



DESIGNATION CODE: 13-14 BC 1
DATE SUBMITTED: August 13, 2013

TO: The Academic Senate
FROM: Mitchell Watnik, Academic Senate Chairperson
SUBJECT: University Writing Skills Policy Implementation Update
PURPOSE: Action by the Academic Senate
ACTION REQUESTED: Acceptance of information

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In 2003-4, the Academic Senate passed a policy, designated [03-04 CIC 7](#), regarding the University Writing Skills Requirement wherein undergraduates were mandated to begin work towards that end upon completing 90 quarter units. According to that policy, students would be blocked from registration in the following quarter if they did not attempt the WST or an appropriate writing course.

PEMSA attempted to enforce this rule literally one year, a few years ago, but the results were problematic. At that point in time, PeopleSoft did not have reliable information about whether students took the WST or satisfied the UWSR through other means (such as satisfying it elsewhere before transferring to CSUEB). Hence, many students who should not have been subjected to the blockage were prevented from enrolling and others who had not satisfied the requirement were permitted to enroll.

An administrative group called the "[Student Success Subcommittee](#)", of which I am a member, was charged last year by Provost Houpis and Vice President Dalton with finding the main roadblocks to graduation. The group identified the UWSR as the primary impediment, as students appear to postpone it until the last minute and, because of that, spend extra quarters on campus in order to satisfy it.

Considerable work has been done within PEMSAs and the Testing Office to make the UWSR records more reliable and accessible to advisors, the subcommittee will not recommend literal enforcement of the hold policy yet. Instead, as a step towards achievement of that goal, the subcommittee recommends that, for the time being, students will not be permitted to file for graduation until they begin to work on satisfying the UWSR. In this manner, there are stakes for the students and they will not find out that there is another unsatisfied requirement when they

have completed all others and expect to be graduating. As students now file to graduate using PeopleSoft (through MyCSUEB), this will be automated and will not need intervention of advisors. Since students must file to graduate at the beginning of the quarter before graduating, they should be aware of the unsatisfied requirement early enough to be able to take the WST or the two writing courses to complete the requirement “on time”. (Of course, if a student files at the last minute, there may not be available seats in the writing courses at that time.) This step also provides a means of testing the reliability of the information in PeopleSoft without adversely affecting over half of our student body and may have the side-effect of speeding up the grad check process within PEMSA, as it should become clear that PeopleSoft, rather than a human evaluator, has documented the satisfaction of the UWSR.