

# MSU INVESTMENT PROPOSAL FOR INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

## PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

<b>Title</b>	Writing Center Director and Development	<b>Request Date</b>	December 1
<b>Department</b>	English	<b>Email</b>	kmachugh@gmail.com
<b>Requestor</b>	Kirk Branch	<b>Phone</b>	994-3768

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

**Core Themes and Objectives (check all that apply)**

### Educate Students

- Our graduates will have achieved mastery in their major disciplines
- Our graduates will become active citizens and leaders
- Our graduates will have a multicultural and global perspective
- Our graduates will understand the ways that knowledge & art are created and applied in a variety of disciplines
- Our graduates are prepared for careers in their field
- We will provide increased access to our educational programs
- Communities and external stake holders benefit from broadly defined education partnerships with MSU

### Create Knowledge and Art

- Students, faculty, and staff will create knowledge and art that is communicated widely

### Serve Communities

- We help meet a fundamental need of the citizens of Montana by providing degree programs for our students
- We help meet the educational needs of the citizens of Montana by providing a wide range of educational opportunities to a variety of students
- Our students, faculty, staff, and administrators reach out to engage and serve communities
- Our students, faculty, staff, and administrator reach in to build the university community

### Integrate Learning, Discovery, and Engagement

- Each graduate will have had experiences that integrate learning, discovery and engagement
- Outreach activities will educate students and address the needs of the communities we serve
- Students, faculty, and staff will create knowledge and art that addresses societal needs
- MSU is a community that will be characterized by synergy within and across disciplines, roles and functions.

### Stewardship

- The public trusts the institution to operate openly and use resources wisely
- The faculty and staff are well-qualified and supported
- MSU will support Native American students, programs, and communities
- MSU will be an inclusive community, supporting and encouraging diversity
- Our publicly provided resources are used efficiently and effectively
- Natural resources are used efficiently and sustainably
- MSU nurtures a culture of resource conservation and ecological literacy among students, faculty and staff
- Our physical infrastructure (e.g., building, equipment, open spaces) will be well-maintained and useful

INSITUTIONAL BENEFIT																						
<b>Campuses</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bozeman <input type="checkbox"/> Billings <input type="checkbox"/> Havre <input type="checkbox"/> Great Falls <input type="checkbox"/> FSTS <input type="checkbox"/> Extension <input type="checkbox"/> MAES																					
<b>Cross Depts</b>	Please List: The Writing Center is a University Wide Resource; online tutoring reaches distant students																					
TIMEFRAME																						
<b>Proposed Dates</b>	Start: August 2012			End: On-going																		
COST AND REQUIREMENTS																						
Funding Type	One-Time (\$)	Multi-Year (\$)			Base (\$)	FTE																
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3																		
<b>Personnel (w/benefits)</b>					<b>174961.70</b>	1.5																
<b>Materials &amp; Supplies</b>	\$8,230.00				11,810.00																	
<b>Travel</b>					5,000.00																	
<b>Contracted Services</b>																						
<b>Capital</b>																						
<b>Other Operations</b>																						
<b>TOTAL</b>	5,230.00				191771.70	1.5																
<b>Please comment, if necessary, regarding cost and requirements.</b>	<p>Personnel:</p> <p>We have budgeted for an Associate Professor, because an experienced Director and published scholar in this position would be the most capable of leading the Writing Center through a period of high growth. We have also budgeted for a graduate research assistant to assist in the running of the WC. Finally, we have included under personnel the cost of a peer tutoring program:</p> <p>Writing Center Director as Associate Professor</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>Salary</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$75,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Benefits (35%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>26,250</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$101,250 + 22,500 for summer (sal. &amp; ben.)</td> </tr> </table> <p>GTA Research Assistant (using funded GTA in the second year):</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>GTA stipend:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10,582</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18 credits tuition waiver</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding-left: 20px;">(2 semesters x 9 credits):</td> <td style="text-align: right;">5569.30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Benefits:</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><u>60.40</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$16,211.70</td> </tr> </table> <p>Writing Center peer tutors:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">100 hours/ week for 30 weeks/yr. at \$10.00/hour (current wages for undergraduate tutors at Residence Life):: \$30,000</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">training budget and money for summer staffing: \$5,000</p> <p>Materials and supplies: One time request covers 3 Mac computers for online tutoring, 1 cat card reader (for champ change), new telephone with caller ID, furniture for the new Writing Center, and a flat screen TV displaying appointment schedule and messages. Base request covers office supplies (\$10,000/ yr.), copier lease, and 3 telephone lines (for director, administrative assistant, and scheduling).</p> <p><b>Travel:</b> Money is budgeted here for travel to appropriate Writing Center meetings for the director (\$2,500/ yr) and for an additional \$2,500 for presentations by peer tutors and staff at Writing Center conferences.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> in terms of how the position of Writing Center Director should be funded, we propose three models, in decreasing order of preference:</p>						Salary	\$75,000	Benefits (35%)	<u>26,250</u>		\$101,250 + 22,500 for summer (sal. & ben.)	GTA stipend:	10,582	18 credits tuition waiver		(2 semesters x 9 credits):	5569.30	Benefits:	<u>60.40</u>		\$16,211.70
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1. Writing Center Director is a position .5 FTE within English (or in the unlikely event that home discipline is other than English, within appropriate department) and .5 FTE directly under the Provost's Office. This allows the Writing Center Director to teach classes within the English department (a ½ teaching load of regular faculty) and keeps the Director connected with the department on campus that has demonstrated the most long-term investment in the success of the Writing Center. The .5 FTE under the Provost's Office reflects the fact that the Writing Center is a University-wide resource and it does not make sense for the funding to come from a college (CLS) that accounts for only 19% of the visits.
2. Writing Center Director is a position wholly under the Provost's Office, with teaching, research, and service expectations decided by the Provost's office. This reflects the position of the Writing Center as a campus-wide resource that should be supported beyond the College level.
3. The Writing Center Director is a 1 FTE professor in the English Department and given appropriate course reductions (probably 1 class/ semester release) for running the Writing Center. Under this model the Writing Center Director would be funded by the College of Letters and Sciences. This is the least desirable because it would send the message that the Writing Center belongs to the English department (it should not), and it would negatively impact the potential of the Writing Center Director to take a campus-wide leadership role in supporting student writing across the University. This should be understood as a choice that will guarantee the least effective realization of the Writing Center goals spelled out in this proposal.

