

**TO:** Herbert Burhenn, Interim Provost & Chair of University Technology Committee

**FROM:** Jennifer Beech, Assist. Prof. English & Director of the UTC Writing Center

**DATE:** September 20, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Tech Fee Project Report for UTC Center for Online Writing Support (COWS)

### **PROJECT OVERVIEW:**

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 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 COWS project was to research, set up, and pilot online consulting for UTC student writers taking distance learning courses.**

### **PROJECT GOALS:**

The goal was to use student technology fees funds and other grant monies to achieve the following objectives:

- To acquire budget-sensitive technologies necessary for the creation and operation of a Center for Online Writing Support at UTC. **With Tech fee and other funds, the UTC Writing Center acquired a desk and file cabinet for use as a dedicated consulting station, a computer and scanner for use in uploading handouts/resources and for conducting online consultations, and books about online consulting.**
- To train UTC Writing Center consultants to be effective peer consultants for the Center for Online Writing Support. **Training of consultants in online tutoring practices took place last spring and is still taking place this fall.**
- To operate the Center for Online Writing Support from Fall 2005 through Spring 2006. **Because we were not notified until mid-Fall 2005 of our being awarded the grant, most work towards setting up the center and training consultants was delayed until Spring and Fall 2006. Operation of COWS will begin in Spring 2007.**

### **METHODOLOGY AND TIMELINE:**

August-July 2005      A former colleague, Dr. James Inman, and I wrote and were funded for a Summer Faculty Research Grant, as well as a Library Enhancement Grant to increase Lupton Library’s holdings of scholarship on online writing consultation. The summer grant provided for a computer for use in online consulting, as well as a scanner. We used the summer to read scholarship on online consulting and to research online consulting practices.

- Fall 2005 At the beginning of Fall 2005, assuming that the project had not been funded, I purchased the rolling file cabinet from Writing Center funds and funded some training in online consulting from our operating budget. Mid-Fall 2005, we received notification that we had been funded, so we began to make plans for the two workshops for the Spring 2006. We also began to make plans to order the desk and hutch for the consulting station.
- Spring/Summer 2006 Dr. James Inman received a course release to begin construction of COWS, which he and I decided to set up in Blackboard. He and I conducted several training sessions with the Writing Center consulting staff in Spring and in Summer 2006. Over the summer, the Writing Center staff and I created and posted resources/handouts on COWS and began to set up instructions for COWS users.
- Fall 2006 Training of returning and new consultants in online practices continues, and we continue to post and finalize resources for COWS on Blackboard. I will meet with Professor Beth Dodd this semester to discuss the online courses for the spring. Likewise, I will meet with Karen Adsit to discuss how best to enroll students in online courses into the COWS Blackboard.
- Spring 2007 We will pilot COWS for select online courses that require writing.

#### **EVALUATION AND SUCCESS:**

Clearly the project is progressing well (given initial delays in funding and the fact that my former project partner had to withdraw from the project, which delayed some production this past spring and summer) with the successful purchase of the consulting station, computer, and training materials, as well as the continued training of COWS staff. The pilot project in Spring 2007 will be the best measure. Writing Center scholarship indicates that online consulting projects often take several semesters to work out glitches.

#### **BUDGET:**

\$1,421.00	To fund adjunct salary to cover the course release for Dr. James Inman
\$5,745.64	To pay for training/workshops for online consulting staff
\$685.00	To pay for desk and hutch for dedicated consulting station
\$314.36	Unused and returned (file cabinet purchased from Writing Center budget and desk/hutch were on sale and less expensive than originally anticipated)

#### **OTHER FUNDS:**

\$2,745.00	Summer Faculty Research Grant to purchase computer, scanner, and data storage materials.
\$448.00	Library Enhancement Grant to purchase Online Writing Consultant Scholarship.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Thanks to the committee for funding this project. If the committee would like, I'd be happy to provide a follow up report at the end of Spring 2007. Please feel free to contact me at ext.2153 or via email if I can provide further information.