Office of the President
California State University, Chico

Executive Memorandum 17-009

September 5, 2017

From: Gayle E. Hutchinson, President

Subject: Writing Across the Curriculum Program and Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement

Upon the recommendation of the Academic Senate and the concurrence of the Provost, I approve the Writing Across the Curriculum Program and Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement. This EM creates a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program and also authorizes changes in university writing requirements, effective fall 2018.

Policy Title:	EM 17-009 Writing Across the Curriculum Program and Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement
Contact:	
Supersedes:	99-003
Revision:	
Enabling Legislation or Executive Order:	

Writing Across the Curriculum Program and Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement

POLICY

In order that students learn to write successfully both in and out of the university, writing instruction should be linked and coordinated at every level, from introductory courses in General Education (GE) to advanced courses in every major. This document creates a program of integrated writing instruction in which students complete a coherent sequence of writing courses by the time they graduate. This program, called Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), will provide significant outreach and professional development to instructors teaching writing courses in areas of common interest, such as responding to writing, teaching revision, using "writing to learn" strategies, and helping students understand audience, purpose, and genre. The rest of this document will 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 goals of the WAC program are to:

1. Sustain the writing of students across their academic careers
2. Increase student engagement in learning through writing
3. Increase student writing proficiency across courses and within their majors
4. Assess student writing development over time and writing proficiency by graduation
5. Offer professional development and redesign opportunities for writing instructors
6. Create a campus culture that supports writing and a faculty community with expertise in writing instruction

Definition of Writing (W) Courses and Course Elements

All university writing courses approved by the UWC will carry the suffix 'W.' W-courses are 3- unit courses in GE or the major that integrate writing and writing instruction into the subject matter of the course. In W-courses, students use writing in the English language to inquire into and respond to course topics, engage in rigorous study about a body of knowledge essential to various audiences, and communicate that knowledge clearly to those audiences. Faculty will provide the rhetorically appropriate and course-specific writing instruction necessary for students to demonstrate understanding and appropriate use of writing in that subject area.

In W-courses, students will:

*   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 written text, 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 or subject area
*   Reduce errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling

W- courses offered in traditional, face-to-face format are capped at no more than 30 students. Equivalent, alternative classrooms, larger enrollments, or different delivery formats may be approved after careful consideration by the UWC.

The University Writing Requirement

Students will take four separate W-courses:

1. A W-course in GE Area A2, Written Communication
2. A lower- or upper-division W-course
3. An upper-division W-course in or specified by the department of the student's major
4. The upper-division W-course serving as the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) course in a student's major (see below)

First-time freshmen will take all four courses; transfer students (having taken writing courses elsewhere) will take course 3 and 4. The prerequisite of the GWAR course is having met the minimum requirements of GE Area A2 (Written Communication) or its equivalent at another institution; other W-courses outside GE may have similar prerequisites as departments require.

A passing grade in each of the four W-courses will certify completion of the university writing requirement. For the course in GE Area A2 (Written Communication) and the designated GWAR course in each major, students must earn a letter grade of C- or better; a C- in the GWAR course additionally certifies writing proficiency for graduation. Students who earn below a C- in either course are required to repeat them until they earn a C- or better.

If students believe their writing already demonstrates proficiency in the outcomes listed above, they may "challenge" one of the first three W-courses. The WAC coordinator will publicize a process for challenging one course, through a portfolio of previous work or other means, and organize faculty readers to score the writing; nominal reading fees may be attached to the process. A successful challenge will satisfy one W-course requirement but does not grant credit. NOTE: students may also receive credit for GE Area A2, Written Communication, through Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate scores; see the Catalog for details.

W-courses will be reviewed and recertified through a process specified by the University Writing Committee.

GRADUATION WRITING ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENT

The graduation writing assessment requirement (GWAR) is a California State University system 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 upper division writing courses in each baccalaureate degree program. Each degree program is required to designate one or more GWAR courses to be taken by students in their junior or senior year. Satisfactory completion of this GWAR course fulfills the GWAR requirement.

Definition of GWAR Courses

As the last W-courses in a series of four, GWAR courses are courses in the major that integrate writing and writing instruction with the discipline-specific subject matter of the

course. In GWAR courses, students use writing in the English language to make claims about disciplinary issues and questions, engage in inquiry about a body of knowledge essential to the major, and communicate that knowledge to professional and nonprofessional audiences.

