

**An Online Primer in Grammar, Punctuation and Usage:
Hands-on, Skill Building in Flexible Learning Environments**

Submitted by:

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Program Significance

As part of its compact with COAFES, the Rhetoric Department is designing a series of hands-on, skills-oriented 2 credit courses to be offered during each three-week May Term. The courses will be divided into computer applications courses and skill building courses. These new courses will serve as a practical component to the undergraduate Scientific and Technical Communication major and as continuing education courses for professionals in business and industry. The first iteration of these courses will include Digital Photography using PhotoShop, Content Management using Framemaker, Speaking for Multi-cultural Audiences and a Primer in Grammar, Punctuation and Usage. The purpose of this TEL grant application is to find funding to assist us in developing the online component of the Primer in Grammar, Punctuation and Usage (Rhet 3720). This course will be used as a model for other hands-on, skills-oriented short courses in the major. It will also be used as a model for blended course with online components. We will also cooperate with Janel Crider, who is designing best practices templates, in designing this course.

We currently teach a required undergraduate course in Editing and Style in Technical Writing (Rhet 4561). Because of their poor preparation, 4561 students usually spend seven weeks out of a 15-week semester in grammar, punctuation and usage review. Even after that time, some students have not achieved the level of mastery needed to work as professional copyeditors. To solve this problem, we propose to offer an online Primer in Grammar, Punctuation and Usage that students must pass with at least 80% mastery to enroll in Rhet 4561. The Primer could also be taken by professionals as part of their continuing education. Diagnostic tests to determine which students will have to take the Primer will be administered in Rhet 1001 and Rhet 3562.

Courses Affected by TEL Grant Funds:

The course most directly affected by this project will be Rhet 4561 Editing and Style in Technical Writing. Students will come into 4561 with a demonstrated knowledge of grammar, punctuation and usage, so that the course can concentrate on higher level editing and document design issues. The proposed course will also positively impact the students' performance in their other writing courses. The course design will serve as a model for designing similar skills building components in other Rhetoric courses that could be more efficiently taught online.

Specific Activity:

The proposed online course will contain progressively more complex editing tutorials, from single sentence editing to contextual editing. The single sentence editing tutorials will concentrate on sentence elements. Students will then progress from sentence elements to grammar and punctuation rules. They will be expected to read the tutorials, review examples, complete exercises, and take quizzes in which they will have to identify and correct errors and cite the rule that governs the changes they are making. In the contextual editing part of the course, students will be taught the principles of contextual editing, complete exercises, and be tested on their ability to copyedit two- and three-page documents, again citing the rules for the changes they make. The P.I. will provide training to two other Rhetoric faculty and three graduate teaching assistants as part of the mentorship activities related to the sustainability of this project.

Learning outcomes from the project:

Students will learn the rules of grammar, punctuation and usage according to the Chicago Manual of Style. They will learn to use copyediting marks and will be able to complete tutorial exercises on single sentence editing and contextual editing with a minimum of 80% mastery. They will be able to cite the rules governing the copyediting changes they make.

Course designers will develop a series of online tutorials which test knowledge and skills development and provide enough drill and practice to help students achieve mastery of the material. We will also provide training to two other Rhetoric faculty and three graduate students in using online tutorials for delivering instruction. The online course shell will be part of Rhetoric's growing inventory of online tools for developing blended and online classes.

Evaluation Plan

The course will be evaluated in two ways. The students will achieve scores of 80% or higher in the quizzes before moving to the next tutorial. They will receive the answers and explanations of the sections they got wrong and be retested on the material until they pass each tutorial. The course plan involves mastery learning which is quantifiable and demonstrable. At the end of the course, students will retake the diagnostic test that they originally took in either Rhet 1001 or Rhet 3562 and be expected to pass it with a score of 80% or better. This provides a pre- and posttest to provide us with baseline data that enables us to measure student progress. The course materials, delivery efficacy, student satisfaction, and level of mastery of students will be evaluated by an external evaluator, Connie Tsenis from the Center for Teaching and Learning Services.

Timeline and Budget

Time	Tasks
April-May 2003	Develop diagnostic test and course materials through a face-face version of the class during May Term.
June 2003	Revise and update diagnostic test and course materials.
July-August 2003	Transfer course materials to courseware shell
September 2003	Pilot diagnostic test in Rhet 1001 and Rhet 3562. Advertise online course to be held in May 2004.
October 2003	Progress report on project activities.
May 2004	Pilot online course. Mentor another Rhet faculty member in teaching the course.
June 2004	Update online course. Final report on project activities.

Budget Item	Matching	TEL Grant
P.I. Salary	\$9559	
Grad Asst. Salary		\$6500
Program Assistant		\$2000
Evaluation Consultant		\$1000
Software	500	
DMC Consulting		\$ 500
Supplies	200	
Totals	\$10,259	\$10,000

Project Personnel:

Victoria Mikelonis, P.I., (20% time for 4 mo.; 5% time for 6 mo.) will lead efforts in designing and developing the diagnostic test and course tutorials; will design the course materials and test them in May 2003; Will lead efforts to redesign the course materials and put them into online format for May 2004; will consult with the DMC as needed; will monitor progress and write interim and final reports.

Graduate Teaching Assistant (25% time for 6 months) will assist in designing and developing the diagnostic test and course materials; will oversee the distribution and scoring of the diagnostic test in Fall 2003; will assist in designing the May 2003 course and teach the May 2004 online class; will assist in redesigning the course materials and put them into online format.

Program Assistant will convert all course materials into appropriate and integrate them into the course shell. External evaluator will evaluate the course materials, delivery efficacy, student satisfaction, and student progress. This evaluation will be mid-way through the course and after its completion.

Collegiate and Departmental Support

As Coordinator of the undergraduate S&TC program, I am working with the S&TC Committee to improve the hands-on and skills building components of our classes. This project will be the first in a series to build mastery learning components into undergraduate classes where students must show proficiency in skill development. This project meshes with the Departmental initiative to develop a series of May Term courses. It is part of our compact with the College and the College's priority on Exemplary Education.