

Title: The UTC Center for Online Writing Support (COWS)

Unit Submitting Proposal: UTC Writing Center (Director: Dr. Jennifer Beech; with Dr. James Inman)

**Briefly summarize the proposed project.**

The UTC Office of Distance Learning has requested that the UTC Writing Center make available to distance learning students the “same consulting services as are available to on-campus students.” UTC’s Statement of Mission says, “Dedicated to providing quality education to a diverse population of over 8000 students, UTC seeks to meet its responsibilities as an emerging metropolitan university, actively involved with regional municipalities, schools, business and industry, and offering expanded instructional opportunities that respond to area needs.” To satisfy this mission, UTC must ensure that it offers distance-learning and commuter students access to the same support services that residential students enjoy, thus providing all students the same access to the “quality education” referenced in the Mission.

The situation that UTC is facing is one many institutions around the world find themselves addressing as well. In fact, according to current International Writing Centers Association data, more than 450 writing centers worldwide have already initiated online programs. These centers serve a diverse range of institutions, from large Research One universities, to smaller baccalaureate-only colleges, and to community colleges and secondary schools.

The proposed Center for Online Writing Support will (1) make sure that UTC indeed offers the same writing-support services for all of its students, as its Mission requires, and (2) establish UTC as a strong contributor to international efforts to reach such students through the effective use of online technologies.

**Identify the project goals and objectives.** Briefly describe your goals and objectives. Include in the description how the outcomes of the project will improve teaching and learning. Indicate also the anticipated reach of your project. In other words, how many and what type of students will benefit from the successful execution of the proposed funding? How will they benefit?

This use of student technology fees will achieve the following objectives:

- To acquire budget-sensitive technologies necessary for the creation and operation of a Center for Online Writing Support at UTC;
- To train UTC Writing Center consultants to be effective peer consultants for the Center for Online Writing Support; and
- To operate the Center for Online Writing Support from Fall 2005 through Spring 2006.

The proposed use of student technology fees will impact the entire UTC student community. As demonstrated by the UTC Writing Center’s annual report statistics, students across the disciplines need effective writing support in order to complete assignments successfully and stay in school. Thus, while COWS will act as an independent online teaching and learning center, it will also serve as a vital support service for the teaching and learning of writing in courses across the curriculum. If well funded, this additional service will certainly improve the teaching and learning of writing at UTC.

The Center for Online Writing Support is necessary as a partner operation for the Writing Center because the latter cannot reach every UTC student, despite outstanding efforts. Currently, as noted above, a number of UTC students are distance-learning students, for instance, or commuter students who cannot visit the Writing Center during regular hours. The Center for Online Writing Support will ensure that every UTC student has the same access to writing support, which is absolutely vital.

**Describe the method with which you will achieve your goals.** Briefly describe your methodology. Include a calendar of target project dates. That is, when will the major steps in the project begin and end?

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|----------------------|--|
| May –July 2005       | [Funded through Summer Faculty Research Grant] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and usability testing of Center for Online Writing Support concept</li> <li>• Development of policies and procedures for online writing support at UTC</li> <li>• Development of research and assessment protocols</li> </ul>  |
| August 2005          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting two pre-service workshops: “Getting to Know Equipment and Procedures” and “Best Practices in Online Consulting”</li> <li>• Facilitating practice consultations and other staff-readiness exercises</li> <li>• Visiting of distance-learning classes to describe services and procedures for online consulting, as well as publicizing the Center and its services across campus</li> </ul> |
| August 2005-May 2006 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation of the Center beginning the second full week of classes each semester and continuing through finals</li> <li>• Bi-weekly in-service workshops: ongoing training and trouble-shooting</li> <li>• Research and assessment of the Center’s activities and success</li> </ul>   |

**How will you evaluate the success of the project?** Describe your evaluation criteria clearly. How will you determine whether the project is successful?

We will utilize the Writing Center’s experience-proven assessment criteria in evaluating how well the Center for Online Writing Support is helping students. Specific elements of this assessment are the following:

- Statistical/quantitative data reflecting usage demographics and usage increases
- Qualitative data from patron feedback (both informal/unsolicited and anonymous/solicited)

Whether or not the Center for Online Writing Support is helping all UTC students to be better writers will be the number one priority for our evaluation. We will use the results to improve our consultants’ teaching practices.

