Overview

The University Center for the Study of Writing (UCSW) will draw together outstanding local and national innovators who are engaging in exciting new inquiries into the technologies, histories, and theories of writing. Such scholarship will position Case to transform contemporary learning technologies into distinctive research, educational, and community learning opportunities. Focusing on interdisciplinary, inter-platform writing theories and practices, the UCSW will foster faculty and student communication across disciplines, across media, and across communities. In addition, the UCSW will support the distinctive SAGES undergraduate curriculum through expanded access to qualified writing instructors, enhanced learning spaces (including online resources and a cutting edge writing laboratory), and interactive workshops and collaborative learning opportunities.

- **Our Current Writing Center is antiquated and inadequate.** The current English department Writing Center is not only too small to handle the demands of the SAGES general education curriculum, it is also too narrowly defined to capitalize on the distinctive cross-institutional research and writing opportunities that SAGES envisions ([http://www.cwru.edu/sages/](http://www.cwru.edu/sages/)).

- **The UCSW is a new kind of Writing Center.** Building on and moving beyond a peer tutoring model, the UCSW will foster new synergies by combining experiential learning opportunities, visiting and local faculty research projects, and robust support structures for our twenty-first century students and faculty.

Global and Local Needs

The advent of new classroom and global technologies, the spread of digital communication and the resulting proliferation of new writing practices, and the growth of scholarship in the history and theory of writing have converged to create a unique opportunity for the development of a flexible, innovative University Center for the Study of Writing (UCSW) at Case Western Reserve University. Such a Center addresses the needs of current and future Case scholars from undergraduates to senior faculty and visiting researchers.

- **The UCSW will increase students’ comfort and facility with writing.** The National Survey of Student Engagement reports that only 54% of Case seniors feel that their undergraduate experience contributed “quite a lot” or “very much” to their ability to write clearly and effectively.\(^1\) The UCSW will provide a variety of resources and opportunities to ensure that all of our students get the full benefit of a robust writing curriculum throughout their tenure at Case.

---

• The SAGES curriculum requires enhanced writing support on campus. The SAGES program addresses a variety of student needs in writing and liberal studies. However, as the Phase II Report (March 15, 2004) indicates, an enhanced and expanded writing center “will be essential to the ultimate effectiveness and success of the SAGES program” (5). Given the overwhelming faculty support and student interest in the SAGES program, the UCSW is both timely and necessary.

• Case’s international and multilingual student population demands a robust UCSW. Case draws students from across the United States and from ninety countries worldwide. Because our international students bring with them a rich diversity of experiences and rhetorical practices, they deserve a UCSW that can support their acquisition of academic and professional English language skills. Non-native and native speakers of English will benefit alike from a UCSW that considers English as a Second Language to be a vital and necessary research and pedagogical resource.

• The UCSW will be a decisive factor in prospective students’ decisions to enroll at Case. A robust writing services center – including a state-of-the-art computer writing lab, a library of online and physical writing resources, and plentiful access to one-on-one writing support and training – will be a strength that Case can use to recruit incoming students. Housed in a central location, the UCSW would make an excellent stop on campus tours.

Intellectual Leadership

While national trends in writing pedagogy are increasingly acknowledging the various non-academic scenes of writing – workplace writing, public and political rhetoric, digital communications, online diaries or “web logs,” self-publishing – few institutions have recognized the power of coupling undergraduate writing instruction to investigations of such situated writing practices. The UCSW would, therefore, be a national leader in fostering collaborations and joint research projects between students, community members, and research faculty members. Such innovation would necessarily draw attention and participation from local and national leaders in rhetoric, composition, professional writing, and other fields of study.

• The UCSW offers a site for “One University” collaboration. Today, writing instruction at Case is isolated in individual departments and schools – the Weatherhead School of Management, the Law School, the English department, the History department, the School of Engineering and others. The UCSW will help bring writing faculty across campus together to enrich their own and their students’ pedagogical and research opportunities.

• The UCSW will be a national model. Writing centers traditionally focus on improving student writing both through peer tutoring and pedagogical workshops and support. In some instances, writing centers have made gestures toward community involvement, including offering writing consultancy services to local businesses and organizations. Rarely, however, are the two models combined, and never are such rich articulations
recognized for their unique educational import. The UCSW would be a national leader in providing writing support both inside and outside of the academy, involving students in “real-world” writing experiences and enhancing campus-wide writing initiatives.

- **The UCSW will attract visiting and returning faculty involvement.** In addition to providing an exciting support network on campus and in the regional community, the UCSW will sponsor national conferences and projects inquiring into the theory and practice of writing. Such events will promote the visibility of Case and draw visiting scholars to campus.

