

I. Proposal Narrative

Part 1: Abstract

The Writing Network is a collaborative learning initiative of the Writing Program, the Minority Recruitment Program, the Southern Arizona Writing Project and local high schools. Pre-service English education majors and first-year composition students will work with high school students on their writing, who will also receive collaborative learning support from the undergraduate tutors in the University Writing Center. Students from underrepresented groups and others will be offered support to learn the skills they need to succeed at the university, and undergraduates will gain practical field experience working collaboratively on their writing. English education majors will particularly benefit from the practical school-based experience, and college composition students will be offered service learning opportunities that will help them learn the practical benefits of attending to audience and purpose in writing.

Building on collaborations with ten high schools, the Writing Network will include

- on-line tutoring for high school students provided by undergraduate tutors at the University Writing Center,
- service learning sections of college composition in which first-year students work on a collaborative writing project with high school students,
- pre-professional English education courses that include opportunities for future teachers to tutor high school English students both on line and on site,
- mentoring opportunities for future teachers to learn from teachers who have participated in a federally funded professional development program,
- an essay contest for ninth-grade students that will be promoted by university recruiters and supported by the Network collaborations and tutoring, and
- a Young Writers conference that will be used to reward high school students from underrepresented groups for working on the skills they will need to succeed.

This program incorporates the learner-centered paradigm's emphasis on collaborative service learning experiences that involve experiential learning and field work on practical problems. The Writing Network expands this paradigm to support school-university partnerships in an area of pressing public need. Over sixty percent of Arizona high school students are currently failing the AIMs writing test that will be required for graduation next year. If students from underrepresented groups are going to be able to pass that test and attend the university, then the university needs to become more involved in the rest of public educational system. Writing instruction is a strategic area to foster such learner-centered collaborations, not simply because writing is so fundamental to students' success, but also because the learner-centered paradigm is fundamental to research on writing as a process of collaborative problem solving.

Through the involvement of award-winning researchers on the teaching of writing and an award-winning teacher development institute, the Writing Network will help to make the learner-centered paradigm a resource for the state educational system at a time when students' writing skills are in vital need of improvement to help ensure that a majority of Arizona students will have the high school diplomas needed to continue their education. The Writing Network will provide learner-centered experiences for students in high school, composition and English education, and it will also create a strategic partnership between recruitment programs and the only academic program at the university that serves all entering students.

Part 2: Identification of Need

The Writing Program at the University of Arizona serves some twelve thousand students a year, and it has created innovative partnerships with high schools throughout Southern Arizona. One of the faculty in the Writing Program, Dr. Anne-Marie Hall, is the Director of the Southern Arizona Writing Project, which has won national and university awards for its outreach to teachers. Dr. Hall has also been instrumental in promoting collaborations between the College of Education and the English Department, most notably the creation of a joint faculty position and the expansion of English education courses to include more school-based work. Students in English education and composition courses have already begun to participate in collaborative projects with high school students, but these efforts have not been brought into a coherent program because they have been undertaken by individual instructors on top of their regular work schedules. Such initiatives are to be lauded, but to be sustained, they need to be organized around a common vision. Learner-centered education provides that vision. While the Writing Network will provide learner-centered educational experiences for high school, composition and English education students, it will also function as a pipeline project that will build a recruitment and retention program from existing programs and initiatives. High school students from underrepresented groups will have the opportunity to be mentored by composition and English education students from similar backgrounds, for special efforts will be made to recruit undergraduates from underrepresented backgrounds (including the reservation that is served by the partner schools) in order to help them stay connected to their home communities and serve as models for high school students from those communities. The Writing Network will expand the emphases in the learner-centered paradigm on service learning, field work, and collaborative problem solving in order to make the university a resource for the rest of the educational system.

The Writing Network is a collaborative learning initiative for faculty and staff as well as students because it brings an award-winning federally funded teacher development program together with researchers who have national awards for their research on the teaching of English. As already noted, Dr. Hall's Southern Arizona Writing Project (an affiliate of the federally funded National Writing Project) has won national awards for its teachers teaching model of professional development, and the Director of the Writing Program, Dr. Thomas Miller, has won the Modern Language Association's award for the best book on the teaching of English. Dr. Miller has also won a national award for his research on writing at work, and a university award for his collaborative work with graduate students. The Writing Network will provide an opportunity for leading researchers on the teaching of writing to partner with local teachers, while at the same time providing opportunities for composition and English education students to collaborate with high school students on their writing at a time when over sixty percent of high school students are threatened with failure on the exams that they need to pass to graduate.

