Machamer reviewed the committee’s investigation of the Writing Skills Test (WST) as a barrier to graduation.

Rustick (Chair of the Writing Skills Subcommittee (WSS) of the Committee on Curriculum (CIC) ) mentioned EO 665 as the basis for the writing requirement for graduation. The campus has not had a GWAR (Graduate Writing Assessment Coordinator) for a number of years. Wiley reported that testing office staff have been compiling data on WST administrations. Rustick stated that the CO has not requested a report and CSUEB has not submitted one since 2008.

Rustick stated that the WST is not an effective assessment tool, and the major effort that has been made to encourage students to complete and pass the WST is not the best use of time and energy. The rate of return on the intrusive advising has been quite low. She discussed using ETS services for administering and scoring a writing skills test. While not fully endorsing it as an ongoing practice she thought it might be a way to administer the test more efficiently.

Bliss raised concerns about the 2,000 plus students who are currently expected to take the test or otherwise satisfy the UWSR. Workshops seem to improve the pass rate and there is a need to identify which students need to register for the test. Machamer will review the available data. Watnik suggested a strategy for organizing the results: identify all students with senior status (determined by units completed), then break those down by whether they are domestic or international, perhaps by college and department, and by whether they are native or transfer students. That would allow for prioritizing outreach to encourage students to complete the requirement.

Rustick confirmed that the WSS approved in concept placing a hold on filing for graduation until a student makes some effort to satisfy the UWSR. It will be referred to CIC for further discussion, including the particulars and possibilities of enforcement.

Further discussion included enforcement of a hold on registration for the FTF 2014 cohort (which would allow lead in time to ensure that cohort is aware of the requirement). This would not reach the large population of transfer students, so it was suggested that transfer orientation be made mandatory and including a session on the UWSR.

The need for a communication plan was emphasized.