As a culminating student writing experience, GWAR courses will be more rigorous than other W-courses in terms of mastering the W-course outcomes listed above. Faculty will teach students the genres, audiences, and purposes of writing in that discipline, and design recursive processes for working with writing so that students demonstrate writing proficiency in that major. The UWC and WAC coordinator will work with department faculty to establish advanced standards for these courses, and to provide training in responding to and assessing student writing for proficiency.

Responsibilities of Academic Departments

Academic departments are responsible for (1) creating and developing high-quality writing proficiency W-courses, (2) maintaining and upholding policies and procedures for writing courses, (3) developing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for W-courses and carrying out regular assessments, and (4) providing W-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 WAC program coordinator.

1. Create and Develop High-Quality W-Courses
It is the responsibility of each academic department to

- Offer W-courses every semester to facilitate students' timely progression to graduation. Department faculty may propose changes to offerings in order to balance
  staffing and student need; these proposals may be approved after careful consideration by the UWC.
- Certify students as having met the writing outcomes of the major by conducting or participating in regular department- and program-based assessments of student writing.

2. Maintain and Uphold Policies and Procedures for W-Courses
It is the responsibility of each academic department to

- 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 W-courses. Departments are responsible for advising students of recommended and required writing resources available to them, such as the Student Learning Center and the ESL Resource Center, and to assist them as needed to develop their ability to communicate in written English.
- Contact the UWC for assistance in developing department policies and procedures.

3. Develop Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for W-Courses

It is the responsibility of each academic department to develop its own SLOs for W-courses. Assessment of W-courses will be driven by the course elements listed above and also the discipline-specific conventions and formats for written communication that are articulated by each department's writing standards. The UWC will work with faculty in each department to do regular assessment of SLOs as expressed in a given set of courses and will support faculty as they develop SLOs.

4. Provide W-Course Assessment Information to the Provost

It is the responsibility of each academic department to provide W-course information to the Provost as requested. Requests may be for course syllabi, student writing samples, reflective surveys, or faculty assessment of student writing proficiency needed by the Chancellor's Office, the Provost's Office, College Deans, the Student Learning Center, the University Writing Committee, the Testing Office, or the Office of Institutional Research.

Responsibilities of the WAC Program

Based on individual department or instructor needs, the WAC coordinator, with assistance from the UWC, will offer services such as:

- Coordination of workshops and stipended Faculty Fellows programs
- Consultations with faculty and departments on W-course syllabus design
- Training of TA's, undergraduate writing tutors, and course-embedded writing mentors
- University-wide workshops on issues in teaching writing
- Coordination of Faculty Learning Communities to create and share best practices in writing pedagogy
- Coordination of department and WAC program writing assessments
- Training in assessment design and uses of portfolios for longitudinal assessment
- Training faculty to read and score portfolios for challenge exams
- Consultation with campus committees such as the GE Curriculum Advisory Board on development of writing SLO's
- Development of online venues for publishing student work and faculty redesigns
- Oversight and regular recertification of W-courses
- Coordination of faculty development activities with the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
- Assessments and documentation of the effectiveness of the WAC Program

Responsibilities of the UWC

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

1. Membership

The Provost and the Academic Senate Executive Committee, upon the recommendation of the academic deans, will jointly appoint one representative from each college to three-year staggered terms. The Provost or a Provost designee, a member of EPPC, a coordinator or coordinators of writing in GE Area A2, and representatives from a GE oversight committee, Associated Students, and the Student Learning Center will serve as ex-officio members.

2. Committee Chair

The Provost and the Academic Senate Executive Committee will jointly appoint the Chair of the UWC to a three-year term. The Chair serves as the coordinator of the WAC program and of GWAR certification and will work closely with the Provost or a Provost designee to establish the agenda for each academic year. The Chair/WAC coordinator will have recognized expertise in writing instruction, literacy, or composition and rhetoric, and will receive reassigned time commensurate with her/his professional development, oversight, training, and/or assessment duties. It is recommended that s/he serve on a GE oversight committee.

3. Reporting

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