Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) and Policies on Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement; Revision to EM 99-003 90-022

Executive Memorandum 99-003XX-XXX

February 04, 1999

From: Manuel A. Esteban, Paul Zingg, President

Subject: Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) and Policies on Writing Proficiency; Revision to EM 90-022-EM 99-003.

On the recommendation of the Academic Senate and the concurrence of Provost Scott McNall, I approve the following revision to EM 90-022, Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). This revision eliminates the Writing Effectiveness Screening Test (WEST) as a prerequisite for enrollment in Writing Proficiency (WP) courses, effective June 1, 1999, and authorizes changes in the University Writing Committee. It also authorizes the implementation of a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, effective fall 1999, as described below.

GRADUATION WRITING ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENT (GWAR) WRITING PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT

The graduation writing assessment requirement (GWAR) is a California State University systemwide requirement per EO 665, which states, in part: “All students … must demonstrate competence in writing skills at the upper division level as a requirement for the baccalaureate degree.” Since 1999, CSU, Chico has met this requirement through the provision of Writing Proficiency (WP) courses in baccalaureate degree programs. Each degree program is required to designate one or more WP courses to be taken by students in their junior or senior year. Satisfactory completion of the WP course fulfills the GWAR requirement. The current EM supersedes EM 99-003 and serves to clarify the roles of various entities on campus in the joint responsibility of the university to provide quality writing instruction and assure the writing competencies of CSU, Chico graduates.

The California State University system requires upper-division undergraduate students to demonstrate a level of writing proficiency which may be expected of college graduates. This systemwide requirement originated in 1976 and developed as follows:
May 1976—In May 1976 the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution endorsing “the principle that all students entering CSU after implementation of the proficiency/diagnostic examination (EPT) would be required to demonstrate their competency with regard to writing skills as a requirement for graduation.” (REP 5-7-4)

Fall 1976—The Trustee mandate resulted in the CSU, Chico upper division literacy requirement (EM 75-022) which reads: "All departments shall require their majors, before graduation, to demonstrate writing skills in their own fields. The task of formulating the procedure for determining competence is delegated to each department. The policy developed by each department will be subject to approval by the Provost."

Fall 1982—Beginning in the fall of 1982, all CSU, Chico students were required to pass the Writing Effectiveness Screening Test (WEST) to qualify for enrollment in the writing proficiency (WP) courses in the majors. The WEST was created to assess a student's readiness to profit from instruction in the WP course. At the same time, a passing grade of C- in the WP course in each major was designated as the sole measure of writing proficiency for graduation, and it remains so today.

Fall 1998—The Academic Senate voted in favor of the Provost's proposal to eliminate the WEST, effective June 1, 1999, and to create a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, effective fall 1999.

**Definition of Writing Proficiency (WP) Courses**

Writing proficiency courses are courses in the major that integrate writing and writing instruction with the discipline-specific subject matter of the course. In WP courses, students use writing in the English language to inquire into and organize the subject matter, engage in rigorous study about a body of knowledge essential to the major, and communicate that knowledge to others.

**Course Elements**

WP courses offered in traditional, face-to-face format are normally capped at no more than 30 students. Equivalent, alternative classroom structures with larger enrollments or different delivery formats may be approved after careful consideration by the committee. Faculty shall provide the rhetorically appropriate and discipline-specific writing instruction necessary for students to demonstrate writing proficiency in that major. In WP courses, students shall:

- Write and read texts in order to question, investigate, and draw conclusions about ideas and issues on a selected subject
- Practice key textual strategies such as finding, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting appropriate primary and secondary sources and integrating their own ideas with those of others
- Learn and apply discipline-specific genre conventions such as organization, evidentiary support, and citation styles
- Revise papers, based on feedback they receive from their instructor and/or peers, to address specific audiences for specific purposes
- Write frequently in the forms or genres of writing appropriate to the discipline
- Reduce errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling
The prerequisite to all WP courses at CSU, Chico is a letter grade of C- or better in a course in Written Communication or its equivalent at another institution. This prerequisite must be stated in writing in the University Catalog, each course syllabus, and in departmental writing standards.

