



AANAPISI COURSE RELEASE PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

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Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI)

No more than three single-spaced pages, in 12 point Times New Roman font.

Title: *COMM Center Writing Consultants*

Author/Participants: *Monica Peck and Roxanne Cnudde, COMM Studies*

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Project Abstract:

Writing Consultants tutor online and in-person through the COMM Center. They enroll in COMM 198, the Applied Activity requirement for the COMM Studies Major or Minor, and complete a total of fifty hours for the course over the course of the semester. Students in the program are recruited from the population of students who successfully completed COMM 100W with a B+ or higher.

Writing Consultants must complete at least 50-hours of training, tutoring, writing, or publishing over the course of the semester and must keep track of their hours on a timesheet, similar to the work experience of a freelance writing consultant.

Writing Consultants are required to complete twelve hours of tutor training at the beginning of the semester. This training includes techniques for working one-on-one with student writers, grammar review, topics in pedagogy, as well as combined training with COMM Center Coaches on safety, COMM Center Technology, and COMM 80.

Over the course of the semester, Writing Consultants spend approximately twenty hours tutoring per semester. They have a weekly 90-minute shift in the COMM Center and also tutor students online via email, Skype, or chat. The program focuses on working with COMM 100W students, so many of the tutoring sessions are online weekend appointments helping students with their 100W essays. Some COMM 100W instructors require their students to work with Writing Consultants, so that each semester an estimated 120 100W students will be served by our program. Writing Consultants are available to work with anyone, however, and as the program continues to expand, we hope to begin serving students studying to pass the WST this Fall 2013 semester by collaborating with the LLD program. Because many students who enter COMM 100W have taken the WST, sometimes multiple times before passing, it seems logical to reach out to those students, as our next phase of outreach.

The Writing Consultants' tutoring philosophy is one of support, both social and academic. Because this program is nested within COMM Studies, a great emphasis in the program is on interpersonal communications within tutoring sessions, via email, and with each other. Writing Consultants practice tactful responses to student writers under deadline and are trained in techniques for establishing rapport with their clients. Thus, one focus of the program is to get "repeat customers," since research shows students who work repeatedly with a tutor show

marked improvements in their overall writing skills. Writing Consultants set a goal of working with at least six “repeat customers” per semester and, for the ones more skilled in tutoring, this goal is easily met.

The second aspect of the Writing Consultant program is writing and publishing. Students must spend an additional eighteen hours working on a special writing or publishing projects, such as a personal writing project or the program’s online flash non-fiction magazine *The Bolt*.

The Bolt Magazine, launched online at theboltmagazine.com in April 2013. Featuring flash non-fiction writing by students and Bay Area writers, as well as anyone who submits their work for consideration. The Writing Consultants put out a call for writing through a contest that drew submissions from writers throughout the Bay Area. The winners included two professional writers and one SJSU student. Writing Consultants copy edited, fact checked, and proofread the accepted entries, then published them with original artwork, also produced by Writing Consultants. The Bolt’s web statistics show an overall reach of 825 views as of August 2013 reaching 164 readers on May 1, 2013.

Some Writing Consultants choose to focus on their own writing for the course. They must propose a semester-long writing project that must connect them to their goals and interests, as well as to a “real world” readership. For example, one Writing Consultant worked on a paper to deliver at the Undergraduate Research Conference at Santa Clara University. Other Writing Consultants have used blogs to build an audience for their writing. Blog topics have included organic farming, parenting, SJSU athletics, and wedding planning. Students are encouraged to connect their blogs to social media such as Facebook and Twitter to expand their readership.

Since the inception of this program in January of 2012, student enrollment has doubled and the estimated number of students served per semester has tripled. Overall the Writing Consultants performed more than 250 hours of tutoring in Spring 2013 and launched *The Bolt*.

The Program has a Google blog so that any SJSU student can access Writing Consultants via email anytime and anywhere. The blog includes a Google calendar that indicates when the Writing Consultants are available for drop-in tutoring. In an effort to foster a student writer community within the Communication Studies Department and not to compete with other campus programs, Writing Consultant Tutoring employs a cognitive apprenticeship model, with special emphasis on rapport building, cultural sensitivity, and social support.

Project Background/Significance:

This project piloted a new model for peer writing tutoring at SJSU that uses the “cognitive apprenticeship” approach, which uses “scaffolding, modeling, mentoring, and coaching [to] promote learning that occurs through social interactions involving negotiation of content, understanding, and learner needs” (Dennen & Jonassen, 2004). Writing Consultants have demonstrated success in the kind of writing taught in COMM 100W, thus they act as mentors to students who currently are in COMM 100W. This model allows the writing of the tutors to also continue to be part of the focus, such that Writing Consultants also continue to write and publish, increasing their writing expertise

Goals of the Grant: Assess and reorganize the existing writing support services at SJSU;

- a. Enable more data-based decision-making about student retention and graduation at SJSU;
- b. Develop, implement, and integrate proactive writing strategies; or
- c. Change the SJSU writing culture from a policy-driven approach to an action-oriented approach.

Literature Review: *(What other/similar projects are out there?)*

There are no projects that I have found in my research that combine 1) cognitive apprenticeship tutoring; 2) individual semester-long writing projects, and 3) a student-run publication.

Project Description: *(How will you do this project?)*

This project has successfully run for three semesters. Changes this semester include implementing a more formal online tutoring component.

Project Method/Design: *(What techniques will you use in this project?)*

Cognitive apprenticeship training via a student-centered model.

Project Timeline: *(Outline each segment of your project, estimating how long each portion will take and when it will be completed.)* n/a – ongoing

Necessary Expenses:

Publication for *The Bolt* annual print edition: \$300. This will be sold print-on-demand, but each Writing Consultant and contributor should receive one free copy.

Prizes for *The Bolt* Contest winners: \$100. These are gift cards presented at a reading and reception for the new issue.

Launching an online writing tutoring lab: TBD

We are currently seeking additional funding for this component.

Potential Contribution for Improvement of Student Success:

This project has directly affected more than two hundred students each semester. Although the project focuses on improving student writing, other intangible benefits result, namely that students feel a sense of belonging on campus. Research has shown that students are more likely to complete their degrees if they feel connected to a community within their learning institution. This program creates that community, as demonstrated by students “graduating” from working with Writing Consultants to become Writing Consultants themselves to repeating the Writing Consultant course beyond their requirement. Furthermore, as the program grows and develops history, we now have graduates from the program who are Dean’s Scholars, award winners, and successful SJSU alumni. In just one and a half years, this program has become a force for positive academic change within the university. I look forward to seeing it continue.