

## Excerpts from

REPORT OF THE WASC VISITING TEAM EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

To SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 6-8, 2013

[http://air.sfsu.edu/sites/sites.sfsu.edu.air/files/SFSU\\_Team%20report%20for%20EER%20spring%202013.pdf](http://air.sfsu.edu/sites/sites.sfsu.edu.air/files/SFSU_Team%20report%20for%20EER%20spring%202013.pdf)

### *Institutional Proposal's EER Expected Outcomes:*

6. Focus on assessment results and needed changes to the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement and Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in the Discipline; and 6th Cycle program review. SF State has reaffirmed its two-decades of deep commitment to students' writing proficiency. The implementation of its campus-wide Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) now involves writing curricula and pedagogy as well as research on writing by faculty across the disciplines. **An indicator of GWAR's positive results is that SF State students write more and show higher levels of confidence in writing than students in comparable institutions, as expressed in the past two NSSE surveys.** (p. 9)

### *Responses to Other CPR Recommendations.*

8. The University should continue to implement the GWAR by gathering data on the effectiveness of the GWAR courses on student writing, and make adjustments to the WAC/WID WID program based on data gathered. [CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6]

As stated in section 3.3 of the EER report, **the GWAR is now fully effectual.**

9. The University should continue to study the issues related to the Level 2 graduate writing requirement and should consider requiring departments to implement Level 2 writing assessment before the culminating experience begins. [CFR 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6] The Council on Written English Proficiency recommended that this recommendation be set aside until the Level 1 writing requirement was fully implemented. (all p. 15)

### *Improving Student Success and Learning*

The HIP study group is first proposing expanding the number and breadth of first-year experience courses and later, as has been recommended in the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR) report and approved by the Academic Senate, implementing capstone classes within the 32 majors. (31) **Over time, the campus may want to consider systematic expansion of some of these HIPs similar to recent efforts to develop the GWAR.** (32)

**As evidenced by NSSE results and internal assessments, the new GWAR has been a notable success.** All programs have developed disciplinary courses that emphasize writing and build on two introductory writing courses. To support the discipline based writing courses, the emphasis in the introductory course has been

shifted from literary to research skills. The campus is providing additional support for students and both marketing to and support of faculty. **Faculty members are beginning formal assessment of student writing skills and students, faculty members, and the writing directors are engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning around efforts to improve student writing (CFR 2.9).** These studies show that the progression of writing courses results in substantial improvement in student writing skills as student writing in the disciplines becomes more sophisticated with more technical vocabulary, more complex sentences, the use of specialized research methods, and greater awareness of disciplinary ways of thinking and understanding. **Impressively, the research indicates that students transferred what they learned in the sophomore composition class, especially strategies for composing papers and reading difficult texts, to their disciplinary writing courses. The work on improving student writing could serve as a model for other efforts to adopt or expand high impact practices and to expand faculty use of pedagogical strategies that have been shown to improve student success, especially for at-risk and underrepresented minority students. Student achievement of the Educational Goals for Baccalaureate Achievement at SF State will depend upon faculty adoption of sophisticated teaching approaches, many of which are difficult to use effectively without encouragement and support (CFR 3.4). (pp. 32-33)**

Several university-wide curricular initiatives are in place. **The GVAR course proposal and outcomes assessment processes provide an example of good use of outcomes assessment. (p. 34)**

### *Teaching and Learning*

**The Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement provides a strong example of engaged learning including providing students with feedback on their work as do many of the course expectations prescribed for general education courses.** Some academic programs employ a number of effective pedagogical approaches such as service learning, case analysis, and project-based learning and many have developed rubrics for assessing student learning. The extent to which rubrics used for program level outcomes assessment are also used to provide feedback to students is not clear from the materials we reviewed. (CFR 2.5) (p. 42)

For the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement, rubrics are used to assess student work and to gather information across students for improvement of both assessment and pedagogy. (43)

### *Scholarship and Creative Activity*

**The extent to which curricular and instructional innovation are valued and supported is less clear, but impressive work is being done around the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement and student success in STEM fields. (CFR 2.8) (p. 44)**

YET: As delineated above, there are many positive indications that characterize SF State as a campus that embraces assessment for teaching and curriculum improvement. Yet, SF State continues to face challenges that impede its progress and expedience toward being a campus that is fully committed to quality assurance at all levels, where faculty throughout the institution engage in inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and where the faculty as a whole consistently use the outcomes of assessment for improvement of learning, curriculum, and pedagogy. (55)

### ***Commendations***

10 (of 14): The team commends SF State for significant progress despite significant financial constraints in implementing its **Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement, which is a strong example of identifying a teaching/learning priority, modifying the curriculum to reflect this priority, providing support for implementation, and using results of assessment to make improvements.** (60)

### ***Recommendations that are relevant to GVAR / WAC Teaching & Learning***

4 of 6: The team recommends that SF State strengthen its support for faculty and staff development and continue to be attentive to how investing in high impact pedagogies such as service learning, learning communities, project based learning, and intercultural dialogue can increase student retention, achievement, and graduation rates. (61)

6: The team recommends that SF State continue discussions related to achieving alignment of tenure and promotion criteria with institutional expectations regarding faculty contributions to student learning inside and outside of the classroom.