Responsibilities of Academic Departments

1. Academic departments are responsible for (1) creating and developing high-quality writing proficiency (WP) courses, (2) maintaining and upholding policies and procedures for writing courses, (3) developing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for WP courses and carrying out regular assessments, and (4) providing WP course assessment information as requested by the Provost. For information in addition to that which follows, department Chairs and college Deans are encouraged to contact the Chair of the University Writing Committee (UWC). Academic departments are responsible for (1) the creation and development of high-quality writing proficiency (WP) courses, (2) maintaining and upholding high-level writing standards, (3) reviewing and updating all relevant WP policies and procedures, and (4) providing WP course assessment information and assistance to the Provost as requested. For information in addition to that which follows, department chairs and college deans are encouraged to contact the GWAR Coordinator in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

1. Create and Develop High-Quality Writing Proficiency Courses

Since 1976, a letter grade of C- in the designated writing proficiency course in each major has been the sole measure of writing proficiency for graduation from California State University, Chico. WP courses in the major are therefore the backbone of the graduation writing assessment requirement at CSU, Chico. They are required upper-division courses in the content of the discipline that include the course elements listed above.

Definition

Writing proficiency courses are courses in the major in which students use writing in the English language to organize the subject matter, engage in rigorous study about a body of knowledge essential to the major, and communicate that knowledge to others. WP courses integrate writing and writing instruction with the subject matter content of the course.

Course Elements

WP courses are small classes (20-30 students maximum) that involve both in-class and out of class writing, require students to write frequently in various modes of discourse, provide students with instructor feedback on multiple drafts of selected writing assignments, and provide the developmentally appropriate writing instruction needed for
students to develop the level of writing proficiency deemed necessary for graduation from CSU, Chico.

Prerequisite

The prerequisite to all WP courses at CSU, Chico is a letter grade of C- or better in English 001: Freshman Composition, or its equivalent at another institution. This prerequisite must be stated in writing in the University Catalog, each course syllabus, and in departmental writing standards.

2. Maintain and Uphold High-Level Writing Standards Policies and Procedures for Writing Courses

It is the responsibility of each academic department to

- Develop and uphold its own writing standards.
- Certify, by a grade of C- or better in the WP course, those students who satisfy the graduation writing standards of the major.
  
  **NOTE:** Students who earn below a C- are required to repeat the course until they as often as needed to earn a C- or better.
- Create a procedure for identifying, as early as possible, students in the major who are not likely to meet the writing requirements and standards in the WP courses. Departments are also responsible for advising students of recommended and required writing development resources available to them and to assist them as needed to develop their ability to communicate in written English.
- Develop means of certifying the writing of students who have transferred WP course content only from another institution. Any proposed alternative to the approved WP course must be based on major-related writing in the English language produced at CSU, Chico by a junior or senior who has already earned a letter grade of C- or better in a GE course in Written Communication or its equivalent. Contact the Writing Center and University Writing Committee for assistance in developing and assessing the writing standards of the department.
  
  **NOTE:** The Provost shall continue to approve the writing standards developed by each department.
- Offer WP courses every semester to facilitate students' timely progression to graduation. In case additional time is needed to meet the department's writing standards, departments should advise students to take the WP course no later than their first semester as a senior. In case additional time is needed to meet the department's writing standards.
  
  **NOTE:** The Provost shall approve each department's writing standards, taking into account the recommendation of the University Writing Committee.
- Contact the UWC for assistance in developing department policies and procedures. **NOTE:** The Provost shall approve each department’s policies and procedures, taking into account the recommendation of the University Writing Committee.

3. Review and update all relevant WP policies and procedures Develop Student Learning Objectives for WP Courses and Carry Out Assessments
It is the responsibility of each academic department to develop its own SLOs for WP courses policies and procedures. Assessment of WP courses will be driven by the course elements listed above in addition to the discipline-specific conventions and formats for written communication that are articulated by each department’s writing standards. The UWC will charge faculty in each department with regular assessment of SLOs as expressed in a given course and will support faculty as they develop SLOs to be assessed regularly. Faculty will provide the UWC with an assessment plan that is effective and efficient in assessing these SLOs. This statement must include a provision to certify the writing of students who have transferred WP course content only from another institution. Any proposed alternative to the approved WP course must be based on major-related writing in the English language produced at CSU, Chico by a junior or senior who has already earned a letter grade of C—or better in English 001: Freshman Composition or its equivalent at another institution.

