

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: *(Project title)* Academic Writing Seminar for Graduate-Level English Learners in the College of Education: Implementation and Development of Research-based Writing Instruction.

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Date: *October 30, 2014*

Project Abstract: *(Same abstract from your cover page.)*

Our project will continue to provide writing support for URM students, including English learners, in the COE through a tuition-free academic writing seminar (AWS). We will analyze and refine AWS curriculum as well as the writing assessment used for program admissions. We will share project findings through research presentations and publications.

Project Background/Significance: *(What need in the SJSU community is this project addressing?)*

Promoting the success of under-represented minority (URM) students is a priority at San Jose State University. This is of particular importance in the Lurie College of Education (COE) where we prepare future educators. In the k-12 public schools, we lack diverse role models; thus, it is critical that we support URM students in our college in their academic endeavors. An action research project previously conducted in the COE (Mena & Karathanos, 2009) revealed that many URM students in the COE struggle with aspects of academic writing and more attention is needed to better supporting English language (EL) student writers in COE graduate-level courses. Our project addressed this need through the development and implementation of research-based writing instruction.

Goals of the Grant: *(Which of the following goals is your project addressing? Circle all that apply.)*

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

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

The professional literature on writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID) indicates a lack of research on the experiences of graduate-level EL writers in academic courses (Cox, 2011; Cox & Zawacki, 2011). Rather, previous and current L2 writing research has focused primarily on EL writers in ESL/TESOL or composition course contexts. As a result, researchers highlight the need for WAC programs and research to be more inclusive of L2 writers and to focus on effective ways of supporting ELs across the curriculum. In particular, scholars emphasize the need for more collaboration among university campus programs to offer support for EL students writing across the curriculum and in graduate programs (through, for example, stand-alone writing courses for graduate students) [Cox, 2011]. They also highlight the need for university faculty to conduct more qualitative research on EL writers through surveys or interviews in order to learn more about students' writing histories, writing experiences and needs, expectations from classes, and strengths to build upon. Scholars further underscore the importance of learning about the wide range of EL groups and backgrounds represented in disciplinary courses and drawing on L2 writing literature to better serve these students (CCCC, 2009; Cox, 2011; Johns, 2001). Lastly, researchers call for an increased focus among faculty on teaching disciplinary content and discursive practices in addition to academic English literacy conventions (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005).

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

Our project provides writing support for graduate ELs including Generation 1.5 students and under-represented minority students (URM) in our COE. We provide this support via a tuition free *Academic Writing Seminar (AWS)* at SJSU. Our research focuses on the characteristics and needs of students enrolled in the AWS and effective writing instructional strategies. We have applied this research toward further developing curriculum for the AWS. Additionally, our research has indicated a need to analyze and redesign the current writing assessment for admission into the Single Subject Credential Program (SSCP). We began work in this in Fall 2014 and need to continue to work with SSCP faculty to improve this admissions exam and establish new assessment criteria and procedures. Lastly, we plan to document and disseminate research findings through conference presentations and journal publications.

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

We will employ qualitative and quantitative measures and engage in an instructor/researcher partnership. For the curriculum development portion of our research, the instruments we will use include a background questionnaire, direct observation, and course documents including samples of student work and student reflections on their writing. We will also document student-initiated writing questions or topics of interest. In addition, we will administer surveys on student self-efficacy in writing and participant feedback preferences. We will analyze data descriptively and inferentially. We also plan to explore and implement effective assessment methods for measuring student improvement in particular areas of their writing.

For the program writing admissions requirement portion of our project, we will analyze the current assessment used in the SSCP Program, examine student writing samples, propose improvements for the current assessment, outline criteria for passing the assessment, and establish a subcommittee of SSCP faculty to provide feedback on the proposed assessment to be

used across subject-areas.

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

Spring 2015: Collect data from student participants in the AWS in relation to demographics, linguistic backgrounds, writing challenges, preferred forms of feedback, and writing samples. Explore potential measures for assessing growth in specific student writing skills.

Work with SSCP sub-committee (to be established in fall 2004) on re-designing program writing assessment and grading criteria.

Summer 2015: Analyze the data from spring 2015, revise curriculum, and refine research questions in preparation for fall 2015. Design improvements for the current SSCP writing assessment. Submit a proposal to share research at professional conference and begin drafting a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Fall 2015: Finalize data analyses and write manuscript to be submitted to peer-reviewed journal. Continue to enhance curriculum based on the findings from spring 2015.

Pilot new SSCP writing assessment.

Complete and submit manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal.

Necessary Expenses: *(What expenses will you need for this project? Include student assistants, copying, supplies, space, etc.)*

Spring 2015: .2 release time for primary researcher (Katya Aguilar), .2 release time for AWS instructor/co-researcher (TBA). \$

Summer 2015: .1 summer pay for co-researcher (Katya Aguilar) and .1 summer pay for co-researcher (TBA)

Fall 2015: .2 release time for primary researcher (TBA) .2 release time for AWS instructor/co-researcher (Katya Aguilar).

Potential Contribution for Improvement of Student Success: *(What will SJSU gain out of this project? How will this project improve writing? Graduation and retention rates? Refer to the goals addressed above.)*

The AWS in our project provides targeted writing support to URM graduate students in the COE at SJSU. Our research has enabled curriculum evaluation and improvements, and we are engaged in dialogue with the broader community on approaches for supporting URM students who struggle with academic writing. We have presented the findings of our pilot study at CATESOL 2013 and have submitted a manuscript to the CATESOL journal (currently under review after re-submitting with revisions). We also presented findings/insights from our project at NABE in February 2014 and CATESOL in October, 2014. We currently have a manuscript in progress to be submitted to *Issues in Teacher Education* by the end of this semester (fall 2014). The continuation of our project in 2015 will lead to improvements in the assessment and support of graduate student writing in the COE.