate, May 10, 2017

The table below outlines the actions items charged to the UWC during the Fall 2016 Senate Retreat. The shaded column represents the End-of-Year status of each action item, followed by a more detailed description of the UWC’s activities and related resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item (In order from retreat)</th>
<th>Suggested Action/Volunteers</th>
<th>Progress-to-date</th>
<th>End-of-Year Report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. GWAR policy (A + B)</td>
<td>A - Reconcile discrepancy btwn “native” DH students (GWAR rqrmnt) (Done) B - UWC develop 2 yr plan to assess effectiveness of GWE ud as measure of _____writing readiness</td>
<td>A. Completed B. UWC has taken up and is working on design of assessment project for GWE. ETA: Design to be completed Fall 2016; assessment project to begin spring 2017.</td>
<td>A. Complete B. Complete</td>
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<td>2. Renew + assessment of existing courses?</td>
<td>Institutionalize collection + assessment of student writing USLOAC should address. Contact Mark Carrier</td>
<td>UWC will invite Mark Carrier to upcoming fall meeting to clarify roles of UWC, USLOAC, and perhaps others.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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<td>3. Writing Intensive Courses Can the campus policy be put in place?</td>
<td>Target intro to major courses for WI itemization/target senior seminars &amp; capstone courses for designation as WI courses</td>
<td>UWC has taken up and will produce a list of target courses and timeline for goals (e.g., at least 1 course per department or program to be designated WI by end of AY 2017-2018) by end of fall 2016.</td>
<td>A new process has been undertaken to survey faculty re: the WI program at CSUDH, which will be used to inform revision of the existing WI policy.</td>
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1. Throughout the spring semester of 2017, the UWC conducted an assessment of the GWE consisting of 3 parts:
   a. Review of multiyear data (2008-2016) on GWE pass-rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity, class, FTF vs. transfer students, College, and student self-identification as ESL (see page 3 below);
   b. Review of GWE exam questions, procedures, and scoring criteria; and
c. Review of relevant disciplinary research and policy statements on writing assessment (see page 3 below).

The UWC’s review suggests there are good reasons to question the validity of the GWE as a measure of student writing ability or readiness, which actually brings our campus conversation into alignment with conversations regarding the GWAR in the CSU Chancellor's Office. However, at the present time the University's hands are tied in many ways by the systemwide GWAR policy (i.e., the GWAR is mandated by CSU policy, and we do not have the capacity to quickly switch to an alternative model such as the certifying course model). There is no fast and easy answer to the issue at the campus level.

Next steps: The UWC is entering into conversation with the Department of English regarding the use of standardized tests to meet the GWAR at CSUDH. Further, the UWC is working on revision to the WI course policy (see #3 below), which could also help the campus move toward a more valid and effective model for certifying students’ ability to write at an advanced college level.

2. The charge of the UWC identifies 2 narrow areas of institutional writing assessment as the responsibility of the Committee:

   a. Assessment of the GWAR
   b. Assessment of the Writing Intensive (WI) Program

All other writing assessment is the distinct purview of the University’s Director of Assessment (Mark Carrier), the GE Committee, USLOAC (strictly as such assessment pertains to program review), and individual departments and programs (i.e., faculty).

Next steps: If the Senate would like to pursue the goal of institutionalizing the collection and assessment of student writing, the UWC can participate as a consultative body in partnership with the above listed entities.

3. The UWC's review of the WI policy revealed that due to both labor and budgetary capacity, it is not possible to implement the existing graduation requirement (i.e., that every student take 2 WI courses in the major or a closely related field prior to graduation). Given this fact, the UWC is working to revise the WI course policy to make it feasible as well as to bring it into alignment with current research and best practices related to WI courses and programs in higher education.

Next steps: The UWC has begun to develop a faculty survey regarding WI programs and policy, which will explain the existing WI policy and describe alternative WI models that could be implemented at Dominguez Hills. The survey will be conducted through Campus Labs in the fall of 2017, and the faculty feedback gathered will be used to inform the UWC’s revision of the WI policy in academic year 2017-2018.
Disciplinary Resources on Writing Assessment and Standardized Tests

“How Writing Rubrics Fail: Toward a Multicultural Model”: This chapter comes from a recent and very well respected publication, *Race and Writing Assessment*. The co-authors are working on the cutting edge of research on writing assessment in higher education, and one of the authors, Asao Inoue, is a former writing program administrator at CSU Fresno (where he began conducting the research that led to this collection as well as his other recent publication, *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*) and incoming program chair for the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The attached chapter focuses on rubrics, specifically how writing rubrics fail students in significant ways. This piece is included because much has been made of the rubric used to evaluate students' GWE responses, and this provides some insight into why the rubric is so problematic, especially when utilized the way it is and at an institution like CSUDH.

At the following link you will find the CCC's position statement on writing assessment. You will notice that high-stakes, standardized tests such as the GWE do not align with *most* of the Guiding Principles for assessing college students’ writing as articulated by this national disciplinary organization: [http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/writingassessment](http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/writingassessment)

Following you will find further elaboration by the National Council of Teachers of English. The NCTE is often seen as the K-12 standard-bearer while the CCC governs policy and positions related to higher education. However, the NCTE also has a college section, and the research and policy articulated here are consistent with the guidelines as developed by the CCC related to standardized testing and student writing (link above): [http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/CC/0242-nov2014/CC0242PolicyStandardized.pdf](http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/CC/0242-nov2014/CC0242PolicyStandardized.pdf)
Below is a link to a fairly extensive discussion of the neuroscience related to standardized testing, of which the author asserts:

the disadvantages that standardized tests pose for the many students who take them are substantial. Although these tests were conceptualized to ensure fairness and equity for all, the reality is much more grim. In addition to the problematic application for students with diagnosed (and undiagnosed) learning disabilities and to non-native English speakers, these tests are unfair to countless others due to a host of social, cultural, economic and even biological reasons. One example is the marked disadvantage for students from underprivileged groups, for which there is a proven departure between test scores and actual academic potential.

This piece is included because we too often neglect conversation regarding the specific repercussions of such testing for students who fit the exact profile of students at DH. This piece does a great job of articulating why and how such testing is particularly contraindicated for our very students. I recommend paying special attention to the section on stereotype threat: https://www.learningandthebrain.com/blog/neuroscience-standardized-test-taking/