The Writing Network further expands the collaborative vision of the learner-centered paradigm by creating an academic partnership with the innovative recruitment efforts of the Minority Recruitment Program headed by Marita Gomez in the University of Arizona's Admissions Office. The Ambassadors program of the Admissions Office provides undergraduates with service learning opportunities to visit high schools. The proposed ninth grade essay contest will add new purpose to this recruitment program by offering first year high school students with an opportunity to receive help and direction with their writing, and the Young Writers conference will provide an opportunity to get students excited about their writing and see how working on it can enable them to have an opportunity to come to the university.

Part 3: Technical Needs.

The University Writing Center currently has the capability to expand its collaborative learning opportunities to local high schools. The University Writing Center already promotes the learner-centered educational model by offering undergraduates a course in peer tutoring and then hiring them to tutor students from across the university on their writing. This support is particularly vital in large enrollment classes, and it could serve as a strategic resource for high schools facing the challenges of enabling their students to pass the AIMS writing test. We feel confident that we can establish funding from schools to pay for such services, once we have demonstrated their effectiveness. To do that, the Writing Center needs funding to establish partnerships.

Part 4: Work Plan/Timeline

- **Timeline**

- April – May:

- Identify and hire two Graduate Teaching Assistants (GATs) to help teach in and administer this program.

- August – September:

- Visit partner schools and establish contacts with individual teachers and classes.

- Organize and produce materials for teachers, students, schools in the program announcing the 9th Grade Essay Contest, opportunities for on-line tutoring. Set dates for deadlines, and arrange Young Writers' Conference.

- October:

- First mailing to schools announcing aspects of the program (English Department Chairs, Principals, Counselors at the ten high schools that have been selected because of their diverse student populations and their particular challenges helping students pass the AIMS test: Pueblo, Tucson, Cholla, Flowing Wells, Marana, Desert View and Sunnyside High Schools in the Tucson area and also Nogales and Douglas High Schools in southern Arizona.

- Follow-up contacts by GATs to arrange classroom visits and to meet with teachers to begin the online tutoring and mentoring aspects of the program.

- November - December

- Begin online tutoring and coordinate the research projects that English education students will do with their collaborating teachers and the writing projects that undergraduate composition students will undertake with their high school collaborators, including topics related to how writing differs in high school and college.

- January – March:

- Offer workshops in the schools for students on writing the personal essay (coordinated with 9th Grade Essay Contest); develop rubric to evaluate the essays; plan concurrent sessions/workshops for Young Writers' Conference; develop materials and awards, certificates for Young Writers' Conference

- March – April:

- Collect and holistically score essays from the 9th graders (using preservice and graduate students and faculty at UA); Young Writers' Conference (students attend writing workshops, lunch with speaker, awards ceremony).

- **Task descriptions and assignments**

- Service Learning - two courses each semester of First-Year Composition at UA will be taught by two graduate teaching assistants linking their students via computers with 9th grade students in the target schools to share writing, ideas, etc.; preservice students

majoring in English Education will also observe, tutor, and conduct research for teachers involved in the study as part of their work in the English methods courses;

Online tutoring – through the Writing Program’s Writing Center – graduate students, first-year college students, preservice undergraduate majors will work in the UA’s Writing Center on a schedule of 2 hours or more a week providing writing tutoring for high school students from the target schools;

Action Collaborative Research – graduate students in English will conduct action research with the teachers in the program through a course dedicated to Community Literacy in Fall 2005. These students will develop collaborative research projects focusing on improving the teaching and learning of writing in conjunction with teachers in the project.

Essay Contest - Coordinated by the UA Writing Program, Southern Arizona Writing Project, and Office of Admissions, this program involves teaching ideas about personal essays, workshops for teachers and students on teaching/writing the personal essay; submission of the 3 best essays from each 9th grade class in the project; creation of rubric to evaluate the essays; written comments to the students on their writing. The work will be coordinated by the two GAT interns as well as graduate and undergraduate students in the various courses involved with this project (composition, methods courses).

Young Writers’ Conference – involves reserving rooms, ordering food, advertising the conference, planning concurrent workshops, inviting a keynote speaker, designing and printing award certificates. Various information tables will be present as well (financial aid, admissions, intramural sports, etc.).

- **Resource allocations**

Classrooms, students, faculty will be provided by the English Department. Graphics and mailings for the Essay Contest and Young Writers’ Conference will be handled jointly with Admissions and English. The Writing Program’s Writing Center will be available for the computers and online tutoring programs. All other workshops will be held in the various schools.

- **Estimated task hours for each key personnel**

Director of Composition: 20% of time as contribution in kind, with additional time devoted to teaching graduate seminar on community literacy, with the contribution in kind commitment involved in working graduate students on the project and administering the collaborative efforts.

