3 Composing a Proposal for a Professional / Technical Writing Program

W. Gary Griswold

The pages that follow describe the development of a grant proposal I wrote to obtain funding from an external private funding source. In the grant I proposed to research the programmatic options, student interest, and departmental/administrative support available for implementing a master's degree in professional and technical writing (PTW) at my university.

The lessons learned and offered here are many, but can be distilled thus: to put forward any type of proposal to develop (or as is the case here, to *investigate developing*) an academic endeavor as potentially complex as a graduate-level PTW program takes institutional savvy, administrative experience, and perseverance.

And even these can sometimes not be enough.

THE BEGINNING

It was just prior to my first semester as an assistant professor of English that, at a luncheon for new faculty, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts mentioned to me that she had heard about a call for proposals that might be of interest. She knew of my experience teaching professional and technical writing, and this grant program provided start-up funds to work on establishing a master's degree in non-traditional fields.

If it sounds strange that a college dean would be chatting with a brand new faculty member about initiating an MA, it is important to mention that I was not really all that new. I had taught here at CSU (California State University, Long Beach), and run various English Department programs, including the writing center, for more than a decade, during which my contractual status had been short-term, temporary, or less-than-permanent; choose your favorite terminology. The previous semester I had been successful in my application for a tenure-track position, and I now found myself attending the same welcome and

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orientation meetings as new hires who had recently arrived from places like New Mexico, Arizona, and New York.

However, since I had been teaching at the campus for years and much of that within the technical writing certificate program we already had, I was no stranger to the idea of setting up a full PTW MA (or "PMA"). Over the years, the concept had been examined and discussed in various contexts, including meetings with the certificate program's advisory board, faculty teaching the classes, and various administrators. Ultimately, while most agreed that such a new program would be worthwhile, somehow no one had championed the cause, and it sat on a backburner for someday.

Certainly the grant award would give new life to this PMA concept, pushing it to happen sooner rather than later. However, it is likely that eventually we would have gotten around to doing much of what ended up in the proposal. I stress this point because it's relevant to a maxim a mentor of mine once told me: try not ever write a proposal for something you are not already doing, or at the very least, plan to do in the future.

Why? Well for one, (and here I speak mainly from my perspective as a faculty member in the CSU) you probably have a teaching and research load to keep you busy; anything else taken on should dovetail in some way for activities already underway. In addition, if you go about writing the proposal as I suggest here and consult widely with colleagues and administrators about it, you will likely get them excited about your idea. As a result, if it is not funded, you may well be encouraged to go ahead with your plan. It makes sense, then, to propose something that is doable within your regular workload, since your institution may or may not provide the same level of fiscal support asked of the external funding source. However, even if you propose something that seems like it will fit into present plans and work, the necessary tasks can well spiral out of control.

But I didn't ponder this very much prior to diving into this project; I just asked the Dean to forward me the grant information.

THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

I tell my students that going after a grant is essentially detective work: the proposal writer, like a sleuth, has to look for clues. Rather than forensic evidence, though, the grant writer's job is to examine information concerning the values, preferences, interests, and taboos as expressed by the granting agency. Based on these clues, the grant writing gumshoe must consider whether or not the potential project is enough of a match (or can be made into a match) to the

granting agency's agenda to warrant the necessary work needed to develop a good proposal document.

Therefore my first task was to read through the granting agency's Request for Proposals (the "RFP," as grant writers call it, the complete text of which is provided in Appendix A). The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), the organization that had issued the RFP, had carried out some research on master's degrees for the Ford Foundation. CGS was now interested in receiving proposals for "planning grants," in which institutions would be given funding to support what were essentially feasibility studies, the purpose of which were to determine if student interest, employment demand, and institutional support existed for a "professional master's degree" in a given area of the humanities or social sciences. CGS hoped to hear about possible master's degree programs that "serve specific employment needs of business, industry, government, and non-profit sectors" (See Appendix A). They were particularly interested to fund grants describing activities that would include consultation with prospective students and area employers, as well as provide evidence (via letters from campus administrators at the department, college, and university levels) of institutional support for the plan.

All this had to be completed in a week and five pages.

Before doing anything else, I followed what I stress in my upper-division proposal writing seminar: I got on the phone. When most folks think of going after funding of some kind, they usually jump the gun and, after reading the RFP, devote a lot of time to writing. However, as is often taught in many a first-year composition course, a significant investment in what a writer does before beginning a draft will help ensure a better product. This guideline applies even more so in "real world" proposal writing, where it is possible to devote a week or more to writing and administrative scrambling only to find out that the proposal does not quite fit the funding agency's agenda.

