**Approved, SCCC Vote, February 3, 2016**

**Proposal to Investigate the Effectiveness of Stretch Composition at CSUMB**

# Background and Introduction to the Proposal

### CSUMB’s current program in oral and written communication follows what the National Census on Writing calls “The Prerequisite Model of basic writing, in which students take a non-credit bearing course that must be passed before taking the credit-bearing first-year writing course” (<http://writingcensus.swarthmore.edu/glossary-notes>). All students who earn below a 147 on the English Placement Test must take Early Start the summer before enrolling at CSUMB and WRT 95 during their first year. Early Start was required by the CSU Board of Trustees and enacted according to Chancellor’s Office Executive Order 1048, requiring that students have “begun addressing deficiencies in mathematics and/or English in a recognized CSU program before enrollment” if they scored below 147 on the English Placement Test. Early Start does not necessarily allow students to fulfill the remediation requirement, and, absent a full four-unit summer course, it seems unlikely that it will do so for most students.

### Data from the last five years of our current program provide some evidence to evaluate its success. For the last five years (fall 2010-spring 2015), an average of 89% of students have passed WRT 95 during the first semester. From fall 2012 through spring 2015, students who passed WRT 95 passed Area A1 courses 84% of the time, as compared to 88% for students placed directly into A1 courses. The average one-year retention rates for students not needing remediation for the years 2006-2013 is 75%. For students succeeding at remediation in English, that rate is higher, at 81%. However, for students who fail WRT 95, the rate is much lower, at 46%. Four-year graduation rates for students who succeeded at WRT 95 are slightly lower (at 15%) than that of students who did not take remediation (20%), but six-year graduation rates are comparable (43%, 42%).

These data suggest that our current program is succeeding at retaining students and at preparing students for their A1 courses (and A2 courses, for which the percent passing is almost the same—93% for students who took WRT 95, 91.5% for students who did not). However, they both reveal other issues—the lower retention rate of students who fail WRT 95, for instance—and disguise some concerns about the writing program as it is currently structured. First, as reported by WRT 95 faculty, some students enter WRT 95 frustrated that they have placed into a “remedial” class that earns them no college credit, a situation made worse by confusion about Early Start. On a recent survey about students’ perceptions of Early Start, a number of students indicated that they were surprised to find they still had to take “remedial” writing after completing their Early Start class. Second, the current system has students taking a course at college that offers no college credit, both potentially reinforcing for them negative ideas about their own competency and potentially delaying their graduation (as suggested by the lower four-year graduation rates of students who enter remediation). Finally, while the outcomes and curriculum of WRT 95 may function for a general introduction to academic writing, they do not align perfectly with CSUMB’s vision of integrated oral and written communication and critical thinking, as described in Area A. Ideally, there should be one set of outcomes toward which both “developmental” and “college-ready” students are working in their opening semesters.

Such a model, which works well with a Stretch program, also matches a move both nationally and in the CSU toward Stretch composition. The National Census on Writing reports that 24 of 205 institutions surveyed have stretch programs. The proportion among CSUs is much higher. Of the 23 CSU campuses, 16 are currently using stretch models, and one is in the piloting phase of introducing the model. CSUMB has a well-earned reputation for innovation among CSUs and nationally; however, the absence of a full-time University Writing Program Director has led to CSUMB falling behind other CSUs in the practice of basic writing and first-year composition. Beginning in 1999, other CSUs have experimented with eliminating non-credit remedial courses, replacing them with cohort-based stretch composition classes. The table below represents the most recent data about CSUs that have stretch programs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Stretch |
| California State University, Bakersfield | X |
| California State University Channel Islands | X |
| California State University, Chico |  |
| California State University, Dominguez Hills | Piloting in 2015 |
| California State University, East Bay | X |
| California State University, Fresno | X |
| California State University, Fullerton |  |
| Humboldt State University | X |
| California State University, Long Beach | X |
| California State University, Los Angeles | X |
| California State University Maritime Academy |  |
| California State University, Monterey Bay |  |
| California State University, Northridge | X |
| California State Polytechnic University, Pomona | X |
| California State University, Sacramento | X |
| California State University, San Bernardino | X |
| San Diego State University |  |
| San Francisco State University | X |
| San José State University | X |
| California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo | X |
| California State University San Marcos |  |
| Sonoma State University | X |
| California State University, Stanislaus | X |

# For reasons I will explore further below, these changes are believed to improve student engagement in writing and university life, and to improve retention rates and success in first-year and later composition classes.

# Summary of Proposed Pilot

**Stretch**—Because CSUMB has chosen to integrate written and spoken communication, ethics, and critical thinking across GE Area A, the Stretch sequence will meet the outcomes of our Area A1. This pilot will require students who earn below 147 on the EPT to take a two-semester, eight-unit course (of which four units would count toward a general university elective) adapted from the Yancey (2014) *Teaching for Transfer* course. Students in stretch will take both courses with the same instructor and cohort of students. Both courses can be hosted by UWP, or UWP could host the first semester course with the second semester in HCOM.

