MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 9, 2015

TO: All General Education Course Instructors

FROM: Jennifer Ricketts, Chair, University-wide General Education Committee
Dennis Ray, Chair, Undergraduate Council
Celeste Pardee, Assistant Director for Academic Policies/Organizations

RE: General Education Writing-Intensive Policies

As of Summer/Fall 2016, all new and continuing Tier One and Tier Two courses must meet the Policies for Writing-Intensive Courses. Guidelines for Writing-Intensive Courses were approved by the University-wide General Education Committee (UWGEC) in 1997 with the launch of the current General Education Program. Since then the UWGEC has used those writing criteria in evaluating and approving proposals for Tier One and Tier Two courses. But members recognized that guidelines were insufficient as courses evolved over time and students' writing skills failed to improve upon completion of their General Education course work. In May 2015 the UWGEC proposed that those guidelines be changed to policies. That proposal was approved by the Undergraduate Council on 10/13/15 and by the Faculty Senate on 12/07/15. The policies apply to all Tier One/Two courses, as noted in the 2015-16 Catalog, http://catalog.arizona.edu/2015-16/gened_tiers.html.

General Education Writing Policies, (see http://gened.arizona.edu/content/writing-component):

The faculty recognizes that writing is a basic way of learning, as well as a means of ordering and communicating knowledge. In General Education courses, writing engages students actively with the body of facts, ideas, and theories they encounter in the disciplines. Writing helps students develop a critical appreciation of the ways in which knowledge is acquired and applied. To this end, writing assignments are relevant to the discipline and the course.

Tier Two course instructors may assume that students have taken First-year Composition, but Tier One course instructors should assume that most students have not completed this requirement.

The following policies for integrating writing assignments are applied during approval and re-approval evaluations of Tier One and Tier Two courses. The University-wide General Education Committee will look for specifics when evaluating course proposals; sample assignments are helpful during course evaluation.

- Writing assignments, both formal and informal, are integrated in the course requirements through more than one means. Some examples are written papers, laboratory reports, abstracts, quizzes, examinations, journals, ungraded writing assignments, writing during the class session, and writing in small groups. Examinations and quizzes alone are not enough, even though they may include essay questions.
- Writing assignments emphasize critical inquiry – including skills of gathering, interpreting, and evaluating information appropriate to the area of study – through attention to the process of writing. Practice of various strategies, such as focusing ideas, drafting, revising, critical reading, and research using outside sources, support the writing process.
• Writing assignments are evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation, as well as content and participation in the scholarly conversation.
• At least one writing assignment involves a revision process in which students receive instructor and/or peer feedback on a first draft and make substantive revisions before submitting a subsequent draft for grading.
• Writing assignments may vary in number and length, but must add up to a minimum of 10 pages or 2500 words over the term. One or more writing assignments of at least 750 words must be done outside of the class session.

Rationale for the Change:

• Writing should be prioritized in the General Education Curriculum to ensure that students’ writing skills improve.
• In practice, the UWGEC has long required new General Education courses to satisfy all “writing intensive guidelines” as a condition for approval.
• Revisions support the mission of The Writing Program’s First-Year Writing (Composition) courses and the General Education Program’s Writing Across the Curriculum.

Implementation of the General Education Writing Policies:

• In Spring 2016 instructors of all Tier One/Two courses should familiarize themselves with the Policies for Writing-Intensive Courses and should assess their classes for compliance. Adjustments in writing assignments must be made as of Summer/Fall 2016.
• Faculty interested in helpful tips on managing written assignments in large classes and providing meaningful feedback on student papers may sign up for one of the Writing Workshops for General Education Instructors offered by the Office of Instruction & Assessment (OIA) http://genedwriting.oia.arizona.edu/content/workshops.
• The OIA and UWGEC will assess the General Education Program in 2016-17 and will develop a re-certification process for all Tier One/Two courses that will be piloted in the next 2 – 3 years. It is expected that the re-certification process will be in place for all Tier One/Two courses within 4 years.

Questions about the General Education writing policies should be addressed to the UWGEC via Celeste Pardee in Curricular Affairs at 621-5375, or cpardee@u.arizona.edu.