March 29, 2011

Dear Members of the Student Success Committee:

I worked side by side with many of you at the Summer 2010 Think Tank to devise ways to increase student success in the classroom. While reading Ken Bain's compelling book *What The Best College Teachers Do*, I stumbled across a study done by Stanford researchers showing that student engagement increases when classes are built around a class project. Such a project would accomplish the following goals:

- Increase student motivation, participation, attendance, retention, and performance in English 21 & all classes
- Develop students' writing and research skills early in the composition sequence
- Produce writing/research sample students can use for future employment and/or transfer application essays
- Build bridges between 21 students and any faculty members they seek out for project advisement
- Enhance academic climate on campus by celebrating these academic achievements

I have since implemented this idea in my Spring 2011 English 21 class. My course syllabus is built around a written research project which will culminate in a project poster, to be presented to the college community on **May 17, 2011 from 12:30 – 3pm in President’s Lane/ “The Walk.”** There will be food, music [this will be free, if the college jazz band agrees] and prizes for the stand-out (first, second, and third place) posters as determined by a panel of faculty judges. It would be great if one or two members of the Student Success committee would agree to be judges.

Students have already completed Part I (out of 4 parts) of the written project and the lowest grade of all of them was a C! This is amazing news in a class such as English 21, in which often a C is the highest, not the lowest, grade. As of this letter's date, one of my students has already completed her entire written project and her poster, since she is so excited by the project! I will bring this poster, as well as several written samples, to your April 6 meeting.

Here are the costs that your committee can help to fund. I have indicated costs in order of priority, should you wish to give some but not all the money requested.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

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Imagine making the work of basic skills students the focus of campus attention!

Project Goals

- Increase student motivation, participation, attendance, retention, and performance in English 21 & all classes
- Develop students' writing and research skills early in the composition sequence
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Researchers at Stanford have shown that project-based curricula increase motivation, attendance, and performance of basic skills students in classes when they are welcomed as capable, rather than remedial, learners.

My English 21 syllabus folds grammar and writing content around a capstone project represented by a project poster. This project was written into the West Los Angeles College's Foundation Skills Comprehensive Plan (1.B., 1.I, 2.1.D, 2.2.D., and 3.2.C.)

Project Showcase Day

Tues. May 17, 12:30 - 3p

"The Walk" beside MSA and MSB

- Posters will be on display to the campus and community
- Food, music, etc.
- Panel of faculty judges will award prizes to the standout projects (let me know if you'd like to be a judge!)
- All classes invited to participate in future semesters
- Students are not to skip classes conflicting with the showcase; their posters still qualify for a prize.

OUR VISION
WEST: A gateway to success for every student

OUR MISSION
West Los Angeles College provides a transformative educational experience.

West fosters a diverse learning community dedicated to student success. Through quality instruction and supportive services, the College develops leaders who encourage excellence in others.

A West education enriches students with the knowledge and skills needed to earn certificates and degrees, to transfer, to build careers, and to pursue life-long learning.

OUR VALUES
Excellence
West envisions each student and employee striving for excellence in and out of classes, laboratories, libraries, studios, playing fields and offices.

Ethics
We hold ourselves and others to the highest standards in personal as well as intellectual responsibilities. This informs relationships among students, staff, faculty and administration.

Empowerment
At West, everyone—students, staff, faculty, administration—is empowered by high expectations, respect and acknowledgement in all pursuits, from single lessons to completed degrees, from daily encounters to formal policy deliberations.

Engagement
To be fully engaged-academically, locally and globally — is to embrace learning with passion, commitment and energy.

Student Project Topics Spring 2011

Football Scholarships
Spanish and Japanese: Similarities/Differences (2)
Careers in Math Education
The Death of the Newspaper
Origins of the English Language (2)
American Sign Language (2)
Universities (2)
History/Origin of Punctuation
Los Angeles (4)
Working for the CIA
Becoming a Firefighter
The Textbook Publication Industry
"The Language of Dance"

and many more!

(# indicates topic chosen by more than 1 student)

Questions/comments >> Holly Hofmann, baileyhh@wlac.edu, x4547