TO: The Committee on Instruction and Curriculum (CIC)
FROM: Writing Skills Subcommittee (WSS)
SUBJECT: 15-16 CIC 31: Writing Skills Subcommittee Recommendations Regarding Writing II: Clarifying “Second Comp” vs. Second Tier

PURPOSE: Action by the Academic Senate

ACTION REQUESTED: For approval of the Academic Senate, effective upon the signature of the President

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In reference to the GE Model Curriculum proposal sent to CIC on May 4, 2015 (14-15 CIC 38), which identifies “second composition (formerly English 1002)” as a graduation requirement, the Writing Skills Subcommittee agrees wholeheartedly with the observation that successful implementation of these policies will require University support and investment, including reliable funding and resources to prevent increases in faculty workloads that undermine effective pedagogy. The University should also identify who will be responsible for overseeing courses that meet the Writing II requirement, keeping in mind that the Writing Skills Subcommittee was established to address the GWAR. Careful consideration is warranted should this committee's charge be expanded in the future.

The addendum (p. 20) of the GE proposal further states, “This writing requirement can be fulfilled either in the lower division or upper division, by the English department or within the major program.” In response to this the Writing Skills Subcommittee recommends the following clarification:

- Writing II should be listed in the catalog as a lower-division requirement, not fulfilled at either the lower or upper division level, with exceptions for transfer students;
- Upper-division courses should be allowed to fulfill Writing II only for community college students who have completed an approved transfer program without a second composition course; those students should take a writing intensive course equivalent to current "second-tier" courses for the University Writing Skills Requirement (UWSR);
• Procedures already in place for approving second-tier courses should be applied to Writing II courses with minor modifications in current criteria (see the attached form and recommended changes);
• The following learning outcomes should be adopted for both lower and upper division courses that fulfill Writing II, preparing students to write for a variety of academic and professional purposes, including but not limited to writing in their selected major.

Outcomes for Second Composition

By the end of second composition, students will be able to
• complete a variety reading and writing tasks that incorporate subject-matter knowledge;
• adjust their writing for different audiences, showing awareness of expectations for academic writing in general and adhering to discipline-specific conventions when appropriate;
• demonstrate critical thinking and logical reasoning, including strategies common in a discipline, in the development and organization of ideas in written texts;
• take into account multiple perspectives and key disciplinary concepts when presenting their ideas in writing;
• revise their writing in response to feedback in order to improve development, clarity, coherence, and correctness.

Second Composition Course Characteristics.

• lower-division Writing II cannot be attempted until after an introduction to college composition; upper-division Writing II cannot be attempted until after receiving a score of “developing competence” on either the WST or first-tier portfolio assessment;
• substantive instruction addresses various aspects of writing, including strategies for generating and organizing information, as well as editing;
• students have opportunities to revise multi-draft essays in response to feedback;
• students produce a minimum of 6,000 words,* not including revisions, in a variety of assignments, occurring throughout the course not one final assignment at the end;
• courses enroll no more than 30 students.

*The 6,000 word requirement and explicit prerequisites are included in IGETC articulation for community college courses that articulate as "second composition." See "CSU Guiding Notes for General Education Reviewers," Http://www.calstate.edu/app/documents/generaleducation/guiding_notes_ge_areaa.pdf.

Approval Process.
The Writing Skills Subcommittee developed a process and criteria for approving courses for the University Writing Skills Requirement (UWSR). These policies and criteria have been applied to second-tier courses, including English 3003, Marketing 3495, and Science 3010, which students take to complete the UWSR if they do not receive adequate scores on the Writing Skills Test (WST) or first-tier portfolio assessment. The same criteria and procedures were applied to graduate programs that wished to assess graduate student writing in their programs. An explanation of current approved procedures and forms are available online at http://www.csueastbay.edu/academic/colleges-and-departments/apgs/cpm/courses/new-writ.html. A copy of the application form is attached (see "Cover Sheet") along with a recommended revision (see "Revised Criteria) that can be applied to courses that can satisfy both the Writing II requirement and second-tier courses to complete the UWSR.

The revisions to current policies include reducing the required word-count from 8,000 to 6,000, which aligns expectations with the IGETC requirements for transfer courses that articulate as "second comp." We have also removed specifications regarding the amount of time students and instructors spend focused on writing during the course, replacing those with more general criteria regarding frequency and variety of purposes for writing instruction integrated with the development of content-area knowledge. Finally, we have asked departments and deans to agree to enforcing prerequisites and class caps, as these crucial aspects of successful instruction are often neglected or subordinated to other concerns, especially when funding is an issue.