Director of Southern Arizona Writing Project: 10% of time as contribution in kind to work with GATs in tutoring, workshops for teachers, working with Southern Arizona Writing Project teachers on developing rubrics and concurrent workshops for Young Writers’ Conference

Director of Minority Recruitment, Office of Admissions: 10% of time as contribution in kind to coordinate essay contest with counselors and contacts in the schools

2 Graduate Assistants in Teaching: Requested funding will be matched to provide two 10 hours per week course release from teaching positions for graduate assistants to plan and coordinate tutoring, workshops, and essay contest. These graduate assistant coordinators will work with instructors of English education and composition courses to coordinate the service learning opportunities for students to avoid putting undue demands on classroom instructors.

Instructors for English Methods and Composition Courses: These coordinators will enable one or two instructors each semester will work with the project to develop a ten hour course component whereby preservice teachers can observe, tutor students, and work with teachers in the project. The students will do research to address the needs of their collaborating teachers.

- **Planned accomplishments including project milestones**

Increased minority enrollment over 4 years from the 10 targeted high schools; more collaboration between students and faculty at the University of Arizona and teachers and students in the 10 high schools in the project; improved AIMS scores.

Part 5: Key Personnel:

Professor Thomas P. Miller is Director of the Writing Program in the English Department. He has won national awards for his research on the teaching of writing and on writing at work, and he has taught seminars for local teachers.

Dr. Anne-Marie Hall directs the award winning Southern Arizona Writing Project and has worked with local teachers for over fifteen years. She frequently visits local schools and knows full well the challenges faced by college composition students, English education majors and local teachers

Marita Gomez directs a program that has dozens of undergraduate recruiters and professional staff visiting high schools across the state. Her office will provide the articulation apparatus for promoting the program, and she will use it to improve the recruitment of students from underrepresented groups.

Part 6: Performance Measures:

More than sixty percent of students in Arizona high schools are failing the AIMS Writing test, which will be required for graduation in 2006. This program will harness the capacities of the university to contribute to the rest of the public educational system by creating collaborative learning opportunities for English education and composition students. This partnership should be fundable from the resources that are being committed to improving the performance of under-achieving high schools once the it is established, and it will also provide collaborative learning opportunities for composition and English education students once the partnership is put into place to avoid placing undue demands on instructors.

The Writing Network promises to make gains with high school student performance, while also contributed to the retention and recruitment of students from underrepresented backgrounds by providing opportunities for composition and English education majors to contribute to ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged high schools. Research on retention suggests that staying connected to one's home communities improves students' persistence rates, and the Writing Network will provide such opportunities to stay connected to local schools, including those that serve local reservations.

To gauge the impact on students writing, recruitment and retention, we will address these performance measures:

- Improved scores over 4 years in the participating schools on the essay contest rubric
- Improved AIMS scores
- Improved recruitment of students from these 10 high schools to the University of Arizona starting in 2009 (when the first 9th graders enter UA)
- Improved retention of these same identified students at UA
- Improved completion and performance in first-year composition courses for participating students.

The results of this initiative will be disseminated through the English Department's Spring Conference, the English Articulation Taskforce, the Southern Arizona Writing Project, and the publication of selected students' papers from the Young Writers Conference. The Spring Conference is an articulation conference attended by hundreds of high school and community college teachers each March. The English Articulation Taskforce is the ABOR program for collaborations among chairs of English departments from across the state, and the Southern Arizona Writing Project offers summer workshops and professional development seminars that serve hundreds of teachers. The Young Writers Conference will celebrate the learner-centered partnerships between university and high school students and provide an opportunity for students from underrepresented groups to visit the university with their families and have their work recognized.

Learner-Centered Education Program
Arizona Board of Regents
Attachment A
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FORM



Proposal Title: The Writing Network

Institution: University of Arizona Dept./Unit: English Department

Multi-Campus/University Projects
(check other campuses or universities participating) List other participating agencies:
 ASU Main UA Minority Recruitment, Admissions Office, U of Arizona
 ASU East UA South Southern Arizona Writing Project, U of Arizona
 ASU West NAU Local high schools

Briefly describe the program and the development plan.
Expanding the learner-centered paradigm to create partnerships of university recruitment and academic programs with local high schools, the Writing Network will enable undergraduate English education majors, Writing Center tutors, and composition students to collaborate with high school students on the skills they need to pass the AIMS test and attend the university.

Funding Category
Indicate a primary (P) and, if applicable, secondary (S) funding category:
Professional Development Program or Course Development/Modification P
LCE Research Improved Assessment of Learning Outcomes S

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