Project Proposal: **Development of a University Center for the Study of Writing**

Coordinator: Martha Woodmansee, expert in the history and theory of writing.
Project Expertise: Brian Ballentine, director of technical and professional communications; Kimberly Emmons, expert in rhetoric and composition; Peter Friedman, director of legal analysis and writing for the Law School; Todd Oakley, linguist and SAGES liaison.
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**Brief Project Description:**

In its most recent report (January 15, 2004), the SAGES Task Force asserts “that a University Writing Center – one significantly expanded beyond its present configuration in the English Department – [is] essential to the ultimate effectiveness and success of the SAGES program.” In addition, the advent of new classroom and global technologies, and the growth of scholarship in the histories and theories of writing have converged to create a pressing need for a University Center for the Study of Writing (UCSW) at Case Western Reserve University. Such a Center has the potential to distinguish itself from existing college writing centers by providing innovative and interdisciplinary support for the study and practice of writing not only across the A&S curriculum but among the professional schools. We propose to design and develop such a Center, which will investigate writing in all of its aspects, including its material basis – its diverse technologies, sites, and economies; its pedagogies, forms, and conventions; its practices and uses both contemporary and historical. Coupling current scholarly inquiry into the practices of writing with practical, pedagogical applications, the Case UCSW will distinguish itself both regionally and nationally as the focal point for the diverse writing needs of an internationally renowned research institution. We seek funding to explore the feasibility of creating a center of this kind at Case. Our objective is to draft a detailed proposal, for submission in September 2004, which will furnish a basis for discussion among the various Case constituencies.

Today, Case draws students from across the United States and from ninety countries worldwide. Because these students bring with them a rich diversity of experiences and rhetorical practices, they deserve a robust UCSW that can support their acquisition of academic and professional English language skills. Non-native and native speakers of English will both benefit from a UCSW that considers English as a Second Language to be a vital and necessary research and pedagogical endeavor. Further, with the full implementation of SAGES scheduled for Fall 2005, the UCSW would provide timely and research-based support for the writing components of the First and University Seminars. The UCSW will build and enlarge upon the philosophy of the English graduate program’s “Writing History and Theory” (WHiT) concentration, established in 2000. Viewing writing as a cultural and material practice meriting scholarly as well as pedagogical attention, the WHiT philosophy will distinguish the UCSW from existing writing centers, which typically offer little more than peer tutoring. Potential areas of scholarly and pedagogical inquiry include: Situated Writing Practices, Writing in the Disciplines, English as a Second Language, and the Role of Writing in General Education. The UCSW might conduct activities like the following:

**Situated Writing Practices**
- Sponsor an annual lecture series bringing high-profile scholars on the history and theory of writing, including writing technologies, pedagogies, and economies to campus to speak, consult, and offer seminars.
- Offer degree programs in professional and technical writing, including certificates in grant writing, business writing, technical writing for engineers, and journalism.
- Serve as a liaison with the community outside of Case to develop internship opportunities, to encourage meaningful writing instruction for the professions, and to foster stronger ties to the community both locally and nationally.

**Writing in the Disciplines**
- Function as a meeting- and clearinghouse for those in the various departments and schools with an interest, whether practical or theoretical, in “writing in the disciplines” for formal and informal discussion and inquiry into the “discourses” of knowledge – the disciplinary nature of knowledge production and dissemination.
- As a natural outgrowth of this function, develop partnerships among Case professional schools, including curricular and extra-curricular activities and support structures. 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.

**English as a Second Language**

- Coordinate and support a robust English as a Second Language program on campus.
- Facilitate ESL instruction of foreign lawyers and other professional students.
- Conduct research into the globalization of English, including the emergence and spread of regional Englishes (e.g., Chenglish).

**The Role of Writing in General Education**

- Coordinate writing instruction for SAGES, including the appointment and training of graduate assistants as well as faculty training where desirable.
- Oversee regular SAGES senior capstone experiences involving writing-intensive internships in medicine, science, and industry.
- Provide model workshops for SAGES and other students on various facets of writing.

**Steps in the Development of the UCSW.** We propose to accomplish the following tasks in association with this proposal:

- Comprehensive discussion with Case constituencies to determine needs and identify expertise across units. Interested units would include the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, the Weatherhead School of Management, and others.
- Thorough study of writing programs elsewhere – their roles, responsibilities, resources – to understand the models that exist and the potential for innovation at Case. Potential sites include regional campuses (Kent State, Ohio State, Pennsylvania State University) and national model universities (American University Law School, University of California, Santa Barbara, Harvard University).
- Make recommendations for implementing the UCSW. These would include the appropriate physical and institutional structure, the level of faculty and graduate student instructional time commitments, the necessary technological and hardware investments, and the potential future programming of the UCSW.
- Identification of potential foundation support for the development of UCSW.

**Relevance to University Objectives**

The UCSW is a necessary and distinctive component of Case’s educational mission. Our proposal addresses several key University Objectives:

- Committed to the University’s **undergraduate curriculum**, the UCSW would provide enhanced writing support to students across campus. The resources of the UCSW would benefit students enrolled in SAGES by ensuring that their faculty and writing consultants have adequate support and training, and would encourage all students to seek additional writing instruction via peer tutoring and additional writing workshops. 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. The UCSW would provide a variety of resources and opportunities to ensure that our students get the full benefit of a robust writing curriculum throughout their tenure at Case.
- Building on the distinctive theoretical program established by the English department’s WHiT concentration, the UCSW would not only provide practical resources on campus but would also encourage **research and scholarship** into the theories and histories of writing in its myriad situations. Such a dual focus will make the UCSW a national model for writing centers.
- Encouraging local, regional, and national partnerships with businesses and professions for student internships, SAGES senior capstone experiences, and increased contact with the diverse writing
practices inside and outside of the university, the UCSW exemplifies Case’s commitment to creative partnerships.

✔ By actively seeking foundation support and community involvement in the UCSW, we envision it becoming a model resource that can draw media recognition, student enrollment, and academic attention to the study and practices of writing on University campuses.

✔ Giving both practical and research-endorsed support to students whose first language may not be English will enhance Case’s attractiveness to under-represented groups. In addition to non-native speakers, all students at Case will benefit from the coherence of their writing instruction across the curriculum, and they will see our community as a welcoming, robust learning environment.

**Expected Outcome and Assessment Plan**

The overall success of this project will be determined by the implementation of a full-scale UCSW and by University and Community involvement in the Center. The Feasibility study – to be submitted to the University community in September 2004 – will generate feedback that can then be incorporated into the development of the UCSW.

**Projected Budget**

✔ Summer Salary for 5 Faculty (2/9 Salary + 27%) $82,771.00
✔ Summer Stipend for 1 Graduate Student Assistant 3,500.00
✔ Travel Funds for Visits to Other Sites 10,000.00
✔ Materials (e.g. photocopying, long-distance telephone) 1,000.00
✔ Entertainment 1,000.00

**Total Projected Budget** $98,271.00