*NOTE:* The Provost shall approve each department’s WP policies and procedures, taking into account the recommendation of the University Writing Committee.

4. **Provide writing WP Course Assessment Information and assistance to the Provost as Requested**

   It is the responsibility of each academic department to provide WP course assessment information and assistance to the Provost as requested. Requests may be for course syllabi, student writing samples, whole class testing, opinion surveys, or other documentation needed by the Chancellor’s Office, the Provost’s Office, the Writing Student Learning Center, the University Writing Committee, the Testing Office, the Assessment Office, or the Office of Institutional Research.

**Responsibilities of the University Writing Committee**

The University Writing committee, functioning since 1978 as an advisory to the Provost on matters pertaining to the WP courses, will review the WP courses to assist faculty with effective writing instruction, and advise the Provost on policies and procedures, department standards, quality and characteristics of WP courses, quality, and the assessment of student writing in the majors.

Issues related to lower-division General Education (GE) writing requirements are the domain of the General Education Advisory Committee relevant GE oversight committees, which have responsibility for formal reviews of the writing requirements in all GE courses. The University Writing Committee will be advisory to also advise relevant GE oversight committees on Writing Intensive (WI) courses in GE. The requirements for WI courses are laid out in EM 10-001.

1. **Membership**

   The Provost and the Academic Senate Executive Committee, upon the recommendation of the academic deans, shall jointly appoint one representative from each college to three-
year staggered terms. The Provost or a Provost designee, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, the GWAR coordinator, a representative from a GE oversight committee, a member of EPPC, and a representative from the Student Learning Center, the WAC coordinator shall serve as ex-officio members.

2. Committee Chair

The Provost and the Academic Senate Executive Committee shall jointly appoint the Chair of the UWC to a three-year term. The Writing Center director shall chair the committee and Chair shall work closely with the GWAR coordinator and shall work closely with the Provost or a Provost designee to establish the agenda for each academic year. The Chair will have recognized expertise in writing instruction, literacy, or composition and rhetoric, and it is recommended that s/he serve on a GE oversight committee.

3. Reporting

The Chair of the UWC will annually report the results of ongoing assessments and other work to the Provost and the Educational Programs and Policies Committee.

Responsibilities of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Program

To prepare faculty and chairs for their fall 1999 writing-related responsibilities, the Writing Center director shall meet with the department chairs and the WP instructors at least once during the spring 1999 semester. Effective fall 1999, the Writing Center director and the WAC coordinator shall

- Provide writing assistance for all students who self-refer
- Provide writing assistance for all students referred by faculty
- Provide written evaluations of individual student writing for faculty who request them
- Develop writing development programs for individual students (in consultation with faculty)
- Assess faculty interest in using WAC Program and Writing Center services for their classes
- Consult with faculty on their writing assignments and department writing standards
- Conduct faculty workshops on writing
- Coordinate faculty development activities with the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
- Provide writing assistants for classes upon request
- Work with the Assessment Office, the Office of Testing and Research, and Institutional Research to issue recommendations for evaluating writing and to document and assess the effectiveness of the WAC Program
- Help all faculty implement the official writing requirements for their courses as designated by various documents related to General Education courses, English 001, and writing proficiency courses, and
• Develop appropriate means (not to be restricted to electronic mail) to extend its services to students enrolled in CSUSAT courses.

**Responsibilities of the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs**

Since WAC's responsibility will be campus-wide and in support of a CSU systemwide requirement, the responsibility for supervising and evaluating WAC and the development of student writing proficiency for graduation rests with the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Beginning in the spring of 1999, therefore, (1) the Office of Testing and Research, (2) the Office of Institutional Research, (3) the Assessment Office, and (4) the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with (5) the Writing Center director and (6) the University Writing Committee shall

• Propose to the Provost a plan to supervise and evaluate WAC and the development of student writing proficiency for graduation
• Collect provost approved baseline data during spring 1999 from a representative sample of faculty and students in the WP courses and
• Report to the Provost on the baseline data collected, and include conclusions regarding the issues deemed relevant by the Provost, the University Writing Committee, the Writing Center director, the director of institutional research, the assessment director, and the test officer.

**NOTE:** Beginning in the fall of 1999, the WAC coordinator will have been hired and will therefore be included in consultation regarding the ongoing plan for evaluating WAC's effectiveness.