



DIVISION of UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION and ACADEMIC PLANNING

WAC/WID NEWSLETTER

We collaborate to serve students and enhance learning

A Year in Review

The academic year 2016-2017 was busy for WAC/WID on campus. More than 20 faculty members (10 each term) from across the university participated in the GWR Mentoring Program (GMP), a faculty learning community launched in the spring of 2016 to support faculty teaching courses that fulfill the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). We sponsored monthly writing pedagogy workshops, featuring topics such as teaching literature review skills and integrating low stakes writing in your courses. With the help of Committee on Written English Proficiency (CWEP), we were able to offer four writing-focused sessions at the faculty retreat in January. We developed resources for faculty, including suggested student learning outcomes for GWAR courses, and began developing a proposal to recognize faculty with expertise in writing pedagogy and the assessment of student writing.

In an effort to continue collecting direct evidence of students' core competencies (written communication, oral communication, quanti-

tative literacy, information literacy, and critical thinking) upon graduation, we, with an interdisciplinary committee of faculty, applied an adapted version of the Written Communication VALUE Rubric (see <https://www.aacu.org/value-rubrics> for more) to assess student writing in capstone projects across the university. A report on this project is forthcoming. We also continued to share our insights from the GWAR assessment project we completed in spring 2016 by visiting departments and groups on campus who are interesting in developing their own assessment of student learning or who are already in the process of assessment efforts. We hope to continue having these fruitful conversations across campus during this upcoming year. For more information, please contact Juliana van Olphen (jvo@sfsu.edu), director of WAC/WID or Jennifer Swanson (jmpeters@sfsu.edu), associate director of WAC/WID. We look forward to another year of progress toward improving student writing at SF State.

Designing Effective Writing Assignments

A topic we have frequently discussed with colleagues over the last couple years is how to design effective writing assignments. According to John Bean¹, an effective writing assignment has interactive features (embedded opportunities for students to brainstorm, engage with ideas, get feedback from peers and the instructor, and revise), a "meaning-constructing task" requiring students to critically ponder and reflect on questions of their discipline, and clear expectations. Scholars frequently talk about the importance of creating authentic assignments. Ask yourself: Does the assignment start with an authentic problem or issue (one that may happen in the real world)?; Are students able to pose their own problem? Students are able to engage more with an assignment when they are given a **Task as Intriguing Problem (TIP)**, a useful mnemonic created by Bean. Another of his suggestions is to give students a **RAFT**, or context for writing; **RAFT** refers to **R**ole (purpose), **A**udience, **F**ormat (or genre) and **T**ask. Be clear about what the student must do (task), why they are writing (role), for whom (audience) and what type of writing (format) it is (e.g., op-ed, proposal, experimental report, blog post, etc.). So, next time you are designing an assignment, give your students a **RAFT** and a **TIP**.

Suggested Learning Outcomes for GWAR

In collaboration with CWEP, the following student learning outcomes (SLOs) were developed to help guide faculty developing a GWAR syllabus and curriculum. These SLOs are meant to be contextualized within an academic field and should be adapted and tailored to the rhetorical aspects of specific kinds of writing within each discipline.

- Understand and apply rhetorical knowledge (consider audience, purpose, and context in writing) relevant to the writing task
- Comprehend, analyze, and apply disciplinary course content
- Apply conventions of the discipline and produce a range of genres important to the discipline
- Skillfully use scholarly and credible sources to develop ideas and arguments relevant to the discipline and genre
- Use language that is clear and relatively free of grammatical errors
- Effectively use feedback and self-assessment to revise written work and improve academic writing skills

¹ Bean, John C. (2011). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking and active learning in the classroom* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Book Recommendation

Lockhart, T., & Roberge, M. (2015). *Informed choices: A guide for teachers of college writing*. Boston, Massachusetts; New York, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Those of us looking for a user-friendly resource for improving our teaching of writing can thank two of SF State's own composition faculty for a recently published insightful, informative, and accessible book. *Informed choices: A guide for teachers of college writing*, by Tara Lockhart and Mark Roberge in the English Department is a boon to both new and experienced teachers of writing and to those who want to better understand how writing can play a role in the courses they teach.

Lockhart and Roberge discuss the current pedagogy of course planning, assignment design, integrating reading, giving feedback and facilitating peer collaboration, among other topics, and offer step-by-step guides for use in different classroom contexts. Every page is full of activities and worksheets to help teachers plan, focus, predict and reflect. Examples and simple instructions make each section a practical resource in and of itself, and the book as a whole provides a start-to-finish overview of teaching a writing course.