### Writing Center Proposal: Scope

The Writing Center at Montana State University currently needs a tenure-track director who will help meet the increasing demands of students and who will lead the Writing Center to achieve its fullest potential. A tenure-track Director with a research background in writing center practice and theory will provide the leadership to develop peer-tutoring and campus-wide programming that will improve the ways that the Writing Center meets strategic goals of Montana State University. This proposal seeks funding for a tenure-track director and for the development and operation of a peer-tutoring program, as well as for materials and equipment.

At the end of the Fall semester 2011, Writing Center usage had increased dramatically over the previous year. There were 1828 visits to the Writing Center in Fall 2010; in Fall 2011, there were 2424 visits, primarily of a half-hour duration. Of those, 1578 were return visits, suggesting how helpful students find the Writing Center. These visits were from students across the university – 23% of students came from the College of Engineering, 23% from University College, 19% from Letters and Sciences, and 14% from Education/HHD - demonstrating that the Writing Center, though presently funded by the College of Letters and Sciences, is truly a campus-wide resource. By the end of the Fall semester, the Writing Center had reached its capacity and was turning away numerous students. The increase in visitors can be attributed in part to increased enrollment at the University, but it is due as well to a much higher priority on promoting the services of the center, especially by the new program assistant in the Writing Center, Portia Hall. As explained below, demand is likely to continue increasing into the foreseeable future.

The original MSU Writing Center, opened in 1984, was run by a tenure-track faculty member who is now a full professor running the Writing Center at University of Nevada-Reno. Up until the early 1990s the Writing Center at Montana State offered extensive support for Writing Across the Curriculum and for faculty seeking to improve writing instruction in their class. In addition, the Writing Center had a vibrant peer tutoring program. A change of leadership in the Writing Program left the Writing Center without a strong voice, and gradually the Writing Center pared down its offerings and eliminated peer tutoring. Nominally, the director of the Writing Center has been the Director of the Writing Program, but actually, since the mid-1990s, the Writing Center has been directed by Helen Porter, an adjunct faculty member paid the equivalent of one course each semester. The Writing Center is staffed primarily by Graduate Teaching Assistants from the English department, with a handful of professional tutors and a handful of undergraduate tutors. Porter has kept the Writing Center afloat and worked to develop Writing Center services in the Renne Library, residence halls, and for student athletes. However, the Writing Center cannot conceivably meet the rising demand for services, much less develop vital programs beyond direct tutoring, without a qualified tenure-track director who understands how to build and run a fully functional Writing Center.

By promoting success in student writing, the Writing Center is already working to address many of the goals outlined in the strategic alignment. Writing is one of the primary ways in which **undergraduates demonstrate mastery in their major disciplines**. Learning to write within a major requires an **understanding of the ways that knowledge and art are created and applied in a variety of disciplines**, and writing is the primary way that **students, faculty, and staff will create knowledge and art that is communicated widely**. Confidence in writing fosters **experiences that integrate learning, discovery and engagement**. As a resource valuable to struggling and experienced writers alike, the Writing Center cultivates discussion and awareness of the importance of writing for undergraduates' current and future success, and current usage statistics bear out the importance of the Writing Center for undergraduates.

