

# Appendix N - Writing Across the Curriculum Proposal

Humboldt State University  
GWAR Alternatives //  
Writing Across the Curriculum Proposal  
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## Rationale for developing a strategic Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) at HSU:

1. In 2012, [Dr. Elizabeth Wardle](#), (now the Director for the Howe Center for Writing Excellence at Miami University) was invited to HSU as a consultant to assess writing development needs. Her visit included talking with numerous faculty and deans. In terms of WAC, Dr. Wardle made the following recommendations:

“Given the CSU system’s attention to retention, learning, and assessment, now is an opportune time to begin planning a writing across the curriculum program at HSU. The writing faculty are enthusiastic about the possibilities, and there appears to be widespread support at both provost and dean level, and faculty in other departments appear to be interested in gaining structural support for assigning student writing beyond first-year composition. **The WAC program, if it is to be successful, needs to be a university-wide program with buy-in and participation from all colleges.**”

**“HSU has an opportunity to build the structure for a forward-thinking, vertical writing education for its students. With the support of the provost and deans, and appropriate support for the writing faculty, this new program could result in positive and quantifiable changes in student learning and retention across HSU.”**

Please read Dr. Wardle’s full report from 2012 [here](#).

2. Creating vertical pathways for students to meet the GWAR can provide more accurate and robust data points that describe what students know and can do as writers at the upper division and discipline-specific stages of their educations. This data can be shared with faculty across and within disciplines to improve teaching and learning university-wide.
3. Vertically articulated pathways to meet the GWAR encourage collaboration and the teaching of writing across the curriculum. They also create opportunities for students to practice and be held accountable for discipline-specific writing conventions, and they can contribute to the development of the habits of mind and

communication skills necessary for students/graduates to play productive roles in their disciplines, careers and communities.

**Background:**

Implementation of the GWAR across the CSU occurred in 1978. In response to concerns about CSU graduates' writing skills, the CSU Board of Trustees resolved that all students must "demonstrate their competency with regard to writing skills as a requirement for graduation."

At the time, the Academic Senate urged the Chancellor and the Board to "support methods other than a system-wide upper division examination program." Since 1978, and particularly over the past two decades, **many campuses across the CSU and nation have established upper division and/or advanced writing courses** that are designed to help students meet graduation writing requirement, as opposed to or as an alternative to a timed-essay examination.

In "[A Review of the CSU Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement \(GWAR\)](#)" from 2002, the **CSU GWAR Review Committee issued a number of recommendations** for the assessment of GWAR. Two of these recommendations are:

Recommendation #1: Each campus should implement measures to ensure consistency and common standards in faculty evaluations of written documents produced in courses through which students can achieve GWAR certification.

Recommendation #8: Each campus should involve CSU faculty from all disciplines in GWAR processes such as reading essays, teaching GWAR courses, providing opportunities for students to improve their writing, and serving on GWAR committees.

**HSU is one of three remaining CSU campuses to use the timed essay exam (GWPE) as a sole measurement for GWAR.** Studies across research fields such as education and composition studies have repeatedly demonstrated that timed-essay examinations are less reliable and valid measurements of students' writing knowledge than contextualized and/or disciplinary writing products produced through a typical academic writing process (e.g. inventing, drafting, revising) (Caudrey, 1990; Hayes, 2000; Anson, 2005; Gregg, Coleman, & Davis, 2007; Brown, 2010).

## **HSU WAC/GWAR Initiative: Proposal**

The language in this proposal draws from research-based consulting and best-practices in establishing and developing strong WAC programs, including:

- Dr. Wardle's 2012 report on writing development at HSU.
- The implementation and program details of various CSU campuses' WAC initiatives, such as CSUCI and CSU Chico.
- Nationally recognized WAC, WID (writing in the disciplines) and WEC (writing enriched curriculum) post-secondary programs.

### **HSU WAC Program Goal**

**Create an exemplary and recognized WAC program that supports students' writing knowledge and development through a vertically articulated course of study.** Students will satisfy the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) through the completion of at least 3 units of an Upper-Division Writing Intensive (WI) Course in their major with a grade of C- or better. Upon completion of the GWAR, students will have demonstrated, through writing assignments in their WI class(es), that they are capable of producing effective writing, as determined by an HSU WAC Advisory board.

