

## THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGES

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Reply Requested by: November 13, 1978
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To: Presidents

*Alex C. Sherriffs*  
From: Alex C. Sherriffs  
Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

Subject: Competency in Writing - Graduation Requirement

In May 1976 the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution endorsing "the principle that all students entering CSUC after implementation of the proficiency/diagnostic examination be required to demonstrate their competency with regard to writing skills as a requirement for graduation" (REP 5-76-4, attached).

During the last two years there has been substantial debate throughout the CSUC system about various methods of implementing this requirement. Mandatory catalog copy has announced the imminence of this requirement as:

"All students subject to degree requirements of 1977-78 and subsequent general catalogs must demonstrate competency in writing skills as a requirement for graduation...."

The English Placement Test has provided information to campuses and to individuals about entering lower-division students who may have difficulty in meeting this graduation requirement.

Inasmuch as large numbers of students subject to this new requirement will continue to enter the CSUC system or be moving into the upper division in Fall 1978, it is necessary to develop plans now to implement the Trustee resolution in this regard.

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Distribution: Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs  
Deans of Graduate Studies  
Deans of Undergraduate Studies  
Deans of Academic Planning  
Liaison Officers, EPT  
Chairs, Campus Academic Senates  
Chancellor's Staff

## Program Planning

Various systemwide groups, including the Educational Policies Committee of the Statewide Academic Senate, the CSUC English Council, the CSUC Student Presidents' Association and the Advisory Committee on Student Writing Skills, as well as campus faculty and administrators, have considered this issue and made recommendations leading to the following guidelines:

1. The need for certification of upper-division writing proficiency is more apparent and important now than ever before.
2. At this time, there are persuasive arguments against imposition of a single systemwide upper-division writing proficiency examination.
3. Writing skills proficiency requirements for graduation, distinct from lower-division curricula and tests, should be made known to students as soon as possible. Certification should be made available for students as they enter the junior year, and requirements ideally should be completed before students enter the senior year (for graduate students, before advancement to classified standing).
4. Attention to the issue of student writing skills is an all-campus responsibility. Individual campuses may find it desirable, and possible, for this certification to occur at the department level including all disciplines. On the other hand, it may be that campuses would prefer to institute or reaffirm schoolwide and campuswide certification procedures.
5. Certification may rely upon evidence of writing ability as demonstrated in written coursework, essays, subjective examinations, and similar materials produced by students. It is expected that any such measures will be developed to fit local student needs and campus situations.

## Reporting and Review

Campus programs and procedures adopted or in progress should be submitted to the Division of Educational Programs and Resources no later than November 13, 1978, after full consultation with campus faculty resource, curricular and educational planning committees. The Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Student Writing Skills will be asked to review these plans and report on the system's response to this challenge.

If you have any questions concerning these requirements, please call Dr. Anthony J. Moyer (ATSS 635-5527).

ACS:pfz

Attachments