The meeting was called to order at 2:20 p.m.

Members present: Lan Wang (CBE), Donna Wiley (APGS/representing Testing Office), Nancy Thompson (CLASS/CIC), Margaret Rustick (Director of Composition), Ryan Smith (COS) was present for the first part of the meeting, but had to leave early.

Minutes: Donna suggested changing the language of the last paragraph to refer to upper- and lower-division writing classes. Moved (Nancy), seconded (Lan) to approve the minutes as amended.

UWSR at other CSUs: Margaret reported on what other CSUs are doing. In many cases, the Writing Skills Requirement is met through course work. The courses are usually approved by a faculty committee, but the instructor’s grade determines whether the requirement is met. In some cases students must earn at least C- in a course where 60 % of the course grade depends on writing assignments; other campuses require a B minimum grade. Most campuses do not require portfolios, but they do require writing instruction, including multiple drafts or rewriting. Sacramento State has a complicated system involving a test or portfolio, but is phasing out the test.

Margaret also brought Fresno’s review of its GE course writing materials, which suggested that instructors seldom asked for multiple drafts and that the assignments tended to be short, so that students were producing around 1500-2000 words per semester. Our sister campuses differ in how writing courses are handled. San Francisco takes a heavy-handed approach requires every department to offer a writing course with a low enrollment cap every semester. At other campuses students can choose to take either a course or a test.

UWSR at East Bay: Discussion centered on the most effective way to meet the UWSR if we move away from the WST to discipline courses.

Margaret noted that there is a difference between a writing intensive course and a course with a significant writing component. We could leave writing intensive courses to department faculty, but offer more support for writing instruction. Courses with a significant writing component could be used for assessment.

Ryan suggested that students who feel ready could take a class that would evaluate their writing. If their writing proves inadequate, they should be directed to a class with more intensive writing instruction.
Donna observed that we haven’t settled the question of whether the assessment of writing assessment would be distinguished from course grade. Ryan pointed out that two separate assessments would put a greater burden on faculty. It would be easier if passing the course meant that the UWSR was satisfied. Donna’s concern was that students in a discipline course might fail because they didn’t understand the subject, not because they couldn’t write well; however, if the course grade was based on writing assignments, it would be clear that writing problems, not lack of subject knowledge, prevented a student from passing.

Writing within the Discipline: for assessment or to satisfy the UWSR: The committee discussed at length whether discipline courses should be used only for assessment or to meet the UWSR. If assessment is to be the primary purpose, then students could take either a Writing Intensive course or the WST. The instructor would determine which students showed Clear Competence and had satisfied the UWSR. The question then is what happens to students who didn’t fare as well.

Nancy wondered whether discipline faculty would feel comfortable deciding between Limited and Developing Competence. If instructors do not make the LC/DC decision, then students who did not achieve Clear Competence could take either a first-tier course (ENGL 3000/3001) or the WST. At that point, their options would be essentially the same as under the current system, except that there should be more second-tier courses offered in the disciplines.

Lan suggested continuing with an exam, and allowing students two chances to pass. She also asked whether there are tests that could be used as an alternative to the WST. Margaret replied that a course in the student’s major would get the assessment process started more quickly: students postpone the WST until they are nearing graduation, but they would be less likely to postpone a class that is needed for their major. As for alternatives to the WST, no exams are likely to be sophisticated enough to test for the skills expected of students at the junior level.

Donna commented that some departments will be concerned about offering writing intensive courses, since those courses need to have low enrollment caps. If writing-intensive courses become the means to satisfy the UWSR, she suggested that students would start with a writing intensive course or a test. Students with Developing Competence could take the same or another writing-intensive course, but students with Limited Competence would have to take ENGL 3000/3001. Under this scenario, instructors would determine whether a student had Developing or Limited Competence.

Another possibility is to use the grade in writing intensive courses to determine whether the UWSR is met. A grade of A or B would indicate Clear Competence, a grade of C would indicate Developing Competence, and a grade of D or F would indicate Limited Competence. Students who did not achieve Clear Competence would have the option to re-take the same course, to take another writing-intensive discipline course, or to take the English courses.
Lan volunteered to develop a flow chart which would set out the possible options (appended).

The meeting adjourned at 3:35.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Thompson
Assessment

WID

WST

Eng 3000/3001

Result

C.C. (A/B)

D.C. (C)

L.C. (D/F)

Follow-up

Done

WI

Eng 3000/3001