The pilot would begin with two sections of stretch (WRT 195) for Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students commencing in the summer of 2016. Students will take a four-week course, meeting three hours per day, which will comprise the first semester of the stretch sequence. Those students will continue with the same instructor and the same group of colleagues to take special sections of HCOM 211 (or perhaps HCOM 195) in the fall designed to fit a stretch curriculum. In the fall of 2016, four additional sections of WRT 195 will commence, linked to four sections of HCOM 211 in the spring of 2017.

Data collection for all courses will include assessments of mid-term and final portfolios, as well as tracking of course grades in all classes and retention rates for all students. These students will be likewise tracked into their A2/3 courses to assess the impact of stretch on future course work. Surveys of students will be conducted at four points—at the beginning of their first semester, at the end of their first semester, at the end of the second semester, and mid-way through the semester following their completion of the stretch sequence.

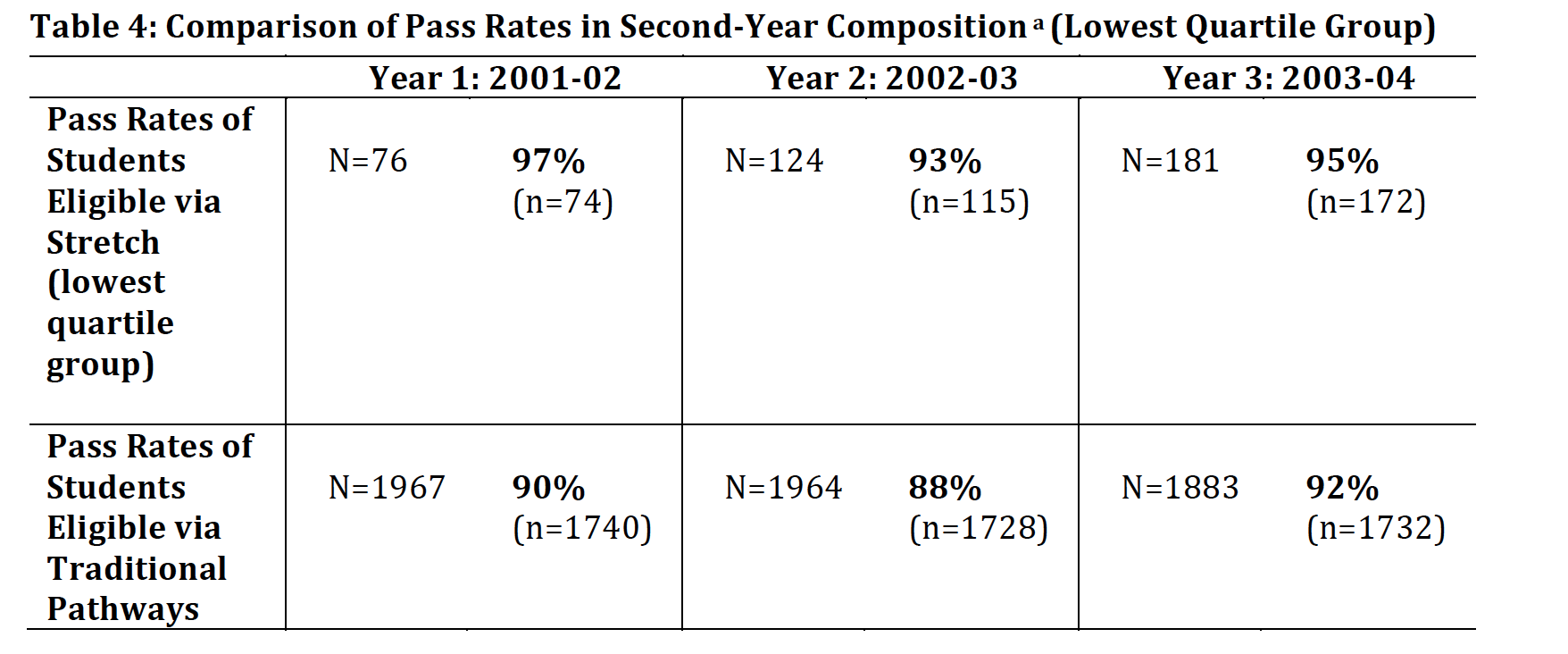
# Rationale and Description of the Proposed Changes

**Stretch**

The Stretch model originated in 1993 at Arizona State University (ASU) based on the notion that what struggling college writers most needed was more time to practice writing. In a stretch model, instead of taking a “remedial” course and a “college-level” course, students have two paths to fulfill the first-year requirement (or in this case, the A1 requirement)—a two-semester course and a one-semester course. Both classes address the same outcomes; both use the same texts; both require the same writing assignments; both conclude with the same portfolio. They differ in that students taking the two-semester option have more time and support to complete those assignments, and they remain with the same instructor and same group of students during both semesters.