So I called the director of this grant program at CGS to discuss my ideas and asked if my reading of their priorities was accurate. He, in turn, confirmed that I had a solid take concerning their RFP, but he also provided additional insight as well as motivation: CSG was particularly interested in programs that would result in master's degrees that were a professional end to themselves and not stepping stones to PhD programs or work inside academia. Also, though it was alluded to in the RFP, he confirmed that successful planning grant recipients would be invited to submit proposals for implementation grants, which would involve larger sums provided by the Ford Foundation, which was also providing the funding for these initial planning grants. He said a proposal relevant to a master's degree in technical and professional writing sounded very promising.

So at this point I had two very important "pre-writing" activities to engage in: garnering the necessary departmental "buy-in" for the idea (since I could not accomplish it on my own) and getting letters of support from administration. Also, I had this nagging but hazy feeling that I had probably better get going on the campus approval process as soon as possible.

SHOPPING THE IDEA

"It's a grant for a feasibility study. It's to see if we have student interest, faculty support, and the resources to develop an MA specifically in professional and technical writing."

"Ah."

"I've already seen a great deal of interest from many of our grad students. I suspect there's a considerable amount who don't want to be teachers or go onto PhD programs. They want to use their writing skills to get a job after the MA."

"Yes, well. That sounds great. I'm glad you're taking the lead on this. Maybe it will help get us other grants. Hey, have you considered designing a profit-making extension program? It could help us support our main MA."

Such was the reaction I got from one of the folks whose approval would probably be necessary to move beyond the feasibility study phase, should it ever come to that. I thought it best to let these people know about this "seed money" grant I was working on so that later on they would feel they had been consulted. So I had various informal chats with my fellow composition specialists.

What really surprised me is not that I was met with hostile stares, but rather *blank ones:* a couple of key players had a hard time seeing a PTW program as a legitimate—or even promising—segment of rhetoric and composition.

In "The Rise of Technical Writing Instruction in the America," Robert J. Connors concludes with a rather rosy view of the picture of the future of PTW programs, stating that "prospects have never been brighter," and that "it now seems likely that technical communication will be an acceptable field of study for English graduate degrees in many schools by the end of the decade" (96).

Well, twenty years later, at least in our department, that did not quite seem to be the case, but no matter: as the director of a writing center for over twelve years, I'd had a lot of experience explaining something outside the traditional academic scope to my colleagues. And so long as they did not seem eager to put up barriers, it seemed safe to proceed. However, I still needed to give a heads up to what I was doing to another member of our department.

As already mentioned briefly, our department already had a modest technical writing certificate program. For many years it had done well in serving students who wanted a small add-on to a traditional MA or BA in English. But for just as many years, various faculty who taught in the program as well as members of the program's advisory council had batted around the idea of having a full master's degree devoted to technical/professional communication. We suspected that student interest would be very high for such a program.

The problem was that no one seemed eager to take on the administrative nightmare that shepherding a new MA through the bureaucracy of the California State University system was said to entail. The director of the certificate program, a senior member of the department who had kept the program viable through the last decade's sundry fiscal crises, had often estimated that it would take at least five years to get a new MA degree approved. He certainly knew what he was talking about, but I also suspected that since he was nearing retirement, he did not want to initiate a new program that more junior faculty would have to deal with long after he was gone. This was also why, when I discussed the grant to him, he pretty much supported what I was doing, albeit with a knowing gleam in his eye. Since the grant was essentially to fund a "feasibility study," why shouldn't I take a look at the possibilities?

LETTERS, WE GET LETTERS

Assuming you are on good terms with your department chair and college dean (I was and thankfully still am), getting letters of support from them is fairly easy. However, obtaining such missives from provosts and presidents is another matter. Though they be wonderfully supportive, the problem remains that they often do not have any idea about your proposed program and probably do not have the time (especially when all you've got is a week) to sit down with you and discuss it.

Here's my method: First, I will usually find out who is the gatekeeper (or as a Hollywood celebrity's aide is dubbed, the "handler") for that administrator. This person is usually an "administrative assistant," though that title is not by any means universal. Next, after initially contacting the handler and determining that the administrator is willing to write a letter, I ask which the administrator would prefer: I can go ahead and draft the letter and send it to him/her to finalize, or I can send along information concerning the grant and then the administrator—or as is more likely, the administrative assistant—can write it.

