TO: The Committee on Instruction and Curriculum

FROM: The Writing Skills Subcommittee of the Committee on Instruction and Curriculum

SUBJECT: Pilot of new process for Writing Skills Portfolio Evaluation in First Tier Writing Course (ENGL 3000, ENGL 3001)

PURPOSE: Information Item

ACTION REQUESTED: None

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
All CSU graduates are required to demonstrate competency in writing skills for graduation. One way to demonstrate this competency is by preparing a portfolio in concert with a first-tier writing course, either ENGL 3000 or ENGL 3001. The portfolio is evaluated by someone other than the class instructor. In some instances a student has passed the writing course, but his/her portfolio has received a “no pass” evaluation so the student has passed the course but has not satisfied the GWAR (graduation writing assessment requirement).

The Writing Skills Subcommittee has been reviewing the portfolio evaluation process for the first tier writing courses, ENGL 3000 and 3001. After resolution of some technical difficulties by coordinated efforts of Testing and IT, the submission and review process was improved. Portfolio review requires adequate resources, particularly evaluator training and the actual time needed to perform the evaluations. In addition inter-rater reliability is important and multiple reviews can be required to ensure that a student is afforded an unbiased evaluation.

A number of portfolios were recently evaluated from ENGL 3000 and 3001 courses. Faculty who taught some of the sections were asked to provide predicted evaluations for portfolios for the students in their courses. (The choices for portfolio evaluations are limited competence, developing competence, or clear competence.) Then the portfolios were evaluated by an external rater who had not taught the particular student. There was substantial agreement between course faculty and other raters, indicating that this 2-rater process will result in good inter-rater reliability, and will also potentially reduce the number of differences between students’ grades in the ENG 3000/3001 course and their portfolio results.

The Subcommittee members believe that this is an efficient and reliable method for scoring writing skills portfolios. There will be a pilot evaluation of summer 2013 portfolios using the method outlined above. If there a rating discrepancy between the external rater and the course faculty, a third rating will be undertaken from another external rater. If this method proves to be as successful as hoped, the Writing Skills Subcommittee plans to propose a policy update for implementation in fall 2013.