

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION REQUEST

PROGRAM: NIU WRITING PROJECT

REQUEST: \$ 183,072

I. ABSTRACT:

Northern Illinois University is requesting funds to establish within the Department of English a Writing Project. The Project will provide (1) tutorial service for all students, (2) computer facilities for computer-assisted instruction in writing courses, (3) training for teachers of writing, and (4) encouragement of writing throughout the undergraduate curriculum.

II. RELATIONSHIP TO INSTITUTIONAL PLANS AND PRIORITIES:

The University is on record, in its report on writing skills submitted to the IBHE in February 1982 (see pages 17-19), as recognizing the importance of writing skills in the performance of its students both before and after graduation. It is on record in the same document as favoring a program of writing across the curriculum and of in-service training programs for secondary teachers in the teaching of writing.

The University in this and other statements recognizes that the improvement of its students' writing skills, and the improvement of the teaching of writing, both among university faculty and the faculties of secondary schools, is a problem for the University at large--though leadership in solving the problem ought to come from the Department of English. At the same time, however, it recognizes that the Department cannot assume such a role without an increase in its resources.

III. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE BUDGET REQUEST:

The Problem.

The Department of English at Northern Illinois University has developed over the years a writing program on the graduate and undergraduate levels that consists of a wide variety of courses, many of them newly designed or redesigned. To complement these, it has established separate writing clinics or laboratories for educationally disadvantaged students, for foreign students, and for first-year students lacking basic writing skills. The Department has also developed a small program in which English education majors and minors provide tutorial instruction to students who require assistance. Most recently, it has developed substantial programs in the teaching of writing for both graduate and undergraduate students. These programs complement the new M.A. and Ph.D. fields in Rhetoric and Composition by offering a strong pedagogical component to match the theoretical and historical. However, these modest developments enable the Department to provide special assistance to only a minimal number of students. For instance, special sections of the beginning freshman English course designed for educationally disadvantaged students admitted to the University through its CHANCE program accommodated 225 students in Fall 1986 and 181 students in Spring 1987. Further, 185 students were assisted in the Department's writing clinic in the fall semester, and 99 received assistance in the spring. Also in the Fall, 50 foreign students received tutorial assistance in English in the Department's TESOL clinic, and 43 students received assistance in the clinic during the Spring 1987 semester.

The Department's success in the implementation of these programs has also made clear their limiting constraints. In their present form, these laboratory and clinical activities are not adequate to respond to the numerous calls for writing improvement that have been made in national, state, and university reports on the quality of education.

Proposed Activities

To address this problem, the Department seeks the establishment of a comprehensive University Writing Project. Expanding present services offered by the Department of English and instituting a broad range of new services, the Writing Project will provide (1) tutorial services as an adjunct to formal class instruction in writing for undergraduate and graduate students, (2) computer facilities for computer-assisted instruction in writing courses, (3) training and practical experience for teachers of writing within the University and in selected secondary schools and community colleges, and (4) facilitation and encouragement of writing throughout the university curriculum. The project will be instituted by the Department of English, administered through a Writing Project Office, and will include the four components described below.

1. Expanded Tutorial Services

The Project will bring together and administer the several tutorial services presently offered by the Department, including its Writing Clinic, Communication Skills Laboratory, and English-as-a-Second-Language Clinic. It will begin a formal program on instruction in rhetoric and composition for graduate and undergraduate tutors, coordinating this

instruction with present course offerings in writing and writing pedagogy. (It is anticipated that the Department could, during a single semester, prepare approximately 10 graduate and 20 undergraduate tutors through this program.) As sufficient numbers of tutors become available, the Project will expand its tutorial service, making it available to all undergraduate and graduate students of the University who need assistance in the area of writing. In addition to providing a necessary service to students throughout the University, these expanded tutorial services will also provide clinical experience for the tutors--primarily English students seeking secondary certification and graduate students planning to teach at the college level.

2. Computer-Assisted Writing

The Writing Project Office will complete an evaluation of hardware and software alternatives to support computer-assisted instruction and the use of word processing in writing courses. Appropriate computer facilities will be established, and word-processing will be made available for use in advanced composition courses. The Department will evaluate its micro-computer facilities and explore the expansion of these to include access for all students in Freshman English classes. This would eventually require at least 250-300 computer terminals in order to serve between 2500 and 3000 students. (This calculation is based not on the total number of students enrolled in Freshman English, but on the assumption that a number of students will have their own computers.)

3. Training for Teachers of Writing

Another component of the Project will be to offer workshops (both on-campus and in-service) for secondary school and community college teachers. Teachers in English and other disciplines will be chosen from the primary feeder schools and colleges that send students to Northern Illinois University. A main objective of the workshops will be to present current theories and methods of teaching writing and to provide a means by which teachers themselves can participate in the design of practical applications for classrooms and writing clinics. In addition, there will be emphasis on the development of writing across the curriculum programs and computer-assisted instruction, adapting what has been achieved on the university level to the needs of high schools and community colleges. There will also be the opportunity for the feeder schools to present their programs and concerns to the University so that the articulation process can be enhanced. It is anticipated that 2 on-campus and 2 off-campus workshops involving 10-15 people each would be appropriate to begin with.

4. Writing Across the Curriculum

The University can not develop a comprehensive writing-across-the-curriculum program within the university until faculty in disciplines other than English are prepared to incorporate and evaluate appropriate writing components in their courses. To facilitate this, the Writing Project will offer pilot workshops on why and how to integrate writing into the wide range of courses offered by the different disciplines.

The faculty participants, who would receive stipends, will be drawn initially from other disciplines in Liberal Arts and Sciences. To date, several departments in the College have already expressed an interest in such an opportunity and desire to incorporate an expanded writing component into selected undergraduate courses.