All the while I am hoping that they choose the first option, since I do not really want the timely submission of my proposal resting on the hope that they will actually have the letter ready by the deadline. And I already have written the letter so it's immediately ready to email if and when they assent to the first option.

Last, there is the matter of (politely) making sure that the assistant and the administrator truly understand the time frame I'm working under. This is also a good opportunity to ask the handler to check the administrator's calendar to confirm that he or she will not be going out of town any time soon. I also emphasize I would love to stop by the administrator's office to pick up the letter as soon as it's done (and thereby not having to risk the vagaries of the campus mail system).

Thus, I am always ready to do a lot of walking the week the proposal is due and to grin and bear it after arriving and being told the letter is not quite ready.

CAMPUS CLEARANCE: THE PRODUCT GOES NOWHERE WITHOUT THIS PROCESS

Once again, the lesson to be learned is that having a great idea, the ability (other than funding) to carry it out, and the skill to write an effective proposal are not enough, especially if the deadline looms. If I had not been willing to literally walk the campus to hand-carry and personally pick up the various documentation necessary to the grant, the deadline would have been missed, even if I had twice the time.

A simple list of the non-writing tasks carried out relative to institutional clearance of my proposal will help illustrate:

1) Show the proposal to the College of Liberal Arts Development Officer and get her feedback.
2) At the urging of my Dean, make contact with the Director of Sponsored Projects to let her know the rather compact time frame I was working on so that I might get a quick lesson on the clearance process.
3) File a "Notice of Intent to Submit Proposal for External Funding." Make various phone calls to clarify how to do so.
4) Go to the Sponsored Projects Office to set up an "internal budget plan."
5) Make several phone calls to CGS and establish whether or not certain budget items would be allowed under the terms of the grant.

6) Provide a copy of the proposal text to various representatives of the Sponsored Project Office.
7) Initiate an Internal Clearance Form and confirm that it was making the rounds for the required approvals.
8) Meet in person with the Director of Research Compliance to make sure that my proposal did not have to be further examined by the Institutional Research Board.
9) Hand deliver the final draft of the proposal to the Director of Sponsored Research so that her assistant could mail it out (with a cover letter from their office) by the deadline.

Certainly all individuals involved did everything possible to make the process flow smoothly. However, a valuable lesson remains: with all the clearance steps required these days, a proposal writer *must* be willing to take a hands-on approach (or be fortunate enough to have a team of GAs or TAs to do so), or he or she may well endanger a great idea from being funded simply by missing a deadline. And even more important is the fact that the next time you need such clearance you do not want to be remembered as the person who made everybody scramble at the last minute.

Before moving on to examine the actual proposal, there are two tasks that were briefly listed above that deserve a bit more attention. The first is the somewhat cryptic (at least to first-time seekers of external funding) mention of an "internal budget." Very likely the money a proposal writer seeks will not in its entirety be applied to the proposed activities he/she seeks to fund; the institution must also cover its own costs. At my institution, all external monies awarded must be managed through an account at our Foundation Office. For every monetary transaction made, the Foundation Office charges a percentage to cover their costs for maintaining the account. Usually this "take" is only a modest amount of the total funding, but the point here is that when writing a proposal for external funding, it's usually wise to consider your budget page to be tentative until you have meet with your institution's folks responsible for overseeing external funding.

Of even more significance to anyone writing a similar proposal to garner funds for developing a program is what I breezily mentioned in item number eight above: getting your proposal cleared by your college or university's research compliance body.

A review of this kind is standard fare in the physical, applied, and social sciences, where faculty routinely go after hefty private dollars to fund research that in some way affects humans and/or animals in its investigation. However, for

anyone whose primary academic activity is in the liberal arts/humanities, especially English, where many PTW programs reside, this whole research clearance concept may well be perplexing. Traditionally, "research" in our areas means, for the most part, examining artifacts (primary and secondary texts, etc.). Though we might assert these works "live and breathe," and some of the creators may still be alive, we are not doing anything physically invasive by writing about another's work.

It is when the proposal writer indicates that he or she will be sallying forth to talk, chat, interview, question, survey, or otherwise interact with actual people (either face-to-face or by other means) that we stray into the realm of using "human subjects," and at that point research clearance becomes an issue. I indeed proposed to interact with great many students, employers, and technical writing practitioners.