**Second Comp as Lower Division.** The Writing Skills Subcommittee recognizes the potential for significant confusion and overlap between this description of second composition as a graduation requirement and "second-tier" courses used to fulfill the GWAR mandated by EO 665. We further recognize a substantial difference between lower-division composition, which develops broad general skills, and upper-division writing, as characterized by the current outcomes for GE area D4, which include composing “written work that manifests the key features of writing in the discipline.” While learning outcomes may overlap, ideally our students will take a second composition class earlier rather than later in their academic careers. Consequently, designating this as a lower-division requirement sends the message that we expect students to receive additional writing instruction before attempting upper-division courses, and before attempting the graduation writing assessment (GWAR) through either the Writing Skills Test (WST) or first-tier portfolio.

As noted in the proposed GE Model Curriculum, courses that fulfill the Writing II requirement can be offered in the major as well as the English department; however, the goal of these undergraduate courses should not be reproducing forms of advanced scholarship--to write like a scientist or historian or literary critic--but to examine genres that correlate with ways of thinking and communicating in a particular field in order to better understand how any angle of vision or disciplinary approach influences writing. With this approach, Writing II courses reinforce skills introduced in beginning composition and promote deeper understanding of the subject matter.
Faculty members have expressed support for the Writing II requirement as a way to ensure more writing instruction for our students. The value of increasing the frequency and amount of writing is consistent with research in the field of composition studies, as well as the National Survey of Student Engagement, which find correlations between the amount of writing students produce and retention rates. Allowing the second composition requirement to be completed at either the lower or upper division level by our native students, however, undermines the goal of providing adequate writing instruction, and may subsequently reduce pass rates on the Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR), potentially adding delays to graduation.

Our native freshmen, many of whom are first-generation college students or English learners, frequently arrive with insufficient academic literacy skills. As the addendum regarding second composition notes, “Most transfer students will come into the university with this requirement already satisfied.” While a small number of students may need an upper-division course to satisfy the Writing II requirement, those students can best be treated as exceptions rather than the norm, and our native freshmen ought to complete a lower-division Writing II course to receive additional instruction early in their academic programs. Given that weak writers frequently avoid writing-intensive classes, we can reasonably expect our native freshmen who are struggling writers will postpone taking the second composition course if allowed to do so.

**Clarifying "Second Comp" vs. "Second-Tier" Courses.** As previously noted, the language in the proposed model curriculum can cause confusion between the "second comp" requirement and "second-tier" courses. Currently, second-tier courses exist for students who need additional writing instruction after being assessed, as mandated by EO 665, through either the Writing Skills Test (WST) or through a portfolio produced in a first-tier course, such as English 3000 or 3001. Students who do not demonstrate adequate skills in those assessments must pass a second-tier, upper-division writing course before receiving a degree. Second-tier courses currently include English 3003 and Marketing 3495. Science 3010, an approved second-tier course for science majors, has not been offered in several years, demonstrating the difficulty of maintaining upper-division writing courses designed for majors. The Writing Skills Subcommittee encourages the development of more second-tier courses focused on writing in the major, and we strongly support the GE Subcommittee's recommendation that university resources be available to assist these efforts. Such courses could serve two purposes: providing additional instruction for students who have not passed the GWAR, and as an upper-division Writing II course for transfer students who need it.

Discipline-specific writing courses appropriate for upper-division work in the major can serve transfer students, but should not replace writing instruction designed to support students who need to improve their general writing ability early in their academic program. Although we recommend the same learning outcomes for both lower and upper-division courses,
differentiating between the two allows faculty to adjust for differences in the student population, such as students’ maturity, background knowledge, and commitment to a particular field. Finally, other CSU campuses have successfully implemented similar policies to address, so we can be confident that this approach is feasible. The catalog description of writing requirements at Cal State, Chico are offered here as an example.

CSU Chico:  [http://catalog.csuchico.edu/viewer/15/GENED.html](http://catalog.csuchico.edu/viewer/15/GENED.html)

**Writing Intensives:**
Students who start at CSU, Chico as first-year freshmen are required to take four Writing Intensive courses in general education. These courses are identified as “WI” in the course schedule, and are designated with an “I” in the course number, e.g., ENGL 130I. The Foundation courses in Writing (Area A-2) count as one of the WI courses, as does your GE Capstone (see discussion below of Capstone requirement.) *Transfer students who have completed substantial portions of their GE before enrolling at Chico State are required to take one WI course in the Upper Division,* which may be the GE Capstone. As the name indicates, Writing Intensive courses have a particular focus on “learning to write and writing to learn.” Becoming a competent writer is the hallmark of an educated person, and a central goal of a Chico State education. Writing Intensive courses are an integral part of that learning process.