### **1. Implementation**

#### **Year 1**(2017-18)

1. Create a WAC Advisory Board. This board should be hand picked, and filled with enthusiastic and respected faculty from all three colleges who are already assigning writing and are devoted to good writing instruction. The Writing Program and Writing Center Directors should also participate on this board, so that first-year writing, writing center support, and WAC are coordinated from inception. This advisory board should:

- Create an initial vision and structure for WAC.
- Develop an announcement/search for a WAC Director, who:
  - Will receive release time (4-units per semester recommended) to direct WAC at HSU.
  - Has scholarship, specialization, and/or training in WAC and (ideally) ESL and/or professional or technical writing.
  - Will conduct workshops and trainings on the teaching and learning of writing, both discipline-specific and campus-wide.

- Determine the criteria for upper-division Writing Intensive (WI) courses, based on research-based best practices. Sample criteria to establish/ convert courses to WI are:
  - Focus of the course is to develop writing knowledge in the discipline.
  - At least 40% of the course grade is derived from writing projects.
  - Students complete at least 2 writing projects in the course.
  - Students write at least 3,000 words in the course.
  - Students engage in revision and receive feedback on writing.

2. Provide one-year of release time (four units per semester) during Year 1 for a faculty member to work with five **departments** to establish, convert, and/or study **five** Writing Intensive courses across the three colleges. The faculty teaching these courses may or may not be members of the WAC Advisory Board. These faculty will be supported to meet as a teaching group and will receive support on:

- Writing and course content integration
- Syllabus and assignment design for the WI course
- Disciplinary/genre-based writing
- Writing assessment strategies
- Scaffolded writing curriculum

3. Conduct search and hire HSU WAC Director.

4. Bring in a Visiting Scholar to present/ have conversations with faculty across campus about WAC philosophy and research. (We have tentatively scheduled [Linda Adler-Kassner](#) as Visiting Scholar for September, 2017).

### Year 2 (2018-19)

1. Report findings of Year 1 WAC pilot to campus community.
2. Advisory Committee assesses and builds upon previous year's work.
3. Working with Advisory Committee, new HSU WAC Director expands Year 1 pilot.
4. Establish WI/WAC workshops for departments interested in developing WI course.
5. Double number of WI courses across the campus.

6. Develop assessment measures for student writing in WI courses.

### **Years 3 and 4 (2019--21)**

1. Report findings of Year 2 WAC pilot to campus community.
2. Offer workshops and other supports (e.g. teaching groups or colloquia) for faculty teaching WI.
3. Double number of WI courses across the campus each Campus year.
4. Hire Assistant WAC Coordinator (Recommended: hire a strong lecturer from the HSU First-Year Writing Program and provide 3-units of release time per semester). This hire will work closely with the WAC Director to develop and conduct workshops for departments as they develop and revise WI courses
5. Develop assessment measures for student writing in WI courses.

### **Year 5**

1. Campus-wide implementation of upper division WI courses in major programs of study to meet GWAR (GWPE no longer offered as a measurement of GWAR).
2. Report findings of Years 1--4 WAC pilot to campus community.
3. Continue to offer workshops and other supports (e.g. teaching groups or colloquia) for faculty teaching WI.
4. Develop and revise assessment measures for student writing in WI courses.

## **3. Staffing and Support**

In order for this initiative to be successful, faculty and departments need to feel supported and valued as they develop and teach WI courses. Creating campus-wide conversations about writing development as well as how to teach and assess writing will make a campus-wide focus on writing and communication visible to students. These conversations can take place via faculty workshops, teaching groups, colloquia, conferences, and celebrations, but they require staffing, such as (coordinated with Years 1--5 in "Implementation" section above):

Year 1: Release time for faculty member to initiate pilot and WAC program with interested departments.

Year 2: WAC Director begins.

Year 3 or 4: Hire Assistant WAC Coordinator to work with WAC Director. These faculty develop and deliver workshops, etc.

## **4. Funding**

As noted in Dr. Wardle's report, **multi-year resources must be committed to any HSU WAC Initiative in order for it to remain sustainable -- and to thrive.**

Current funding for the GWPE at HSU, which would be phased out through this WAC Initiative, could be repurposed for it. Students currently pay a fee, for example, to take the GWPE. This fee funds GWPE assessment (\$250 stipends to faculty per scoring session) as well as a three-unit course release for a lecturer in the Writing Program in the Department of English to coordinate GWPE. Current GWPE funding at HSU, then, can offset some costs of this initiative.

There are also various grants that we might pursue to help initiate a WAC Program on our campus, however, campus administrators must be willing to put funding behind this program if it is to be sustainable -- and if faculty are to value it. It is not realistic to say "We all teach writing at HSU" without a coordinated, articulated, and funded program. Such a program requires leadership and expertise, visible and valued supports for faculty, and coordinated assessment to support improvement and development over time.