What saved me from having to seek formal approval and potentially months of delay (and thus missing the deadline) was the fact that what I was going to do was programmatic in nature. Here is a point where "administration" has positive connotations for the lone faculty member: since I was mainly going to consult with various interested people concerning the potential demand and interest in a PTW master's degree and use the resulting information for programmatic development (i.e., not publish it) I was in the clear. Such activity is considered within the scope of regular administrative duties for department chairs, program directors, and assistant professors looking to initiate new master's degrees.

WRITING THE PROPOSAL: SAYING WHAT YOU'LL DO

I do not intend to take you though each moment of my writing the week or so when I was actually drafting the proposal; going into what section I wrote first, how many drafts it took, etc. would not really be helpful here. However, I do think it would be useful to go through the sections of the proposal and discuss my rationale for exactly what I included. My main rationale for including each section, of course, was primarily that the RFP stipulated them in one form or another.

I started off the text of the proposal with a rhetorical device I encourage students to use in their professional documents: a concise purpose statement that informs the reader exactly what the document is all about. Then, the first paragraph of the "Rationale" section begins with a discussion of what I saw as the connection between the master's degree and the area employers. Here the proposal also stresses the importance of communication to the various enter-

prises mentioned in the RFP (business, industry, government, and non-profit sectors) while also briefly providing a definition of technical and professional writing and explaining its relevance to the Long Beach area in particular and the global marketplace in general.

Audience analysis, that concept we all come back to again and again with our students, is what was behind placing this information in such a prominent position; the RFP had stated that CGS was interested in funding programs that showed potential for meeting "local or regional workforce needs" (See Appendix A). Therefore, I wanted to establish here the employment and demographic diversity of the Long Beach area as I conveyed exactly what technical and professional writing was. In my experience, and the experience related to me by the practicing writers from the local chapters of the National Society for Technical Communication, most people, even those in academia (and even English Departments), have a very narrow view of what "technical/professional" writing entails.

In the next two paragraphs, the proposal begins to fully outline the "problem": few opportunities exist in California for the study of technical and professional writing, especially at an advanced level. Here some modest evidence is presented to suggest that such a demand exists generally, though specifically assessing the demand/interest more locally will be a part of the grant activities.

The last paragraph in the "Rationale" section overviews the problem that this proposal is intended to begin a process in solving. The intent here is to briefly demonstrate the kind of program that we would be looking to build.

The next section, "Relevant Institutional Background," was one that some campus colleagues and development experts I consulted with thought I might want to greatly shorten or leave out altogether since the proposal did not specifically call for it. Nonetheless, I still thought it was extremely important to include, though it did take away some space for other sections. Though some quick research on the CGS website indicated that their Board of Directors consisted of folks (mostly deans and provosts) who had extensive experience in higher education, I thought it best to provide some background on the CSU for three reasons: 1) even those experienced in higher education do not always know the particulars of other states' systems, 2) while the CGS Board consisted of people familiar with various higher education systems, the representatives of funding organizations they acknowledge in their literature, who I supposed would likely examine at least some of the proposals, would not be familiar with the CSU, 3) the RFP expressed interest in providing funding to institutions with "a track record of admitting students to master's degree programs . . . rather than offering master's degrees only to students admitted to doctoral programs, but who do not complete the doctoral degree" (See Ap-

pendix A). I dang well wanted to be sure that they knew that this very much characterized CSU Long Beach.

The next section, "Proposed Plan of Action," as its name implies, outlined what I said we would do with the funding if awarded. Using the exact wording in the proposal, these are listed below:

1) Gather quantitative and qualitative data regarding student interest and perceptions for a master's degree in technical and professional writing.
2) Consult with Employers and Current Professionals.
3) Fully assess the feasibility and options of establishing the master's degree program.
4) Draft an action plan for implementing the master's degree program in technical and professional writing.

There is nothing particularly innovative about the action areas listed here; they are appropriate steps for assessing the feasibility of any academic program, and all are in line with what the RFP outlined as fundable activities.

HOW THINGS STAND

And funded they were: the proposal was submitted on time, and a few months later I learned that CGS had awarded us the grant. For a good part of a semester and much of the summer break, I have been carrying out what was promised in the proposal: wide consultation with students, faculty, technical writing practitioners, and employers in order to establish the need for the MA and begin considering the shape it might take. For me, as a "new" faculty member, I have been able to make invaluable contacts both on our campus and in the surrounding business community and have been amazed at how all sorts of folks will pay attention when I mention that our project is "supported by funds from the Ford Foundation." I also now have a thorough understanding of the campus clearance process for faculty going after external funding.