**Existing Strengths**

The moment is right for a UCSW at Case because it can draw on a rich history of research and pedagogy already under way on campus. Drawing the resources together across departments, programs, and communities, the UCSW will make visible the outstanding work that is ongoing.

- **The UCSW draws on a nationally recognized interdisciplinary initiative of the Society for Critical Exchange.** The “Cultures of Writing Project,” sponsored by the Society for Critical Exchange, has been devoted to the study of writing since its inception in 1997. In that year, Andrea Lunsford (Stanford University), Larry Needham (Lakeland CC) and Martha Woodmansee (Case) convened a conference on *Cultures of Writing: Places, Spaces, and Interfaces of Writing and Writing Technologies*. The success of that conference has continued, as SCE members have pursued and expanded the research project. (“Cultures of Writing: Inscription, Implementation, Sites” at the 1997 MMLA; “Digital Humanities” at the 1999 MMLA, and “New Histories of Writing” at both the 2000 and 2003 MMLA). (See: [http://www.cwru.edu/affil/sce/](http://www.cwru.edu/affil/sce/))

- **The UCSW complements the English department’s Ph.D. concentration in “Writing History and Theory.”** Developed in the English department in 2000, the Writing History and Theory graduate Ph.D. concentration examines the practice of “writing” as historically, culturally, and technologically situated. Students study rhetoric theory and history, the history of writing and publishing practices, linguistics and semiotics, and digital communication theory. The program focuses on the relationship between textual features (e.g., word-image interface, lexical and grammatical choices, document design) and global and rhetorical issues, such as text production and circulation, copyright, audience, ethics, and rhetorical effect. The aim of the program is to develop a deeper understanding of the way that writing functions in disciplines, in organizations, in institutions (like business and academia), in society, and in cultures more generally. (See: [http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/engl/html/whit.html](http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/engl/html/whit.html))
Collaboration and Community

The UCSW is uniquely positioned to partner with various departments, schools, and community organizations to enhance the study and teaching of writing. Such collaborations could include student and faculty seminars, experiential learning opportunities, and enhanced discipline-specific writing support.

- **The UCSW will foster partnerships across campus.** One such partnership with the School of Law is already being forged. Given the role writing has assumed as the dominant mode of discourse within contemporary legal practice, the UCSW would provide a place not presently provided for within any university to study the contemporary and historical forms, conventions, and practices of legal writing in legal practice and in legal scholarship. Given the relative novelty within U.S. law schools of teaching introductory legal writing and the resulting, but only nascent, rise of a new legal rhetoric, this critical and historical study of legal and scholarly writing practices would make Case distinctive, in fact unique, within the academic legal world. We believe that other professional schools at the University stand to profit equally from the establishment of UCSW.

- **The UCSW will design and support discipline-specific writing initiatives.** Following the model of the current Technical Communication for Engineers program, the UCSW will develop and provide targeted writing instruction with interested Case constituencies. Such a process will not only benefit the individual departments and programs, it will also provide a valuable service for professionalizing graduate students into the field of Writing in the Disciplines.

- **The UCSW will facilitate experiential learning and community collaboration.** By sponsoring experiential learning opportunities for students on campus (e.g., a senior capstone experience that places a student with a local engineering firm as an intern, asks the student to examine and evaluate the writing practices within that firm, and provides opportunities to share the knowledge with the rest of the Case community), the UCSW will foster collaboration with surrounding businesses and organizations. One such project is already being developed in the English department. A graduate student is developing a project where her first-year composition students would mentor local students from East Tech High School. Not only will this project promote closer ties between Case and the Cleveland community (especially for the individual students involved), it will also serve as the basis for a Master’s Thesis project, contributing to ongoing research on service learning and composition pedagogies.

- **UCSW outreach may lead to new revenue streams.** Collaborations such as those envisioned above might ultimately produce new revenue streams for Case. One possible model would ask local organizations would “sponsor” a Teaching Assistantship for one or more graduate students, getting in return a series of workshops, real-time consulting, and other materials.
Activities and Programming

The UCSW will provide a number of activities on campus, from individual tutoring for students to campus-wide lectures on writing research.

- **The UCSW will enhance access to and quality of writing instruction on campus.** With the added resources, including technologies and the number of qualified writing instructors, the UCSW will provide better support for writing activities on campus. With increased staffing, the UCSW will provide extended hours of peer tutoring and more individual instruction. A state-of-the-art computer classroom will enable the UCSW to further Case’s commitment to innovative classroom technologies.