Though they do an excellent job of introducing theory and relevant research, one of the most appealing aspect of this book is their focus on reflection. They present an approach to teaching writing that is dependent on thoughtful choices and continuous reflection and assessment on the part of the teacher. This approach reaches beyond writing pedagogy to teaching in general, and offers many insights for any teaching professional interested in understanding their own values and philosophies and how to put those into practice in the classroom.



Center for Equity and Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The newly formed Center for Equity and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CEETL), located in LIB 242, reflects the university's commitment to a culture that values and rewards teaching, supports diversity among learners, and promotes learning environments that foster social justice and the respectful and vigorous exchange of ideas in which students and faculty thrive and succeed. Given the common goal of WAC/WID and CEETL to provide programs and opportunities to foster teaching excellence, we plan to collaborate in supporting faculty across the university. For more information about CEETL, please contact Amy Kilgard at akilgard@sfsu.edu

NEWS and ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recognizing Excellence in Student Writing

Beginning in the spring of 2016, the Committee on Written English Proficiency (CWEP), an interdisciplinary group of faculty and administrators who oversee practices and policy related to student writing on campus, began recognizing undergraduate and graduate students who demonstrate excellent writing within their discipline. In 2016, CWEP solicited faculty nominations of exemplary student writing in a GVAR course and, in 2017, CWEP solicited nominations to recognize writing in a GVAR course as well as writing in a graduate program. We believe that honoring students for their successes helps to foster a supportive learning community for students and faculty alike. The awardees are listed below and their papers are posted at <https://ueap.sfsu.edu/wac/student-writing-award>.

CWEP Award for Student Writing in a GVAR Course

2016 Awardee: Kareena del Rosario, *The Power of the Fabliaux* (French: FR 400 GW; Instructor: Le Marchand).

2016 Honorable Mention: Elijah Behar, *The Mold Remains Intact* (Psychology: PSY 305 GW; Instructor: Christine Perry).

2016 Honorable Mention: Michelle Stone, *Palestine and Israel: The Path Towards Cooperation* (International Relations: I R 309 GW; Instructor: Juanita Darling).

2017 Awardee: Ariana Balagtas, *Of Histories and Hiveminds: The Weaponization of Community in Fuente Ovejuna and The Crucible* (Comparative and World Literature: CWL 400 GW; Instructor: Dane Johnson).

2017 Honorable Mention: Noah Agape Scandrette, *Measurement of Muon Lifetime* (Physics: PHYS 490 GW; Instructor: Akm Newaz).

CWEP Award for Graduate Student Writing

2017 Awardee: Max Czapanskiy, *Quantifying Habitat Accessibility in Marine Species* (Geography: GEOG 857; Instructor: Ellen Hines).

2017 Honorable Mention: Allyce Ondricka, *Why Suzie Wong Is (Possibly) a Lesbian: Reading the Queer Possibility of the Unseen in Filmic Representation of Asian Women's Sexuality* (Cinema: CINE 720; Instructor: Celine Shimizu).

Thank You and Happy Retirement to Dr. Betsy Blosser!

The WAC/WID Program and the Committee on Written English Proficiency (CWEP) would like to congratulate Professor Betsy Blosser on her recent retirement from San Francisco State after 29 years in the Broadcast and Communication Arts (BECA) department. In her time at SF State, Professor Blosser taught over ten different BECA courses for both undergraduates and graduate students, including “Women in the Media,” “TV and Social Change” and an internship course and thesis seminar for graduate students. For almost three decades, she also taught, “Research in BECA,” which was the very first course on campus to be approved as GVAR in spring 2009.

Professor Blosser was the recipient of two Fulbright Lectureships, in Uruguay and Chile, and received the SFSU Service Learning Award in 2006. Through the BECA International Video Project, she took students on fourteen different trips to countries around the world in order to produce videos for NGOs. Professor Blosser served on the Committee for Written English Proficiency (CWEP) for eleven years, and took an active role in the movement that eventually created GVAR courses for each department.

We asked Professor Blosser to share some of her experiences and memories of her time at San Francisco State.

Q: When did you begin teaching at SF State?

A: I arrived in the BECA Department (then BCA) in 1988 from the University of Illinois at Chicago. I had been exposed to SF State while I was a grad student at Stanford.

Q: What were some of your favorite experiences working and teaching writing at SF State?

A: Serving on CWEP and hanging out with the writing folks was a big part of my experience teaching the GVAR course. I learned a lot from my colleagues on CWEP as I absorbed what they taught me about writing. That experience led to my practice using writing prompts (i.e. low-stakes writing) in the GVAR classes (and in the international class, to help students reflect on their experiences). Because my colleagues said peer reviews were important, I continued struggling with peer reviews until I found a system that

worked for me. I really enjoyed getting to know the students and helping them with their writing. Probably, the best part – aside from getting to know the students more intimately through their writing - was finding class activities that help us all laugh together. I’m going to miss that.