Which is a good thing, since the process is about to start all over again. CGS has invited us to submit an implementation proposal: a report of the grant's activities thus far as well as a detailed description of how we would like to set up the program. In fact, as soon as I complete the manuscript of this very article and email it to the editors of this volume, I plan to jump upon drafting that proposal and initiating the clearance and support-letter gathering processes. I am glad to say that I have allowed a bit more time to finish this one; the deadline is once

month hence, but, of course, the proposal is lengthier and the required letters of support both more numerous and specific.

The only glitch is that CGS has yet to receive final confirmation from the Ford Foundation that it will provide the considerably larger funding for the implementation grants. CGS has nonetheless encouraged us to submit these proposals for follow-up grants.

AN UPDATE

It has been just about a year since I completed the terms of the planning grant. As outlined in the proposal, I held meetings with local PTW practitioners as well as those who employ them. I also conducted a survey of current English majors at CSULB and orchestrated a focus group discussion of several students enrolled in our upper-division PTW courses. In brief, these meetings established that there did indeed exist a great deal of interest in this program.

As another aspect of the grant, I consulted far and wide on our campus concerning what it would take to set up a new PTW master's degree in our department. What I discovered was quite close to what the director of our certificate program had told me: it would take around five or six years at the very least to get approval from the required department, college, university, CSU system, and California bureaucracies, and that did not include developing the curriculum.

Nonetheless, I did discover a much more expedient way to essentially accomplish the same thing: we could develop an area of emphasis within our current MA. We already had ten such emphases, ranging from medieval literature to rhetoric and composition. The only thing was that just as with all those other emphases, the actual degree would say "Master of Arts in English" with no mention of the particular concentration. However, I and other faculty from the department didn't think that would be too great an impediment since it had never dissuaded students from enrolling in the others.

So, with input from a couple of interested colleagues, I wrote up a rationale describing the need and interest in and for the new MA emphasis and a description of its curriculum. This included courses that we already offered with a few more that would be developed (and that I and the others had wanted to put together for quite some time). Ultimately, the document I developed became the proposal for an "implementation grant" that CGS had invited us to submit, whereupon I spiraled back into the previously described support-letter-gathering and clearance-obtaining maelstrom.

Unfortunately, we were not awarded an implementation grant. My follow-up inquiries confirmed what I suspected were the reasons: our proposal was not a bad one, but competition was extremely fierce for less funding than had been expected. As a result, very few institutions received the second level of grant funding.

But that wasn't quite the end of the PTW master's degree concept. I eventually had to report to my Dean that we didn't get implementation funding, but she was still enthusiastic and encouraged me (as did several other senior faculty) to pursue the idea. It was also hinted that on-campus funding might be available to provide some support. At any case I was congratulated for what I had accomplished so far.

Excited, I shared this information with the English Department Chair. She also congratulated me on what I had done and urged me not to fret about not getting the second proposal. However, she surprised me by expressing a strong disinclination that I continue with the project. Below are the points she raised.

At our institution at least, it seemed that getting a grant proposal funded and carrying out its terms is an activity that falls into an indeterminate grey area for the purposes of retention, tenure, and promotion, the trinity of work that no assistant professor can afford to ignore. Is writing a funded proposal equal to a publication? To publication in a juried journal? Or is it just service? In the case of someone like me, who teaches upper-division seminars devoted to things like proposal writing, does it count as teaching development? Regardless of the category writing a successful grant proposal falls into, and using the parlance of my institution, another important question was did such work meet "essential" or merely "enhancing."

The written policies offered little clarity. While the Retention, Tenure, and Promotion policy documents of the College of Liberal Arts hinted that funded proposals could be considered "essential" items of scholarly research, our department policies pretty clearly categorize them as "enhancing" (i.e., "lesser"). Though I had done well in my three-year retention review, it was clear that there would be some doubt as to whether all this grant seeking was to count for much in another couple of years when I was up for tenure and promotion.

My Chair, rightly so, was concerned that continuing with the PTW master's degree would get in the way of my publishing scholarly work. The former endeavor was something of a crapshoot concerning how it would contribute to my six-year review; the latter was certain to be seen at "essential." As a result then, of its nebulous scholarly status, I was strongly advised to shelve the PTW master's idea for the time being. To return to the detective metaphor raised at the outset of this article, I was taken off the case.

The proposal outlining the option in professional and technical writing for our current master's program remains on my office computer and archived on my back-up flash-drive. I've shown a printed copy to a few of my newly tenured colleagues and halfheartedly suggested they begin shepherding it through our department and college curriculum process—lest the momentum gained for the idea is lost during the next three years.

