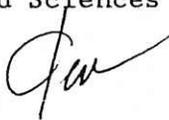


July 28, 1989

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: James D. Norris, Dean
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

FROM: Kendall L. Baker 
Vice President and Provost

SUBJECT: FY90 Expenditures of the Writing PIE

The proposal for FY90 expenditures of the Writing PIE outlined in a memo from Robert Self, dated July 24, 1989, convinces me that the department has a satisfactory plan for beginning an enhanced set of activities and services which will support writing across the curriculum. I am authorizing the expenditure of the \$89,000 identified in Self's memo.

I note that in the first memo from the department, dated July 14, 1989, the proposed budget included some funding for clerical support and supplies. From my own experience, I know that there will be support costs for running workshops, and I have been told that the omission of such projects' costs was an oversight in the second letter. Therefore, I would like to see an additional proposal from the department for support costs for the workshops. There is unexpended funding remaining in the FY90 PIE funding, and I assume that the computer networking costs are a one-year expense which could provide additional support in the future.

jr/1120

c Peter Nicholls
Glenn Meeter ✓
Robert Self
Lou Jean Moyer
Tony Fusaro
Lynne Waldeland

24 July 1989

To: Kendall Baker
Vice President and Provost

From: Robert T. Self
Director of Freshman English

Subject: Writing Project Proposal

The university's proposal for a writing project specifies a number of activities that increased funding would support. The English Department believes the single most important aspect of that proposal to be the director of the Writing Center and coordinator of writing across the curriculum. Prior to our search for such a director, we recommend the appointment of a temporary assistant professor whose primary function would be to assist the department immediately in working for the goals specified in our project proposal.

The job description for this position would be as follows:

1. To offer formal instruction in writing across the curriculum;
2. To offer faculty-development workshops on computer-assisted instruction in writing courses;
3. To offer staff-development seminars for tutorial staff in the Writing Center;
4. To assist in the curriculum revision of English 250 Practical Writing and offer training seminars for teachers of the course;
5. To offer "pilot workshops on why and how to integrate writing into the wide range of courses offered by the different disciplines.

1. The faculty member in this position would offer two courses during the year--both during the spring semester because of the lateness of this appointment: English 398 Topics in the Practice and Theory of Composition: Writing Tutorials, and English 504 Theory and Practice of Writing across the Curriculum. English 504 would begin to establish a group of graduate students in and outside of English who will subsequently be employed in training and assisting other faculty members in the teaching in different disciplines; the course would also be an important addition to the programs of study of our doctoral students in rhetoric and would add significant credentials to the vitae of other graduate students when they seek employment after graduation. English 398 would offer to English and other undergraduate majors instruction in the nature and practice of peer tutoring in developmental English, computer assisted writing, and writing across the curriculum; it would also offer students clinical experience in these areas through assignments in the Writing Center. These courses would answer to the writing project proposal to offer a formal program of instruction in computer-assisted writing and writing across the curriculum.

2. This appointment would also carry responsibility for staff training and curriculum development in computer-assisted writing courses. During the fall

semester we anticipate teaching some 1500 freshman in computer-assisted sections of freshman English. We have made considerable progress toward the proposal's goal of computer facilities sufficient to teach the entire freshman class, but that progress in hardware is not matched in training for the instructors to teach computer-assisted sections of English 103, 104, and 105. The department seriously needs to devote continuing resources to training the transient staff of graduate teaching assistants who teach the majority of those courses. The new faculty member employed through this project would be responsible for the development of curriculum materials to support the computer assisted instruction of rhetoric and composition including the research process, to evaluate and implement the use of software beyond just word processing, and most important to provide a series of on-going staff development seminars for the 28 graduate teaching assistants and instructors teaching with the computer. Our goal here is to bring the quality of instruction and the improvement of student writing significantly closer to the great potential of computer assisted instruction in writing.

3. One of the most important courses in our writing curriculum is English 250 Practical Writing. Several programs already require this course for their majors, and we envision the course eventually becoming a central feature in a formal sequence of required writing courses. We intend to revise this course with the assistance of both a new technical writing and a new writing-across-the-curriculum specialist in the department. The faculty appointment which we request here would have responsibility not only to work on revising the content of this course and on designing a university writing sequence, but would also offer training sessions for graduate teaching assistants and instructors assigned to teach the course.

4. The department currently must limit the availability of tutorial assistance in the Writing Center to students with severe problems who seek help on their writing in freshman English. One of the major components of the writing project proposal is to expand the services of the Center into a broad-based facility available to the entire student body. As we move in this direction and seek to assist a larger number of students with their writing for diverse courses in the university, the need increases for our tutorial staff to understand the divergent axiomatic perspectives that undergird writing demands in the different disciplines. The faculty member appointed for this project would offer training seminars in these matters for the graduate students who comprise the Writing Center staff and assist the department in building the foundation for a Writing Center with a much larger mission than it currently has.

5. A central assignment for this faculty appointment would be to offer "pilot workshops in why and how" to integrate writing into instruction across the university curriculum. This language in our proposal clearly indicates two stages of activity here. While some of the faculty at NIU already recognizes that the writing skill of our students is a responsibility of the entire faculty, many of our colleagues do not

recognize their relationship to this responsibility. We understand a major concern of this appointment to be "the encouragement of writing throughout the university," and we believe this responsibility will entail a good deal of missionary activity. The writing project faculty member would offer a number of seminars--some broadly based across different disciplines (such as liberal arts, business, engineering) and some more area specific (such as the physical sciences or the arts)--whose goal would be an examination of the necessity and the desirability, of teaching writing across the curriculum. But to the converted the question becomes How? How can writing be better integrated into the general education or upper division course? What writing assignments achieve the best results? How (and when) is writing to be evaluated? How can the teaching of writing be added to an already full curriculum? The writing project faculty member would offer a series of seminars to address these matters, to provide "training and practical experience in writing-centered instruction for university faculty," and to help build the foundation for the kind of consensus we will need eventually to change the university writing requirements.