As the University moves toward formally implementing a writing-across-the-curriculum requirement, the Project will extend these write-to-learn and writing-across-the-curriculum workshops to faculty and graduate assistants beyond the Liberal Arts and Sciences departments to departments across the University, several of which have also expressed the desire to participate.

Results

The Writing Project thus seeks to improve writing by putting into practice recent advances in the teaching of writing and by conveying these advances to teachers of writing and to teachers in other fields. More specifically, the Project will do the following:

1. Establish a Writing Project Office staffed by a full-time director and by graduate and undergraduate tutors.
2. Continue specialized instruction in writing for students with particular needs, especially educationally disadvantaged students, speakers of English as a second language, and students lacking basic skills.
3. Provide tutorial instruction in language and communication skills for all university students, whether course-related or not.
4. Provide training and practical experience in writer-centered instruction for university faculty and graduate students in disciplines other than English, and for

graduate students planning to teach at the college and community college level.

5. Provide training and experience in writer-centered instruction and writing in other disciplines for undergraduate English majors seeking certification and for teachers, in English and in other disciplines, already working in the secondary schools.
6. Coordinate and support activities leading to a university requirement in writing across the curriculum.
7. Strengthen the Department of English's M.A. and Ph.D. fields in rhetoric and composition and in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages.
8. Establish laboratory facilities for computer-assisted instruction and word-processing for such courses as freshman English, practical writing, advanced essay composition, and technical editing.
9. Encourage research in writing and writing pedagogy and the dissemination of this research to teachers of writing.

IV. A DESCRIPTION OF THE RESOURCES REQUESTED:

The Writing Project will require a full-time director, one who will be hired as an associate professor with a speciality in rhetoric and composition. This should be a 10-month appointment, giving the director time to plan and participate in secondary teacher workshops during the summer.

In addition to a director, the Project will require both graduate and undergraduate students who will receive either reliefs of load or stipends for their participation as trainees and tutors. A full-time secretary will also be needed. This staffing will remain steady in the program, with the graduate and undergraduate instructors/tutors increasing as the program expands and as recurring equipment costs diminish.

To offer the workshops for NIU personnel in preparation for a more comprehensive writing-across-the-curriculum effort and for the teacher workshops, the Writing Project will need to offer participants at least minimal stipends. The workshops will be three days each with a minimum stipend of approximately \$125 per day for NIU personnel and \$175 per day for secondary school and community college teachers. The participants from off-campus would cover their own expenses during their stay at NIU, and thus the difference in the stipend level. Also, costs for postage/ mailing to cover publicity, curriculum interchange, and communication between the University and the participating secondary schools and community colleges will be incurred.

In the first year, a figure of \$65,000 for microcomputers, printers, and maintenance is included in the budget. It is estimated that 25-30 work stations plus peripherals might be purchased. During the second and third years, 20-25 more would be added, and then, after about 3 years, new purchases will decline with a portion of the money allotted to replacement and repairs. With the resources requested, all the hardware and peripherals necessary for the Project as originally conceived could not be purchased, but it is hoped that by the third year the Project would be at a stage where external funding--from grants, foundations, or corporations--will be forthcoming. Funding in the commodities line will be used for software, paper, and other supplies necessary for efficient operation of the writing laboratory and workshops.

STAFF

FY89

Full-time Director	37,000
Graduate Students Staff	17,000
Undergraduate Tutors	13,600
Clerical Assistance	12,400

WORKSHOP STIPENDS

NIU Instructors	8,500
Pilot Workshop for Secondary and Comm. College Teachers	10,200
Micro Computers/printers hardware	65,000
Commodities-software/supplies	5,900
Postage/mailings	540

<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$170,140</u>
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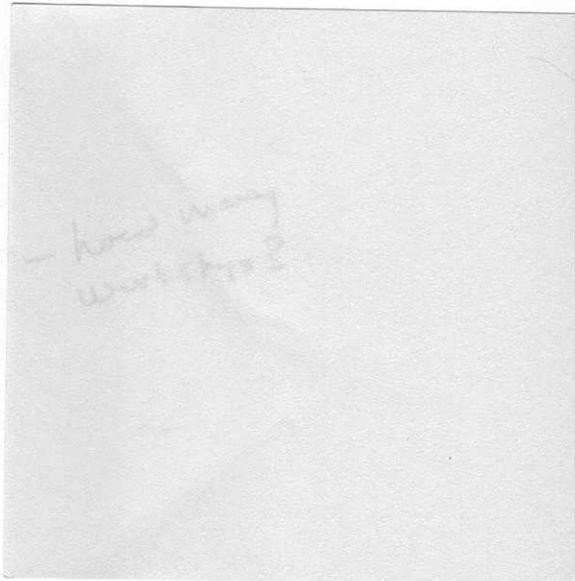


TABLE I

TOTAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT
AND EXPANSION REQUESTS

<u>LINE CODE</u>	<u>FY1988 HISTORICAL YEAR</u>	<u>FY1989 CURRENT YEAR</u>	<u>FY1990 BUDGET YEAR</u>
01 Total Resource Requirements			183,072
02 Total Resources Available from Federal Sources			
03 Total Resources Available from Other Non-State Sources			
04 Existing State Resources			
05 State Resources Available Through Internal Allocation			
06 New State Resources Required (01 minus the sum of 02-05)			183,072

Breakdown of the figure shown on Line 06 for the budget year:

07 Staff	97,350
08 Equipment and Commodities	74,445
09 Library	0
10 Contractual Services	10,710
11 Other Support Services	567