### **Benefits**

- Writing across the curriculum supports **persistence** and **retention**:
  - The HSU First-year Writing is an entry point into this proposed WAC initiative. First-year Writing Program faculty along with the Writing Program Director are currently deeply engaged with creating and delivering curriculum to students that supports their development of transferable writing knowledge to major courses of study and other subsequent contexts for writing. A vertically coordinated model for WAC at HSU builds upon the curricular concepts of these first-year writing intensive courses (English 102, 103, and 104) and helps students make clear connections across their academic writing experiences at HSU, promoting their learning and agency as learners, thinkers, and writers.
- WAC coordinates with current HSU innovative models:
  - **Place-based learning models**, such as Klamath Connection and other cohort models (Stars to Rocks and Global Humboldt) emphasize that interdisciplinary connections are made, in part, through the study and practice of writing. Various first-year writing program lecturers at HSU are (or will be) actively teaching in these cohorts and they have (or will be) developing cohort-specific writing intensive curriculum as foundational courses in these place-based models. A WAC Program is naturally vertically

aligned to these models, since it reinforces discipline-specific writing expectations. It enables students to have scaffolded experience and practice in discipline-specific writing as they take WI courses in the upper division.

- WAC supports **faculty collaboration**:
  - Because departments sign on to convert or develop an existing course to “Writing Intensive” (WI, faculty across departments can discuss the different methods and processes for such conversion.. Departmental buy-in ensures that any WAC/GWAR initiative does not rely on individual faculty interest, but on department willingness and collaboration to think about the teaching and learning of writing in their disciplines.
  - A WAC Initiative supports campus-wide and cross-disciplinary collaborations and conversations about the teaching and learning of writing, which is expected in all programs and majors.
- WAC **aligns to the HSU strategic plan**:
  - WAC programs articulate and document a scaffolded approach for writing that moves students into their major areas of study and integrates writing/communication skills across the undergraduate experience.
  - WAC promotes the idea that students who “write to learn and learn to write” think more critically and creatively, engage more deeply in their learning, and are better able to transfer what they have learned from course to course, and from context to context.
- A WAC program puts HSU on par nationally with post-secondary institutions that incorporate best-practices in the teaching and learning of writing:
  - A robust WAC Initiative replaces the timed-essay GWPE, which fewer and fewer campuses use as assessment of upper-division writing proficiency.
  - Students achieve mastery in the discipline by developing their communication skills, a process that requires deep engagement with the content.

### **Additional WAC Possibilities/Recommendations**

- Add a 200-level GE course as an optional (or required) course to scaffold and further support students’ writing development. Many campuses require 9 units in WI courses. Our model might look something like:
  - English 103 or 104 (first-year WI)
  - English 215 (second-year WI)
  - WI course in the major
- Develop HSU writing e-portfolio that students develop and add to throughout the baccalaureate pathway. Assessment of GWAR includes portfolio assessment.

## **Exemplary WAC Programs as Inspiration**

### **1) Established**

- a) The **University of Minnesota's** [Writing-Enriched Curriculum Program \(WEC\)](#) provides academic departments with a way to ensure that discipline-relevant writing and writing instruction are intentionally infused into their undergraduate curricula (launched 2007).
  - i) Students create an Undergraduate Writing Plan.
  - ii) Faculty across all disciplines create writing enriched curriculums with the support of a WEC team.
  - iii) Students are required to take three levels of WEC courses across the undergraduate experience, including disciplinary writing.
  - iv) Student products are assessed by panels of raters.
  - v) This program was initiated through grant funding and has ongoing support through the university budget.
  - vi) Five member team.
- b) **University of North Carolina Charlotte's** [Communication Enhanced Curriculum](#) seeks to create a culture of writing and speaking among faculty, academic partners, and the administration, all of whom share a commitment to students writing and speaking in the disciplines (established 2012).
  - i) Consults with departments to assist with developing a communication enhanced curriculum that includes oral and written communication outcomes. Currently works with 11 departments.
  - ii) Five-member team.
  - iii) Provides students with frequent opportunities for writing and speaking across the curriculum.
  - iv) Provides departments with a built-in assessment process for accreditation purposes and to provide an informal forum for faculty to address concerns regarding student writing.
  - v) Consults with faculty who want to meet "Best Practice" standards for "writing intensive courses and assists with grading strategies to manage the paper load.

### **2) Emerging (includes options for upper-division writing exam)**

- c) CSU Long Beach (established 2014).
  - i) Students must take GWPE as a gateway to upper division study.
  - ii) Pathways toward meeting GVAR, including passing the GWPE with 11/12 score.



- iii) 300-level course and WI course required for lower range GWPE score. WI course required for mid-range GWPE score.
- iv) WAC and GVAR coordinators on campus.

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