- **UCSW lecture series will draw national experts to campus.** Bringing nationally renowned scholars to Case to talk about writing in various disciplines and traditions will enhance the profile of writing on campus. Potential speakers might include: Peter Goodrich, Rhetoric of Law; N. Katherine Hayles, History of Technology; Jay David Bolter, Media/Writing Technologies History; Deirdre McCloskey, Rhetoric of Economics; Adrian Johns, Sociology of Knowledge.

- **The UCSW will promote graduate student professionalization.** As a site for pedagogical instruction and innovation, the UCSW will enable Case graduate students in many disciplines to achieve greater levels of programmatic and classroom experience. In today’s competitive job market, such skills have become particularly important in successful job placement for Ph.D. students.

- **Pedagogical workshops led by specialists in rhetoric and composition will enhance writing across the Case curriculum.** Workshops might include both Case faculty and visiting experts on topics like: writing, plagiarism, and ethics; digital writing; grant writing; collaborative writing practices; writing in the disciplines. Such workshops will involve Case faculty and advanced graduate students in dialogue about teaching and writing, thereby developing a greater comfort with implementing writing in a variety of courses and for a variety of purposes.

- **National conferences and other programming will draw attention to the Case UCSW.** National conferences, lecture series, and visiting instructorships (at all levels, potentially including Dean’s and Presidential fellows brought in to work in the new SAGES curriculum) could be coordinated through the UCSW.
Development and Support

As part of the development of the UCSW, possibilities for community and foundation support, as well as increased tuition revenues, would be explored.

- **The UCSW leverages resources to provide “multiple use” benefits.** By serving as a site of undergraduate writing instruction, graduate student professionalization, and faculty development, the UCSW will provide a high return on investments made in it.

- **The UCSW will be attractive to students and parents, raising tuition revenues.** When deciding on which school to attend, students may well look to the academic support services offered – the UCSW would provide a highly visible source of instructional enrichment. In addition, activities – including experiential and service learning, seminars and lectures, and interactions with faculty – will be attractive to prospective students.

- **Corporate and community organizations may “sponsor” UCSW activities.** Current collaborations between School of Law faculty and English department staff have produced legal writing seminars for local and regional law firms. Such endeavors could be coordinated through the UCSW, bringing their revenues to Case.

- **Federal and Local Foundation support will be sought.** A number of local and national funding sources have been identified and the Director of the UCSW would pursue additional funding opportunities.

UCSW Action Items

- **Nationally recognized Director of the UCSW.** An established scholar in Writing/Communication across the Curriculum (WAC/CAC) or Writing in the Disciplines (WID) would be an ideal candidate to develop and implement the UCSW.

- **Physical space – writing center, office space, computer laboratory.** The UCSW should be housed in a central location on campus, convenient to all of the schools and departments. Additional office, conference room, and computer laboratory space would enhance the visibility and usability of the UCSW.

- **Programming Budget.** In addition to the faculty and student time, the UCSW should actively promote interest in writing through distinguished lectures, visiting faculty, and sponsored student projects.

- **Additional faculty positions to enhance UCSW activities and visibility.** Beyond the director, additional faculty hires in fields like the History of Rhetoric, the History of Journalism, Technical and Professional Writing, and Communication across the Curriculum would significantly enhance the profile of the UCSW.
• **Additional Teaching Assistantships to increase access and availability of writing instruction.** A significant increase in the number of qualified Teaching Assistants will be required to provide the necessary staff for the UCSW’s scholarly and pedagogical activities. Such staff will be recruited from a variety of Case graduate programs, and will receive training and support from the UCSW Director and UCSW affiliated faculty (thus providing important mentoring and professionalization opportunities for graduate students).

### Proposal Team

The ethos of the UCSW has already begun to shape conversations across campus. In developing this proposal, we have initiated and profited from discussions among faculty representing the English department, the SAGES Task Force, the School of Law, and the School of Engineering. We look forward to continuing these productive discussions.

Martha Woodmansee, History & Theory of Writing Specialist  
Department of English  
Email: maw4@case.edu

Brian Ballentine, Director of Technical & Professional Communication  
Department of English  
Email: bdb5@case.edu

Kimberly Emmons, Director of Composition  
Department of English  
Email: kke1@case.edu

Peter Friedman, Director of Moot Court and Mock Trials  
Case Law School  
Email: pbf2@case.edu

Todd Oakley, Linguistics & SAGES Liaison  
Department of English  
Email: tvo2@case.edu