

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, BAKERSFIELD
ACADEMIC SENATE

AAC

**Concerns About the Content and Consultation Process of Recent GWAR
Memoranda from the Chancellor's Office**

RES 222305

RESOLVED: That the content of the attached memo be communicated to the Chair, ASCSU, the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs and to the members of the Board of Trustees Committee on Educational Policy; and be it further

RESOLVED That campuses be allowed to defer implementation of the new GWAR policies until the 2024-25 academic year.

RATIONALE: The process of consultation when changes to the GWAR requirement were contemplated, the policy changes outlined in recent memoranda, and the inflexibility of the policy changes across campuses are all problematic. Providing an additional catalog cycle to engage in consultation and implement any changes to policy would allow campuses to thoughtfully and appropriately address GWAR requirements.

Distribution List:

Approved by the Academic Senate: 10/20/2022

Sent to the President: 10/31/2022

Approved by the President:

While we can understand why some may have concern about a requirement for CSU graduates to demonstrate college-level upper-division writing and reading proficiency as part of the requirements of a degree only through an examination, we have strong concerns about the recent memoranda and associated policies received in relation to the GWAR requirement.

- 1) Our strongest concern lies with the process by which the memoranda were developed. This led to ensuing concerns about the content. CSU composition faculty are recognized leaders in their field and have worked diligently for many decades to ensure that our students graduate with composition, reading and thinking skills that prepare them for lifelong success, by meeting our students “where they are” upon admission to our 23 campuses. The CSU English Council is an outstanding consultative body and any changes to composition requirements should receive a positive recommendation from that group and be approved for implementation by the Academic Senate CSU, the body that by state law and Board of Trustee policy should have the primary role in formulating curricular policy. While Dr. Nelson Graff, our current representative to the English Council, was one of three compositions coordinators who were asked to respond to the proposed changes, to not receive a positive recommendation from the two aforementioned bodies prior to implementation was inappropriate. We can only speculate what impact following appropriate consultation processes would have had on the policies implemented, but appropriate consultation usually results in policies which better support student learning outcomes.
- 2) We take exception to the use of the term “high stakes” in reference to all GWAR exams, including the one on our campus, in the March 24, 2022 memorandum. In fact, composition coordinators from other campuses also raised this concern when the policy was being drafted. Our faculty, under the leadership of our own Dr. Flachmann, one of the preeminent experts in college composition in California, continues to develop highly effective courses and continuously monitors and norms expectations related to GWAR courses and our GWAR exam. Dr. Flachmann engages faculty with ongoing professional development in these areas. Students have the option to pass either a GWAR course or an exam to demonstrate competency and can retake either repeatedly until receiving a passing grade or score. Our approach is developmental and supportive, with reinforcement of writing skills throughout our curriculum.
- 3) The elimination of the opportunity for our students to demonstrate proficiency by exam places yet another burden on students in programs which have accreditation and/or licensure requirements, and/or have many units of cognates required for completion of the degree. To require 120 units for graduation along with the meeting of all system and campus graduation requirements may make sense in the humanities. However, a 120-unit cap places undue strain in majors such as engineering, accounting, and nursing. Again and again, faculty in those majors must find “creative” solutions to meet both discipline requirements and other requirements. This is typically done by waiving skill and breadth requirements or finding ways to have discipline courses do “double” and even “triple duty,” potentially diminishing the accomplishment of student learning outcomes in multiple areas. Students in these majors who can demonstrate strong proficiency by exam

are able to meet program and university learning outcomes within 120 units. Those who need to use course credit to demonstrate proficiency may be unable to do so.