Additionally, we will evaluate the online technologies utilized to see if they have been effective in enabling writing consultations. Our two criteria will be the following:

- Accessibility (the innovation’s ability to be accessed effectively by all students, including those with disabilities and those with older or less up-to-date computer equipment)
- Usability (the innovation’s success in facilitating effective writing consultations, including how well students can initiate and participate in such consultations)

We will use the results of this part of our evaluation to determine if alternate online technologies should be selected and piloted or if the same technologies should continue to be utilized.

**Previous grant(s):** If you received a Student Technology Fee grant last year, have you submitted your final report?

Not applicable: we have not previously received a Student Technology Fee grant.

**Proposed location:** Describe the proposed location of the equipment, software, etc.

The UTC Writing Center (Holt 119) will house the Center for Online Writing Support. As Dr. Beech is the director, access to equipment and facilities is guaranteed.

**Requested Budget:** Clearly identify one-time costs, such as equipment, shipping, and installation. Clearly identify recurring costs, such as maintenance and support, and the source of the funds to cover the recurring costs.

We request the funding detailed below in the Summary of Projected Costs section, where we have marked all expenses specifically as either one-time or recurring.

We need to purchase a desk/hutch for the dedicated online consulting station, along with a locking file cabinet for the secure storage of the laptop that will be used for online consulting. [Note: we have been awarded a UTC Summer Faculty Research Grant, which will provide for the purchase of a laptop and scanner for use in online consulting.]

Because online consulting practices are significantly different from face-to-face consulting, we must provide for an initial pre-service workshop for online consulting staff and provide additional bi-weekly in-services —particularly during the pilot year of the project. As we do not retain all student staff from year to year, we anticipate the pre-service workshop to be a recurring expense. After the pilot year, in-service training will be integrated as part of regular training for staff.

Currently, because the Center for Online Writing Support has not yet been created, we cannot provide specifics as to funding sources for the recurring costs. We are confident, however, that once we present data from the 2005-2006 academic year and demonstrate that our project is providing a vital service to all students at UTC, we will be able to secure an operational funding source.

Including both one-time and recurring costs, we are asking for \$8166.25 for the 2005-2006 academic year.

**Summary of Projected Costs**

Salaries (if any)	\$ 3240.00 (student online consulting staff: 10 hours per week in Fall 2005 and 20 hours per week in Spring 2006 at a mean pay rate of \$6.75) [recurring cost]
	\$ 2000.00 (Fall 2005 course release for Dr. Inman, expert in online writing centers, to help pilot project; amount is contribution to adjunct pool) [one-time cost]
Equipment (hardware and software)	[Laptop and other hard/software for online consulting will be purchased through an awarded UTC Summer Research Grant]
Complete the following items as appropriate	
Installation	no anticipated costs
Construction/furniture	\$ 800.00 (online consulting station: desk/hutch and 3-drawer locking file cabinet from Cooper’s Office Supply) [one-time purchase]
Annual maintenance/support costs	IT services are already provided to the Writing Center.
Training	\$ 2126.25 (pre-service workshop: 5 hours each for 15 consultants before Fall 2005 [recurring cost]; and one in-service hour every two weeks for 15 consultants through Fall 2005 and Spring 2006 at a mean pay rate of \$6.75 [one-time cost])
Recurring costs per year	\$ 506.25
<b>Total</b> project one-time costs	\$ 4420
<b>Estimated</b> recurring costs per year	\$ 3746.25

**Identify the area(s) responsible for operating and maintaining the equipment.**

The UTC Writing Center (Holt 119), directed by Dr. Beech

**Approval** by Dean or Vice Chancellor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Individuals** responsible to complete proposal if funded: \_\_\_\_\_

**Priority** established by Dean or Vice Chancellor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Deans and Vice Chancellors should return** completed forms (along with 25 copies) to Provost John Friedl, Chair of the University Technology Committee, prior to **December 13, 2004.**