Q: How did you see writing on campus change over your time?

A: Since I was hired to teach the class (one of 3 core and pre-requisite classes in the BECA curriculum) that became our department’s GVAR, I was exposed to the writing of first-semester juniors, both “natives” and transfer students. It was fairly upsetting. Due to a lot of complaining on my part, my department was able to get the undergraduate dean to agree to hiring grad students in the department as writing tutors. Although this effort began with two graduate student tutors a semester, after a couple of semesters, that was reduced to one tutor per semester. We still have that writing tutor position, and the tutor assists GVAR and other BECA students with their writing, American Psychological Association (APA) format, and library research. I’m so pleased that support exists in our department.

The area of writing that we have not yet worked on enough as a university is writing at the graduate level. We were limited – and perhaps still are – by a perception that writing help at the graduate level constitutes “remediation.” That is a fallacy. We all need feedback on our writing, regardless of how well we write. Useful writing assistance at the graduate level involves feedback, peer review, and work on disciplinary norms.

Q: What was the best part of your career at SF State and what will you miss the most?

A: That’s easy. The students, of course – especially those I had the pleasure of getting to know quite well on the international trips. My colleagues – especially those in the BECA Department and on CWEP. And the diversity of SF State. It’s a privilege to work at an institution that is so committed to diversity.

Writing Pedagogy Workshops

We are happy to announce that the WAC/WID program will continue to offer writing pedagogy workshops throughout the academic year. In the past, these workshops have been valuable opportunities both for learning and for connecting with the community of WAC/WID teachers on campus. The sessions, led by SF State faculty from a variety of disciplines, are interactive and focused on topics related to teaching writing and reading. In the fall 2017 semester, we will have workshops on constructing essay prompts, facilitating peer review, and supporting

non-native writers of English, among others. Included in the presenters are Aviva Sinervo from Anthropology, Hsiao-Yun Chu from Design & Industry, and Esther Chan from English. The dates and locations will be posted on the WAC/WID website (<http://ueap.sfsu.edu/wac/news-and-announcements#>) and announced in the Campus Memo. Lecturers will receive a small stipend for their attendance at workshops, and faculty presenters are eligible for an honorarium. If you are interested in offering a workshop, please contact Juliana van Olphen (jvo@sfsu.edu) or Jennifer Swanson (jmpeters@sfsu.edu).

SF State University Tutoring Resources for Writing

	CARP	ETC	LAC	EOP	Library
Target population	Undergraduate students	Students in 1 st and 2 nd year composition classes	Undergraduate students	EOP students	All students (graduate and undergraduate)
Tutoring hours	4-8 Mon-Thurs, 11-2 Fri	Variable – Schedule determined by student/tutor availability	9-4 Mon-Thurs, 9-12 Fri	9-12 & 1-4 Mon-Thurs	- Walk in: 10-8 Mon-Fri, 12pm-6 Sat-Sun - With subject specialist librarian: by appointment
Location	HSS 344 (Lab) HSS 346 (Office)	HUM 480	HSS 348	SSB 201	
Referral required?	No, but welcomed; also CARP Contracts	Strongly preferred for weekly; No for walk-in	No, but preferred for weekly appointments.	No	No
Walk-in tutoring?	Yes	Yes – By appointment	If time available	Yes; also by appointment	Yes
Tutor profile	Trained undergraduate and graduate students	Graduate students in English	Graduate & undergraduate students who have completed a 3-unit course on tutoring		Librarian (faculty)
Tutoring for graduate students	If time available	Via walk-in	If time available	No	Yes
Faculty resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handouts Faculty meetings Information Sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Composition. and grammar resources (in print and via website) Reporting on student progress, at request 	Support for teachers across the disciplines in, for example: course planning, assignment design, assessment & working with multilingual students.		Librarians available to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teach in-class research skills workshops for Metro Academy, upper division, and graduate courses work with faculty to design assignments and create tutorials/ learning objects to support research
Other services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GWAR Writing Fellows In-Class / At CARP Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops Instructor support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing Workshop Program (for students completing composition requirements) Topic-specific, faculty-led workshop sessions for GWAR courses 		
Website	http://carp.sfsu.edu	http://etc.sfsu.edu	http://lac.sfsu.edu	www.sfsu.edu/~eop/services.html	http://library.sfsu.edu/research-help