Other responsibilities remain that will come with the appointment of a regular continuing faculty member as the director of the Writing Center--in particular, to develop workshops for secondary school and community college teachers on tutorials, computer-assisted writing instruction, and writing across the curriculum; to encourage the establishment of a vertically organized sequence of writing requirements in the university, and to help develop a system of accountability for the teaching of writing skills at all levels of university instruction. The writing project is designed to improve student writing skills, and the director of the Writing Center will be a central figure in the assessment of those skills. The job description presented here for a temporary assistant professor would be expanded for the permanent position to include such responsibilities as well as the requirement to conduct research in writing and writing pedagogy.

While we have begun the teaching of writing across the curriculum in English 104 and 105 and while we have moved to develop hardware resources to teach writing with computers, we have had to postpone most of the activities specified in this job description because we have had neither the number of faculty needed to devote to them nor the faculty specially trained and experienced in these areas. State funding ironically occurs at just the moment when our professorial staff of rhetoricians is decimated. Yet for us to delay another year implementing the goals of this writing project would only further delay our joining a movement to improve the writing skills of undergraduates which now approaches a decade in age.

As it happens, however, the department has an applicant for an instructorship whose qualifications seem to fit this job description very well. Because his wife has taken a job at North Central college, Parker Johnson has left a tenure-track job at Northwest Missouri State University to apply for instructorships like ours for which he is clearly over-qualified. He has the Ph.D. in English from the University of Minnesota (1985). He has significant research publications in literature and in the rhetoric of technical communication. He has training and both academic and professional experience in writing in different fields and in using the computer to teach writing.

Indeed, he studied and worked with Professor Donald Ross at Minnesota who was one of the pioneers in the use of computers in writing instruction and whose program there continues to lead in the application of computers to the collaborative and learner-centered approaches to the teaching of writing. Dr. Johnson also has formal experience in teaching writing across the curriculum both at Minnesota and at Northwest Missouri, and he was until his departure, the coordinator of writing across the curriculum at Northeast Missouri. His recommendations from both schools are first rate. Professor Ross calls him "an experienced scholar, teacher, and administrator who has done excellent work in all three areas."

We believe, then, that we have a programmatic need and commitment, a set of programmatic assignments, and a candidate with the qualifications to undertake these responsibilities.

We need additionally to comment on our request for additional assignments in the Writing Center. Our writing laboratories already see specialized needs for tutorial assistance in writing across the curriculum. At least half of the 150 or so foreign students who will enroll in English 103ESL this fall will be graduate students. Another assignment in the writing center will enable us to meet the increasing need and demand from these students for assistance not only in English but in the specialized writing demands and research needs of their graduate programs.

Minority students who come into the university through the CHANCE program discover the value of writing tutorials in the English 103 Communication Skills program. They are familiar with our writing laboratories, our procedures and the kind of individual attention our staff devotes to their writing problems, and they come back to us for help after the freshman year. After English 103, however, the English Communication Skills laboratory is not available to CHANCE students. An additional assignment in the writing center will enable us to meet the need of minority students as they encounter the writing requirements in courses after freshman English and would moreover contribute to the retention of these students in the university.

One of the goals of the writing project is of course to expand this kind of tutorial assistance to all students in the university, not just to certain specific clienteles. Our request for instructor positions here derives from a determination to begin the process of building the Writing Center to meet the writing concerns of a larger number of students, though that number is certainly not as great now as we expect it to be with an increased emphasis on writing throughout the university.

On the other hand, the demand for English 250 Practical English is very high. We have the staff to meet only 35 percent of that demand in the fall semester. This kind of understaffing on this scale has existed for some time, with the result that only seniors are able to register for a course which desirably should come earlier in their program of study, as is indicated by its number. Additional staff assignments in English 250 would reduce the backlog of demand for the course and move writing from its currently marginal position in students' study to a more useful relationship with their major.

Finally, we recognize that further expansion of our computer assisted instruction of writing at all levels of the English curriculum will require at least another computer laboratory beyond the three we hope to use in the fall; we will thus need to seek additional funding to achieve the goals specified in our writing project proposal. However, a relatively modest allocation of \$26,000 would permit us to network the laboratory in Douglas Hall. The new laboratory in Lincoln Hall will be networked, as will the laboratory in Graham Hall, and will permit us to explore the increasing developments in software, besides word processing, for the enhancement of student writing skills. The lack of networking in the Douglas laboratory means that we will not be able to offer students there the same degree of sophistication even in word processing which is available in other laboratories.

The English Department fully recognizes the need to expand the teaching of writing skills at NIU. With our PIE proposal five years ago we asserted our understanding of the professional requirements involved in such an expansion and expressed our willingness to take a leadership role in that endeavor. We remain so committed and welcome any additional resources you can provide us toward those ends.

Budget Requested

1. Temporary Assistant Professor (10 months)	\$30,000
2. Writing Center Instructors	33,000
3. Douglas Computer Network	<u>26,000</u>

Total \$89,000

cc:

Lou Jean Moye
 James Norris
 Peter Nicholl
 Glenn Meeter