Application for Disciplinary Communication Improvement Grant

1) Title: Anthropology Department Writing Assistant Program Anthropology

2) Department: Anthropology

3) Amount Requested: $28,089.17

4) 400-500 majors and proposed majors plus additional students who take courses in Anthropology to fulfill GE requirements.

5) Overview of the program's DC requirement
Anthropology's DC requirement aims especially at cultivating high-level skills in critical and ethnographic writing. To satisfy the DC requirement students must: a) complete an Anthropological Theory Course (chosen from ANTH 100, 150, 152, 170, 270) and; b) complete a Senior Seminar or complete an Independent Senior Thesis, following the guidelines of the senior exit requirement. Students who take 270 to fulfill the theory/DC requirement may not use the course to satisfy the senior exit requirement.

6) The Plan:
We would like to continue to grow our already successful Writing Assistant (WA) Program. We believe that excellent writing is essential to critical thinking. As such, we have put in place an education program and administrative structure that we think is effective in producing positive changes, both in student performance and at the level of departmental culture. Everyone fall we identify a cadre of juniors, and occasionally sophomores, who are recruited into the WA program on the basis of a faculty recommendation. These students take a class, ANTH 113, which introduces them to the peer-review process and serves as a supportive environment for them to discuss challenges and successes throughout their first quarter as WAs. WAs read widely on topics related both to the technics of writing and to strategies for engaging their peers in discussion and reflection; faculty also provide guest workshops on topics such as proper citation. Historically, the cost of this course has been borne by the Anthropology Department.

WAs are assigned to individual classes to work with individual faculty members, who also interact with and mentor the WAs. (Sometimes large courses or writing intensive courses are assigned two WAs). WAs then meet with students in individual and/or group sessions, which are arranged around the students' schedules. This is increasingly done through Google Calendar or Doodle Polling. The Anthropology Department has given the WA program its own office in Social Sciences 1, where the meetings are often held. WAs work with students at a variety of stages throughout the writing process, from the initial brainstorming of ideas to polishing a final draft.

In spring 2014, we will also begin offering drop-in hours in the WA office in weeks 3&4 and 8&9 of the quarter. This is a response to a strongly-voiced suggestion by the WAs themselves that such a move would eliminate some logistical problems that arise at those

busy times of the quarter, when WAs themselves are also juggling a course load, and encourage students to seek out additional sessions beyond those recommended by a particular professor.

7) Needs Addressed:
Our WA Program began in 2010 as an effort to provide additional support for anthropology students' writing based on a strong, shared sense among the faculty and graduate students that quality of undergraduate writing was deteriorating, with fewer resources available on campus for writing support. This sense has only grown over the last four years; we are now working to educate the first generation of students educated entirely under the auspices of the No Child Left Behind initiative. The policy's heavy emphasis on test scores and quantitative educational measures means that writing skills and awareness of writing as a process have been compromised in California and across the country. This is an especially acute problem in Anthropology, which is in essence a discipline that requires critical thought, careful argumentation, and descriptive skill.

8) How does the DC fit within your program's learning outcome goals?
Written Communication is one of the program's learning outcome goals. We expect that students will demonstrate the ability to write clearly and to formulate well-organized arguments that are grounded in supporting evidence while countering evidence that contradicts the students' claims.

In 2013-2014, we were lucky that one of our outstanding graduate students, Suraiya Jetha, received the Chancellor's Graduate Internship to study the educational outcomes of our WA Program. While Suraiya's research is on-going (it will be completed in June 2014), we are happy with some of her preliminary findings:

- students who participate in the WA Program in an anthropology class report that they are more aware of writing as a process than before their work with WAs
- they are likely to report that they have skills that could be improved
- students report that seeing a WA helped them in time management: the attention to writing as a process and the incentivization provided by faculty for working on multiple drafts of a project means that they get started earlier and have more time for revision

  By far our most striking finding so far, however, has been:
- Students who see a WA tend to become what we call "frequent flyers." That is, they recognize a high value in the interaction and seek out support repeatedly throughout the quarter.

Though we are waiting for more information on how this enthusiasm translates into student achievement, we think this is clear evidence that we are so far very successful in building a lateral support structure, a community, that supports student writing. We are working to produce wide-reaching changes in department and academic *culture* in the Anthropology program that may not be quantitatively measurable for a few more years. Indeed, one of Suraiya's biggest tasks this year has been figuring out what our criteria of

assessment actually should be, given our goals and constraints. We intend to rely most heavily on student reporting/surveys, rather than, for instance, grade point assessment, to try to get as close to the on-the-ground realities of achievement as we can.

If we are able to obtain course relief support for the Faculty Coordinator of the program, we will be able to continue this assessment in 2014-2015.

9) Budget (with explanation):
1. WA Hours

     400 hours x $13.50/hr = approx. $5,400 x 3 quarters $16, 200

This figure is considerably more than our budget for 2013-2014. We are happy to report that the success of the program and faculty enthusiasm means that our WA program is more and more being built into the structure of our curriculum. Thus, WA support is almost universally used in our writing-intensive senior seminars. This figure also includes funding to staff a drop-in center for perhaps 6, rather than 4, weeks of the quarter.

2. Faculty Coordinator Support/Buy-Out $7, 813

One thing that has become abundantly clear as our program grows is that it is a considerable service task for the faculty member serving as the WA coordinator. The job requires year-round commitment (assignments and budgets must be managed over the summer, as well as ANTH 113 materials prepared in consultation with the instructor). It involves managing faculty needs, WA concerns, student requests and, increasingly, grant-writing. We have determined that course relief is essential for the coordinating faculty; without it, we will likely be unable to continue the program in anything like its current form.

3. Salary for ANTH 113 Instructor $4076.17

Historically the Anthropology Department has covered the cost of ANTH 113. Our current curricular needs no longer allow us to cover this cost.

TOTAL: $ 28, 089.17

10) Assessment Plan:
Please see Question 8.

11) Sustainability:
We will be unable to fund this program going forward without support from a DC Grant.

If we receive support for a faculty buy-out, one of the tasks of the Faculty Coordinator in 2014-2015 will be to seek out 1) funding possibilities off-campus and 2) relationships with other departments (Education and Psychology seem likely candidates) to collaborate on external grants.