So far, no one has taken up the offer.

APPENDIX A: THE ORIGINAL RFP

Council of Graduate Schools
Professional Master's Program in the Social Sciences and Humanities
Request for Proposal
July 28, 2003

The Council of Graduate Schools [CSG] invites proposals for planning grants to support the needs assessment and development of professional master's degree programs in the social science and humanities fields (PSSHM). Professional master's degree programs prepare graduates for non-academic employment that serves local or regional workforce needs rather than for doctoral study.

For the past two years, CGS has supported the development of professional master's programs in science and mathematics fields (see www.sciencemasters.com). With support from the Ford Foundation, CGS recently conducted a survey of master's education in the social sciences that generated interest among social science and humanities disciplinary societies for a collaborative research and demonstration project that assesses the need for and promising models of professional master's programs. The CGS/Ford program will provide grants to CGS members to participate in this initiative.

Eligibility
All CGS member institutions that meet the following criteria are eligible to participate in this program:

- The institution must have a track record of admitting students to master's degree programs in the general disciplines specified for the project, rather than offering master's degrees only to students admitted to doctoral programs, but who do not complete the doctoral degree.
- The institution and participating departments must have adopted strategic goals that are consistent with developing PSSHM programs that respond to non-academic employment needs. Letters of endorsement from department chairs and administrative officials (including the graduate dean and chief academic officer)

can be appended as evidence of commitment of faculty effort and institutional resources to the proposed PSSHM planning grant process.

Summary and Scope

The CGS/Ford project will provide grants to a significant number of member universities to participate in the collaborative research and demonstration project on professional master's education. The core of the project is the development of models of professional master's programs that serve specific employment needs of business, industry, government, and non-profit sectors. The models will provide additional insight into the trajectories of master's education in relation to societal needs. We are hopeful that the results of this PSSHM planning/development project will provide a compelling basis for a second series of grants to implement some of the proposed PSSHM programs.

CGS will make a maximum of 60 PSSHM planning grants of up to $6,000 across a broad range of social science and humanities disciplines in universities reflecting the variety of CGS member institutions: private and public; minority and majority serving; research/doctoral and master's focused. This coverage will demonstrate most effectively the broad applicability of the concept of professional master's education and provide sufficient numbers of models to attract the attention of colleagues and peers and to serve as templates for replication of the programs in other departments and institutions.

Activities to be undertaken in the assessment and program planning process

The grants will provide support for activities such as:

- Contacting prospective non-academic employers and engaging them in a discussion with departmental faculty and institutional officers concerning the skills and backgrounds they expect of new employees and realistic projections of workforce needs for PSSHM graduates.
- Establishing an external board to advise on curricular issues, offer information, serve as external mentors to PSSHM students, and sponsor internships for students in PSSHM programs.
- Conducting information sessions/focus groups/surveys among likely pools of prospective PSSHM students in order to determine interest and to project enrollments.
- Assessing institutional and departmental commitments to and capabilities of developing PSSHM programs, either by establishing new degree programs or by revising existing master's degree programs and incorporating professional components.
- Developing a proposal for implementing one or more model PSSHM programs, provided employer, student, faculty, and institutional support are sufficiently strong. The proposal will include a PSSHM curriculum with appropriate dis-

ciplinary core strength, components that develop high-level communications and professional skills, and employer commitments for internship experiences. A business plan will be required that includes projection of tuition appropriate for the applicant pools, contributions for program funding from employers and the institution, internship stipends/salaries, and other revenue sources that allow the program to be developed and sustained at a cost acceptable to the institution.

Application materials for an assessment and planning grant
Institutions are encouraged to submit proposals for as many as three PSSHM assessment and planning grants per institution. The body of the proposals for each program area should not exceed five pages[2].

The proposals must:

- Demonstrate an interest in and commitment to master's education by faculty and the institution, including appropriate credit for faculty through the university review and reward system
- Propose strategies to seek the participation of minorities and other underrepresented groups
- Commit appropriate matching funds and effort to accomplish the goals of the planning grant: in most cases we anticipate these goals would include a proposal to create a PSSHM program
- Indicate an interest in establishing PSSHM programs in two or more departments
- List activities to be used to determine needs, interest, and institutional capacity for developing PSSHM programs

Appended material as required to:

- Document that faculty from departments that would be most likely to develop PSSHM proposals are committed to the project (department letters that express interest in and commit faculty efforts to the project are particularly relevant.)
- Assure that the activities and intent of the grant are consistent with and complementary to the institutional mission and strategic plans (a letter of endorsement by the chief academic officer or president would be particularly useful.)
- Provide evidence of endorsement by the graduate school (a letter from the graduate dean or other person responsible for graduate education at the institution.)