As such, the Writing Center presently is a way for **students, faculty, staff, and administrators to reach in to build the university community.**

In October 2011, the ASMSU Senate, recognizing how vital writing centers can be in promoting undergraduate academic success, approved a Supplemental Request for \$300,000 to build a new Writing Center on the west side of Wilson Hall. The Board of Regents provided final approval in November, and the new Writing Center is slated to open in Fall 2012. The facilities will be designed according to current writing center practices, and they will be a considerable improvement over the now inadequate and divided space. At present, the director and the administrative assistant work across the hallway from the small windowless room where the tutors work. The new Writing Center will be in one area, allowing for more interaction between students, staff, and the director, and it will be a more personable and communal space, with a feature as yet unheard of in Wilson Hall: large windows. This is a major step forward for the Writing Center, strongly backed by student leaders; it is also a significant vote of confidence that will need further support if its potential will be fully realized.

As a major renovation funded by student money, the August 2012 opening will likely attract a good deal of attention. Together with increasing enrollment, the new publicity will certainly increase student appointments next fall. As indicated, the Writing Center is struggling to meet current demand, due to space and staffing constraints. The space constraints will be largely lifted for the time being (Wilson 1-115 will eventually become part of the Writing Center space), and the demand for tutoring could perhaps in the short term be addressed by hiring more tutors, but this would be a short-term solution that would not address the need for focused and qualified leadership in the Writing Center.

As a campus-wide resource, the Writing Center will never achieve its fullest potential under the current model. An adjunct faculty member is not adequate as a director, by dint of training and institutional position. While the MSU Writing Center can provide tutoring for interested students, it is impossible for the Writing Center to live up to the standards of writing center facilities at peer institutions. A tenure-track Writing Center Director will capitalize on the energy and enthusiasm for student writing and will improve the quality of tutoring and expand the programming offered by the Writing Center. Such programming includes:

**For students:**

- Increased opportunities for peer tutoring and much more thorough peer tutor training. Well-trained peer tutors are the preferred staff for writing centers across the country because of pedagogical benefits for both tutors and Writing Center visitors;
- On-site workshops focusing on particular aspects of writing for college, from citations to idea development, or on particular assignments;
- Non-credit writing classes of short duration;
- Clearer integration with WRIT 101 and other writing and writing intensive courses;
- Publication venue for outstanding examples of student writing from across the University
- An on-line Writing Center in which students could have face-to-face tutorials from off-site locations.

**For faculty:**

- A Writing Across the Curriculum program to help faculty better understand and enhance the role of writing in teaching within their fields;
- Advice on using student writing for individual and program assessments;
- Workshops and one-on-one assistance for faculty seeking to improve their writing instruction and their writing assignments;
- Feedback and support for faculty writing projects and research;
- Class visits from Writing Center personnel;
- Plagiarism resources and workshops on how to design assignments that help prevent plagiarism.

A tenure-track director and a strong peer-tutoring program will bring the Writing Center into even stronger alignment with the strategic goals identified in the proposal application. Improved tutoring would improve the ability of the Writing Center to meet the goals already outlined above, but a vibrant peer tutoring program and increased programming would allow the Writing Center to address a number of other strategic goals as well.

A core mission of writing centers since they first appeared in American universities has been to **provide increased access to educational programming**. One of the greatest challenges undergraduates face is learning the expectations and conventions of academic writing and writing within their own majors, and writing centers offer a safe and effective space to assist students at all ability levels in that learning. While the MSU Writing Center already promotes this goal, well-trained peer tutors from a variety of disciplines will make the Writing Center more relevant to students across the University. In addition, peer tutors will represent a cross-section of students from the university, making the Writing Center **an inclusive community, supporting and encouraging diversity** and allowing the Writing Center to better **support Native American students, programs and communities**. Thus, the Writing Center will become integral in **meeting the educational needs of the citizens of Montana by providing a wide-range of educational opportunity to a variety of students**.

A thriving peer-tutoring program helps students **become active citizens and leaders** and fosters **a multicultural and global perspective**. Peer tutors will receive extensive training, both before and during their work in the Writing Center, much of that training run by other peer tutors. This offers complex professional and academic experience for undergraduates that focuses on their disciplines and creates situations in which they are intellectual consultants with other students and trainers of other tutors, a natural opportunity for students to develop leadership skills. Much of the training will explore strategies and methods for interacting with a broad range of students. During the current semester, for example, 536 of the visits during the Fall semester 2011 were speakers of English as a foreign language; to work effectively with such students, tutors must recognize cultural differences in discourse and personal relationships.

