CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
AND
SOLANO COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

#91-0029
## 91-0029 --- FII --- SUMMARY

California Community Colleges  
Curriculum and Instructional Resources Division

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**Team Teaching of English Linked to Basic Content Courses**

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**PROJECT DIRECTOR**  
Nan Wishner, Instructor English

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**  
Kathy Rosengren, English Chair

**PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION**

An expansion of linked writing and content area classes was achieved through this project. Specifically English Composition classes were linked to U.S. History and Biology. Also linked and team-taught were English and Child Development classes. Additionally, an advanced Technical Writing class was linked with the first year nursing program.
Team Teaching of English Linked to Basic Content Area Courses

This project improves college composition at Solano College by linking English 1 with courses in academic and vocational disciplines. The project improves two linked classes that were first taught during 1989-90: College Composition linked to U.S. History and to Introduction to Biology. The project also creates two new linked classes, College Composition with Child Development and with first-year nursing.

Two main problems which create a need for linked writing and content area classes are (1) students express and exhibit difficulty applying reading and writing skills outside the English classroom, and (2) content area faculty lack time and expertise to address their students' writing problems.

We want to continue and expand linked writing and content area classes because the two courses piloted last year were so successful in producing high quality writing and research by students, a sense among students of the relevance of reading and writing skills to work outside English, enthusiasm from faculty learning from each other, and enthusiasm in students who appreciated the joint attention of two faculty members with clearly defined and integrated common goals.

Students who originally enter college underprepared in reading and writing are especially good candidates for the joint mentoring available in team-taught classes like those proposed because these students, though prepared as a result of developmental work, often feel insecure when they reach college-level classes. At Solano, 85% of entering students are underprepared in reading and 75% are underprepared in writing. In English 1 classes from 1988 to fall 1991, approximately 40% of students had taken developmental reading and writing prior to English 1 and would thus be likely to benefit from the project. In addition, 45% of Solano students are older, many with clear degree and vocational goals and strong motivation to apply writing skills directly to their degree and career interests.

In this project, 10 faculty will plan, revise, and teach four linked classes. Three pairs of classes will be team-taught. U.S. History-English 1 and Biology-English 1 will be revised into team-taught classes integrating reading and writing principles with content information. In addition, two faculty members will plan an integrated, team-taught curriculum for Child Development linked to English 1. The second new class will be advanced Technical Writing linked with the first-year nursing program. This class will be planned with close consultation.
between nursing and English instructors but not team-taught because the large number of hours involved in the nursing curriculum makes a different format preferable.

Materials from this project-readings, course outlines, assignments-will be available to other colleges and easily adaptable. Because all colleges have educationally disadvantaged and reentry students as well as the problem of knowledge "remaining closeted" in the classroom where it is taught rather than applied widely, the model will be broadly applicable.

The project's total budget is $20,999. Of that, the amount requested from the Fund for Instructional Improvement is $15,910, or 71%. Solano College (which has already supported with faculty development funds the planning of the first two linked classes) will support this project with $6,139 in direct and indirect costs. The majority of the money requested from the Fund will be used for faculty hourly pay.
Team Teaching of English Linked to Basic Content Area Courses

1. Specific Educational Program Being Addressed

Team Teaching of English Linked to Basic Content Area Courses
This project expands and improves college composition at Solano Community College by linking English 1 with courses in various academic and vocational disciplines. It improves two linked classes that were piloted during the 1989-90 school year-College Composition (English 1) with U.S. History and with Introduction to Biology-and it creates two new linked classes: English 1 with Child Development and with the first year of the nursing program.

The project addresses the California legislature’s concerns that "alternative instructional programs should be developed that reduce the barriers between school and work, link academic knowledge and learning outside the classroom, improve problem solving abilities, and place greater responsibility with the student in defining individual learning objectives and means" (California Education Code, sec. 84380, Appendix A).

The project addresses the following areas identified as eligible in the California Education Code Section 84381 (Appendix A):
  a. Nontraditional forms, content, and methods of instruction
  b. Programs for improving teaching abilities of faculty members
  c. Programs addressing special learning needs of educationally disadvantaged students
  d. Educational services for new clientele, including older, working adults
  e. Efforts to improve traditional instructional programs
  f. Programs for the improvement of the intellectual development of faculty and staff, specifically subsection 3, interdisciplinary programs involving local non-college institutions in the arts and sciences

The project meets the challenges of the Board of Governors’ 1990-91 Agenda in the area of transfer education, specifically increasing the numbers and successes of underrepresented students in transfer programs; and in the area of Educational Standards, specifically maintaining and improving the quality of instruction by promoting both teaching and learning excellence in the classroom and by improving retention of underrepresented students.
The project's objectives and the program, problems, and population affected by it are described below, as we explain how the project meets the criteria listed above.

Educational programs/services addressed by the project

This project addresses the college composition program, focusing on students' writing and reading skills and their application across the curriculum in content area courses.
2. Specific Problems Being Addressed

Description of the problem
Our proposal to develop and refine team-taught college composition classes linked to content area courses arises from concerns expressed by instructors in several disciplines at Solano College. English teachers express frustration that freshman composition students perceive writing and reading assignments as exercises without relevance to other course work or tasks outside school. Teachers in other fields complain that students who have had freshman English nonetheless seem unable to write coherent essays or test responses or to read textbooks independently. The lessons of English composition often seem to remain in the English classroom without application to students’ lives and other studies.