The evidence, both nationally and in the CSU, strongly support the potential of the stretch model. Using statistical analyses of ten years of data from ASU’s stretch course, Glau (2007) concludes that the stretch sequence has improved outcomes for all students (except Native American students, which result he cannot yet explain), leading to pass rates in the year-long sequence higher than those of students placed directly into the one-semester class, higher pass rates in the next level of composition, and increased retention of students semester to semester, all despite students entering stretch with much lower standardized test scores. Peele (2010), studying the program at Boise State based on the ASU model, finds similar results and suggests that remaining with the same instructor and cohort of students plays a key role in the success of the model.

Assessment of students at sister institutions support these claims. San Francisco State University piloted the first stretch program in the CSU in 1999, and it is their success that has inspired so many other campuses to follow suit. The co-creators of that program, Sugie Goen-Salter and Helen Gillotte-Tropp, won a Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE) grant to pilot and study their stretch program and reported very positive results: “Between 2001 and 2004 (the three years of FIPSE‐funding), students in the Stretch group had higher retention rates, received higher ratings on their writing portfolios, and scored similar to or higher on measures of reading comprehension and critical reasoning” (Goen-Salter, p. 5). Goen-Salter noted that students’ success extended beyond their first year into second-year composition: “the Stretch students passed the second year course at similar, or slightly higher rates than students who were eligible via traditional pathways (Table 4)” (p. 8).



Other CSU campuses, having adopted stretch, have reported similar success. CSU Channel Islands opened its doors with directed self-placement and stretch composition. They have reported, of students in the 2013-2014 year (after several years of Directed Self-Placement and Stretch), that 85.5% of CSUCI students passed their final portfolios at the C level. Similarly, in a 2009 assessment of their DSP and Stretch Programs, CSU Fresno reported: “Eng 5A5B [Stretch] appears to have a positive effect on retention rates especially among students who needed remediation and failed English 5B.”

The data below from the last several academic years provide a further argument in favor of the stretch program, that students succeed in A1 courses in greater numbers when those courses follow their WRT 95 course in the immediate next semester. The first three rows below reflect the performance of students who took A1 in the spring following their fall WRT 95. The final three rows show the success rates of students who waited one year to take A1. It is worth noting not only that the vast majority of students do take A1 in the next semester but also that those who do generally succeed at a rate higher than students who wait a year before taking A1.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| WRT 95 Term | A1 Term | Passing Numbers | Passing Percents | Failing Numbers | Failing Percents |
| 2012 Fall | 2013 Spring | 196 | 87% | 30 | 13% |
| 2013 Fall | 2014 Spring | 182 | 87% | 28 | 13% |
| 2014 Fall | 2015 Spring | 280 | 88% | 38 | 12% |
| 2011 Fall | 2013 Spring | 12 | 80% | 3 | 20% |
| 2012 Fall | 2014 Spring | 18 | 78% | 5 | 22% |
| 2013 Fall | 2015 Spring | 16 | 89% | 2 | 11% |

Data nationally and from other CSUs, and even data from CSUMB students suggest that a stretch program is worth investigating for students at CSUMB scoring below 147 on the English Placement Test.

Although faculty at CSUMB would have to evaluate and modify this program to meet our Area A1 outcomes, I recommend the *Teaching for Transfer* course developed by Kathleen Blake Yancey and colleagues (2014) as a starting point for that curriculum. The course is designed specifically to help students develop a theory of writing and a language for discussing writing, and Yancey’s team found that students who took that course were better able to transfer their knowledge of writing to new contexts.

The course is organized into four units, in which students read and write about key concepts: Genre, Audience, Rhetorical Situation, and Reflection; Exigence, Critical Analysis, Discourse Community, and Knowledge; Context, Composing, and Circulation; Knowledge and Reflection (reiterated specifically in this unit). Because CSUMB’s A1 courses integrate oral communication, critical thinking, and ethics into the written communication sequence, some concepts that might appropriately be added include Perspective, Dialogue, Logic, and Ethics, (replacing “Circulation” with “Delivery”?).

# Timeline

**Spring 2016**—Planning

* Stretch Co-op—A faculty group meeting to develop a shared syllabus for Stretch classes

**Summer 2016**—Pilot and data collection

* Stretch pilot with two sections of WRT 195 and EOP students.
* Student surveys and midterm portfolio assessment

**Fall 2016**—Pilot and data Collection

* Stretch Pilot—Four additional sections of WRT 195
* Two sections of HCOM 195 for EOP students.
* Data collection

**Spring 2017**—Pilot and data collection

* Stretch Pilot—Four sections of HCOM 195
* Data collection

**Summer 2017**—Stretch Report

# Resource Implications

The pilot would require some investment in curriculum development and in compensating faculty for portfolio assessment and professional development activities to prepare them to teach the class. However, because we would be moving from two courses to a two-semester sequence, the long-term consequences of a shift to stretch should be minimal.

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