Project time-line
July 2003: CGS sends RFP to member institutions and posts on CGS website
October 15, 2003: Deadline for response to RFP for CGS/Ford PSSHM planning grant

Oct.-Nov. 2003: Evaluation of proposals in response to RFP
November 2003: CGS/Ford PSSHM grants awarded to graduate deans
December 2003: CGS Annual meeting: plenary session on professional master's education and meeting/progress reports for deans, directors of CGS/Ford PSSHM projects
May 2004: Interim reports due from PSSHM planning project directors/graduate deans
July 2004: Meeting of PSSHM deans and directors at CGS Summer Workshop
September 2004: Final reports due for CGS/Ford PSSHM planning grants. Proposals for implementing proposed PSSHM programs due

Responses to this RFP in the form of proposals for a CGS/Ford PSSHM Planning Grant may be sent via e-mail (preferred) or by U.S. mail (with an e-mail notice that proposal is being sent).

Send completed applications to For more information or questions, contact
Council of Graduate Schools Les Sims or Peter Syverson
Professional Master's Degrees lsims@cgs.nche.edu or psyverson@cgs.nche.edu
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 430 Phone: (202) 223-3791
Washington DC 20036 FAX: (202) 331-7157
www.cgsnet.org

[1] Professional Master's Programs in the Social Sciences: Current Status and Future Possibilities, Report to the Ford Foundation. The Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, DC 2003. Available upon request.
[2] The Professional Science Master's startup checklist (http://www.sciencemasters.com/startup_checklist.html) provides a set of topics that could be useful in developing a PSSHM proposal.

APPENDIX B: THE PROPOSAL

A Professional Master's Degree Program in Technical/Professional Writing: A Planning Grant Proposal

Prepared for:
The Council of Graduate Schools
Professional Master's Program in the Social Sciences and Humanities
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Purpose Statement
This proposal outlines a four-part process to enable faculty at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) to develop an implementation plan for a Professional/Technical Writing program leading to a Master of Arts degree.

Rationale
The city of Long Beach, California, its surrounding communities, and the greater Southern California area abound with corporations, government agencies, and non-profit organizations requiring the advanced skills of specialized communicators. Simply stated, prose communication is a staple of success; no organization in this region can thrive and grow without professional writers. In all forms of print and electronic media, the technical and professional writer in Southern California is the conduit to a wide variety of internal and external audiences with diverse linguistic, cultural, and demographic profiles. The scope of this diversity becomes evident with the realization that over 40 different languages and dialects are spoken in the city of Long Beach (LBUSD, 2003).

However, few opportunities exist in California for graduate-level study in the area of technical and professional writing. The Society for Technical Communication's national Academic Programs Database lists only 15 universities in California offering **any** coursework in technical and professional communication. Only five of those are within a 50 mile radius of the Long Beach area, and all of these are certificate and/or extension programs. In fact, there exists no master's degree program whatsoever in California focusing specifically on technical and professional writing (STC, 2003).

Nonetheless, the websites of the Los Angeles and Orange County chapters of the Society of Technical Communication list more than 50 current job announcements in the area (LASTC, 2003; OCSTC, 2003), and the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* indicates that the employment rate of such positions "is expected to increase faster than average" (U.S. Department of Labor, 2003). *Money* magazine has suggested that work as a communicator in scientific, technical, medical, and other specialized areas is one of the top twenty best careers in the nation (Gilbert, 1994).

A professional master's degree program in technical and professional writing will provide students the opportunity for in-depth study of the advanced rhetorical and compositional theories and practices necessary for them to be leaders in designing, composing, and editing the prose and visual media so critical to success in nearly every industrial, scientific, governmental, technical, corporate, institutional, and philanthropic endeavor. This same master's degree would offer academic study and training concerning communicating with multicultural and multilingual audiences. In addition, completion of

such a program would confer upon students the appropriate advanced credential often required by employers for career advancement.

Relevant Institutional Background

The California State University (CSU) system consists of 23 campuses offering bachelor's and master's degrees in more than 1,600 programs in approximately 240 subjects. (CSU, 2002). CSULB is the largest campus in the California State University system and the second largest institution of higher education in the state.