An active Writing Center assists students in becoming **prepared for careers in their field**. Employers regularly express the need for employees with better written communication skills, and the Writing Center supports students in developing and improving as writers. Undergraduates who work as peer tutors will gain invaluable professional experience. Peer tutors will become more aware and reflective writers, and they will learn about collaborating with and providing feedback to other writers. They will also develop rich interpersonal skills by working with a cross-section of the student body.

In addition to developing a peer-tutoring program, a new director will offer improved reaching in to faculty and colleges across the University and can help develop additional programs. Online tutoring will increase access for students in remote locations, offering vital face-to-face support for students in remote locations. Faculty can utilize the Writing Center for consultation about writing instruction, assignments and assessment, promoting a **well-qualified and supported faculty and staff**. When operating to its fullest potential, the Writing Center will be a central location on

campus for creating **synergy within and across disciplines, roles and functions**. The Writing Center **effectively and efficiently uses publicly provided resources** through its commitment to student learning, and it will certainly continue to meet the **public trust to operate openly and use resources wisely**.

Writing centers should offer considerably more than tutoring for inexperienced college writers. Running at full capacity with a range of programming, writing centers are campus hubs in which trained and committed students support their peer students, and they provide places in which students at all levels can find intellectual support and stimulation. In this regard, they have the potential to play a key role in University retention efforts, because they offer a specific location in which students can make a strong connection to the institution, they offer academic environments that are alternatives to the traditional classroom, and they provide a place in which students can make significant connections with University representatives. Writing centers can play an important role in assisting developmental students with transitions into the university and are vital locations for enriching the experience of first-year and transfer students. Finally, peer tutors can play a vital role in helping students develop institutional loyalty and commitment.

The construction a new and state-of-the-art writing center is clearly a transformative event for the Montana State University Writing Center. But to realize its fullest potential, the Writing Center will require a good deal more than a nice space. Under the current staffing model, the Writing Center will never be able to operate according to current writing center practices and will never provide the full array of services that are standard in writing centers across American universities, and the new Writing Center space will not be utilized as fully as it should be, given the significant investment in its creation. A tenure-track Director would provide leadership and build the capacity in our Writing Center. Not only would a fully functional Writing Center clearly address a majority of the goals spelled out for strategic alignment, but it would also represent an investment in a program wholeheartedly endorsed by students. This is an opportunity that should not be squandered if the University seeks to provide rich resources in support of on-going student learning and access.

**PROPOSAL SCOPE**

**Describe the broader impacts and benefits of this proposal**

Please see above.



**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Implementation Plan** *(Please describe with timelines)*

August 2012: New director hired for grand opening of new writing center

Spring 2013: peer tutoring program commences;  
Student workshops begin

Fall 2013: peer tutoring program fully functional;  
Online tutoring for students in remote locations;  
Writing Across the Curriculum program active;  
Further programming active as identified in the proposal and by the New Director

If we are unable to hire a new director before next academic year, we can begin the groundwork for a peer-tutoring program, but this timeline in general would likely be pushed back one year.

**Assessment Plan** *(Please describe with indicators)*

The Writing Center success will be measured by several indicators, including:

Online survey on dedicated computer for students to complete upon exiting the Writing Center. This will be especially useful as a tool for developing tutor training and improving the services of the Writing Center, and this material will be available on request at any time.

Regular tutor feedback regarding management of the Writing Center

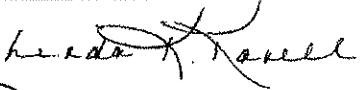
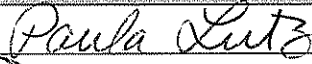
Usage statistics:

- Number of visits per semester;
- Number of return visits per semester;
- Number of faculty consultations per semester;
- Number of class visits by Writing Center staff per semester.
- Majors of student visitors.

In addition, the Writing Center Director will go through an annual review process just as any other tenure track faculty member.

**If assessed objectives are not met in the timeframe outlined, what is the plan to sunset this proposal?**

If the assessed objectives are not met as spelled out in the timeline, we will expect that they will be met one year later. Meeting these objectives will not be difficult, given the personnel and resources we are requesting in this proposal.

SIGNATURES			
Department Head (please print)	Signature (required)	Date	
Linda K. Karell		12/22/2011	
Dept Head Priority (please circle one): <u>Very High</u>			
Dean/Director (please print)	Signature (required)	Date	
Paula Lutz		1-3-12	
Dean/Director Priority (please circle one): <u>Very High</u> High Medium Low Very Low			
Executive/VP (please print)	Signatures (required)	Date	
Executive/VP Priority (please circle one): Very High High Medium Low Very Low			