Application for UCSC DCG Funds

Proposals are due in the Academic Senate Office by March 31, 2017, 5 p.m. submitted by email to senate@ucsc.edu.

1) Proposed title for Disciplinary Communication Grant (DCG)?

   Improving Scientific Writing through Guided Iteration

2) Department/Program:

   Psychology/Psychology and Cognitive Science

3) Amount requested:

   $23,889.60

4) Number of students affected:

   630

5) Overview of the program's DC requirement:

   .5 DC is fulfilled with Psych 100: Research Methods. .5 DC is fulfilled with writing in senior seminars. <u>This proposal will apply to the senior seminar component.</u>

6) What is proposed?

   Consistent with the intent of the disciplinary communication (DC) requirement, we view effective writing as a central skill that all of our majors should have the opportunity to master. Like other skills, writing skills are best developed through guided apprenticeship in which individuals learn from those with greater experience. Students will benefit from the opportunity to develop their writing in collaboration with graduate students with expertise in disciplinary writing.

   We propose a new program in which graduate student teaching assistants organize writing groups and provide additional rounds of feedback to students. Faculty members will train teaching assistants to evaluate writing and will work closely with them throughout the course to develop student writing skills.

   Graduate students will be matched with faculty mentors who will work together with them to discuss goals and progress and to identify a time and labor management strategy, with the requirement that the time includes faculty-member-to-graduate-student mentoring, graduate student group coaching of undergraduates, graduate-

undergraduate individual coaching, and individual feedback on drafts. We will collect information about variations in this model used by the 21 different faculty members at the conclusion of this program, as we work towards developing the most effective writing apprenticeship system.

7) What problem will this proposal solve?

Learning scientific writing is an iterative process, involving multiple drafts and rounds of guidance and feedback. However, the student to instructor ratio at large research universities is often so high that it prevents instructors from engaging in this iterative process of writing and feedback. This is especially true in psychology departments, which typically have very large majors. At UCSC, psychology and cognitive science majors complete the disciplinary communication requirement in senior seminars with up to 30 students and one faculty instructor. Faculty are rarely able to read and comment on more than one full draft before the final version of the class papers are due. This proposal addresses this problem and provides needed resources to support the development of effective disciplinary communication skills among undergraduate majors in psychology and cognitive science.

8) How does the DC fit within your program's learning outcome goals?

A key program learning outcome (PLO) in both psychology and cognitive science centers on communication skills. Students are expected to demonstrate effective communication skills following professional conventions in psychology or cognitive science, appropriate to purpose and context. In addition to this key PLO, it is noteworthy that all of our PLOs are evaluated through writing that occurs in the senior seminar. These other goals include the application of knowledge with critical thinking skills, the application of research methods with values and integrity, and awareness of sociocultural diversity and societal inequality. Therefore, it is especially imperative that our majors communicate effectively in writing. The provision of additional resources to ensure we can meet the expectations of the DC requirement to our maximum potential will have a broader effect on all of our program learning outcomes, revealing the extent to which our majors have met these goals.

9) Detailed budget: (you may attach additional spreadsheet)

The department typically offers 21 senior seminars per year, with 30 students per senior seminar. Our proposal for improving student writing involves having one graduate student work as a *writing coach* for each seminar. The writing coaches would work with students in small groups, hold individual meetings allowing students to get individualized guidance, and give written feedback on two written drafts.

The writing coaches would be have a 10.9% appointment (48 hours per quarter),

which would allow graduate students to take on a writing coach position on top of another 50% appointment without special permission from the Graduate Division (the maximum appointment percentage without special permission is 61%). The writing coaches would have a Tutor II appointment. The standard hourly salary for a Tutor II leading group sessions is $23.70.

To cover the cost of one writing coach per seminar, the total proposed budget for this project is $23,889.60. (21 Tutor II appointments, 48 hours/appointment, $23.70/hour.)

One model for how a writing coach may spend the 48 hours per quarter is as follows: Holding six 2-hour group sessions about writing with students, giving feedback on two paper drafts for each student (60 drafts total, 30 min per draft), holding four 1-hour office hours for individualized tutoring, and meeting with faculty member for two hours to discuss course goals and progress. We will collect information about variations in this model used by the 21 different faculty members at the conclusion of this program, as we work towards developing the most effective writing coach system.

10) Assessment plan. How will the effectiveness of this change be measured?

The effectiveness of this program will be assessed by:
   (1) Numerical comparison of the average grades in the seminar before versus after use of this program for each seminar.
   (2) Survey responses from faculty regarding the quality of students' writing in their seminar, as well as the growth of their graduate student mentee assisting them with their undergraduates' writing. This survey will also contain questions about exactly how the writing coaches' time was spent.
   (3) Survey responses from undergraduates regarding the effectiveness of the writing tutor program.
   (4) Survey responses from the writing tutors themselves about the effectiveness of the program for enhancing undergraduate writing, as well as the contributions of the program to the tutor's own development as an educator.

11) Sustainability. How will this innovation be continued without DCG funding?

If this program enhances success of our students, we will ask for additional TAS funding from the division. We will also investigate opportunities for extramural funding to support the program. We will consider initiating a formal research proposal to agencies and foundations that fund educational research or research in the learning sciences, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) or the Spencer Foundation.

<u>Recommended by (or attach dated email approval)</u>:

Campbell Leaper   3/18/2017
_____   _____
Dept. Chair   Date

Sheldon Kamieniecki (see attached email approval)   3/18/2017
_____   _____
Dean of Social Science   Date

Subject: Re: Senate grant application needs your approval
From: Sheldon Kamieniecki <sk1@ucsc.edu>
Date: 3/17/17, 7:58 PM
To: Campbell Leaper <cam@ucsc.edu>
CC: Allison Land <allison@ucsc.edu>

Dear Cam,

This is a terrific proposal. For so little money we will be able to improve the writing of numerous students in your senior seminars. I strongly endorse your Senate Disciplinary Communication grant proposal.

Sincerely,

Sheldon Kamieniecki

Dean, Social Sciences

On 3/17/2017 8:30 AM, Campbell Leaper wrote:

> Hi Sheldon,
>
> The Psychology Department is applying for a Senate Disciplinary Communication grant (attached). The gist is that we are requesting funds to hire graduate students for 10.8% time as writing mentors for our senior seminars; the 10.8% time would allow them to be a TA at the same time without exceeding their maximum employment. We based our application on a similar model in Anthropology.
>
> *The application requires the dean's approval, which can be in the form of an email to me* (which I will include with my application).
>
> Thank you for this consideration.
>
> Cheers,
> Cam
>
> **Campbell Leaper, Ph.D.**
> Professor and Department Chair, Psychology
> University of California, Santa Cruz
> Room 277 Psychology Department
> 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064
> Psychology Phone Messages: 831-459-5084
> Web page: https://leaper.sites.ucsc.edu/

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Sheldon Kamieniecki, Dean
Division of Social Sciences
Professor, Department of Environmental Studies
Humanities and Social Sciences Building
Room 460

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1156 High Street
University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, California 95064
831-459-2919 (office)
831-459-3661 (fax)

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