Currently, the CSULB Department of English offers a Technical and Professional Writing (TPW) Certificate Program. Earned in conjunction with a baccalaureate or master's degree (usually, but not always in English or related areas), the program requires 24 units of coursework. A capstone portfolio project and internship experience are also required. A small Advisory Council, consisting of various area practitioners (in both freelance and in full-time positions), assists faculty in the overall direction of the program. As valuable and established as the TPW Certificate Program is, in its current form it cannot offer the scope and contemporary focus that a full master's degree program would provide.

The vision set for here, then, is to allow our faculty to build upon the foundation of the current TPW Program at CSULB, so that it may develop into the leading technical and professional writing graduate program it has the potential to be.

Proposed Plan of Action

The following four action areas are proposed as most critical in developing a sound academic and financial plan for a master's degree in technical and professional writing at CSULB. Under each are listed the proposed activities to be carried out with the support of this planning grant.

1) Gather quantitative and qualitative data regarding student interest and perceptions for a master's degree in technical and professional writing: Methods to be used include written surveys as well as focus groups. Current graduate students as well as graduating baccalaureate students will be included in these efforts. Expertise from those faculty and staff involved in the Department of Communication's Hauth Center for Communication Skills can be drawn upon for establishing and conducting the focus group interviews.

2) Consult with Employers and Current Professionals: Area employers as well as practicing technical communicators will be consulted in a needs assessment process concerning the advanced skills and knowledge they see as important to include in such a master's degree. Special emphasis will be placed on involving, whenever possible, those practitioners and employers from minorities and other underrepresented groups. The TPW Certificate

Advisory Committee will be a valuable resource in this activity, which will likely result in a wider range of interested employers and practitioners participating in the advisory board established for the proposed master's degree program.

3) Fully assess the feasibility and options of establishing the master's degree program: An interdisciplinary and interdepartmental range of faculty, staff, and administrators will be consulted concerning the options available for establishing the master's degree.

Faculty, staff, and administrator expertise can be drawn upon from a number of departments and programs both within and external to the College of Liberal Arts: the Department of English's Composition Program, the Department of Communication Studies, the Department of Computer Science, the Department of Political Science, the Center for Language Minority Education and Research, the Hauth Center for Communication Skills, the Writer's Resource Lab, the College of Engineering, the Department of Journalism, the College of Business Administration, and the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

4) Draft an action plan for implementing the master's degree program in technical and professional writing. Led by the principal investigator, faculty and staff involved in the planning process will draft an action plan for the technical and professional writing master's program. Drawing upon the input gathered in the consultation process detailed above, this document will outline the most feasible program structure as well as estimates of costs and available funding.

Throughout the planning, faculty and staff involved with remain cognizant of the fiscal climate likely to continue for some time in California. Plans for having the program generate, whenever possible, its own revenue streams and strategic development plans will be examined along with traditional programmatic funding sources. In addition, throughout the planning process the integration of outreach to minority/underrepresented student populations will be a priority.

Course release time will be provided to the Project Director by the Department of English and the College of Liberal Arts to facilitate this planning grant. (A normal workload at this campus is four 3-unit courses per semester.) During the preparation of the action plan as well as any ensuing proposal development for funding and implementation, other faculty will participate as time and resources are available.

It is important to note that the Department of English has the expertise necessary to develop and carry forward the planning process here, as well as the implement the resultant master's degree program. In the last three years alone, three tenure-track faculty

have been hired with experience in general technical writing and rhetoric, visual literacy, new media, applied writing technologies, and scientific/technical editing. In addition, a core of five full-time lecturers regularly teach classes within the current TPW Certificate program. Among these eight faculty, six bring extensive marketplace experience in technical and professional writing.

Conclusion

CSULB is uniquely positioned to develop a viable professional master's program in technical and professional writing, one that can draw upon its broad array of institutional expertise and resources to provide students with a learning experience that is grounded in current theoretical and practical applications. It is hoped that once such a program is established, the planning process and the actual program may serve as models for other institutions to develop their own professional master's degree programs.

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Tentative Schedule

December 2003/January 2004:

Plan, organize; and design survey instruments and focus group sessions; attend CGS Annual meeting (Dec. 3-6), assemble core faculty team; hire GA assistance.

February/March 2004:

Administer surveys; conduct focus groups; consult with faculty, staff, and administration in other departments; develop employer and practitioner contacts.

April/May 2004:
Analyze survey response, focus group, and interview data; begin drafting of action plan; circulate action plan draft for institutional input.

June/July2004:
Prepare final draft of action plan; attend Summer Workshop (July 10-14).

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