In addition, content area instructors, though they have participated in previous writing across the curriculum projects, feel they do not have sufficient time to work with students on writing problems, as well as problems with course content, nor do they have sufficient expertise to address any but the most dear-cut writing and reading problems.

Background to the current proposal

Instructors at Solano College began addressing this concern in the 1989-90 school year by linking sections of college composition to basic classes in history and biology. First, one section of English 1 (college composition) was linked to one section of History 17 (History of the United States); the same group of 30 students enrolled in both classes. Students read and wrote about history in their English class.

The intention of the linked classes was to give students a meaningful context for their writing (the study of history) and to offer them the support of an English class as they prepared writing assignments for history and learned to read and research independently. The instructors, Susan Messina (English) and Diane White (History), felt their linked classes were so successful that they repeated the experiment in Spring 1990.

Another pair of linked classes, English 1 with Biology 15 (Introduction to Biology) was also offered during Spring, 1990, taught by instructors Nan Wishner (English) and John Nogue (Biology). Planning for both pairs of combined classes was supported by the Solano College Faculty Development Mini-Grant Fund.

All four instructors and the overwhelming majority of students evaluated the linked classes as successful in helping students apply reading and writing skills to other disciplines. The instructors agreed that the vast majority of the linked assignments produced writing that was superior to what is ordinarily produced in any of the courses by themselves.

Instructors and students also felt that the linked classes could be improved by the continued presence of both instructors in both classes. With both instructors present in class, true team
teaching and integration of the subjects could take place, rather than a "scotch-taping" together of two separate classes. In addition, students would not have to feel put off by an English instructor whose limited expertise in history or biology prevented her from answering a question about the content of an essay or experiment, or by a content area instructor who felt unable to answer a question about reading or writing. The presence of both instructors in class would allow immediate answers to questions relating to either discipline or to the links between the two areas. The English and content area instructors did a lot of talking to each other about the exciting connections they discovered between their disciplines, but students did not get to hear or inquire about those discoveries because the discussions always took place during planning meetings outside of classes. Having both instructors present in class would allow students to see a connection between disciplines rather than being told about it.

The instructors in the linked classes chose to attend each other's class meetings several times, despite full teaching schedules. Ms. Messina and Ms. White were both present when paper assignments were given out, when students worked on papers in class, and when students went to the library to do research which amounted to about 1/3 of the class meetings. Their joint presence allowed what we hope can, as a result of this project, take place for the whole semester-students being able to see and ask about the connections between the two classes.

Ms. Wishner and Mr. Nogue were also both present for several field excursions when students learned scientific observation of wildlife and visited a salt marsh and a watershed management area. In addition, they were both present during planning of the students' research project and paper, during students' initial library research, and during more than half of the class's weekly three-hour lab meetings. Ms. Wishner and Mr. Nogue both felt the best writing came from the papers prepared after these joint class sessions, where students were able to ask questions about both the form and content of writing and research.

From these initial experimental classes came the perceived need for more thorough curriculum integration and for more substantive support for students which, in turn, led to this project proposal.

Rationale for team teaching and for expanding linked class offerings

As a result of their experiences, all four instructors and the students involved have concluded that while "scotch-taping" the classes together was a success, even greater improvement of traditional classroom instruction will come from truly linked and melded classes in which both instructors are present for both class periods during most of the semester.

In addition, additional English composition classes linked to other areas of the curriculum will increase the number of opportunities for students to learn college-level writing and reading and to apply what they learn to their major interest or career field. In particular, we would like to begin developing offerings that link writing classes with vocational fields in order to reduce the barriers between school and work. We would also like to expand offerings that link English to
academic areas, because we believe these classes increase the preparedness of our students when, as junior transfers, they face writing tasks in their major fields.

In this project we will revise the English-History and English-Biology linked classes and team-teach them in the fall semester, 1991, and we will add two more linked classes: English 1 with Child Development (Human Development 38) and technical writing with the first year of the nursing program. The project includes planning time for the instructors developing the two new linked classes we also expect the instructors who have already taught linked classes to give time for consultation with the instructors who are planning.
3. Population To Be Served

Populations served by the project
The specific populations include students in several categories. First, transfer students (roughly 14% of Solano students) will have the opportunity to link writing skills with studies in their field, and the chance to learn how the "generic" skills of English, such as library research, apply to their areas of interest, such as biological experimentation. Developing true college-level writing and reading skills is extremely important to the success of these students when they move into upper-division courses as transfer students.

Second, older reentry students (45% of Solano's student body) who most often come with clear educational and career objectives will have the opportunity to develop their writing skills in the context of their objectives.

Third, educationally disadvantaged students who have come to English 1 after taking developmental composition courses will have the extra attention and mentoring of two instructors to help them gain confidence and overcome learning problems. From 1988 to fall 1991, approximately 40% of English 1 students had previously taken developmental composition classes. Many students who require developmental classes before attempting English 1 fear a college-level class and/or feel out of place in it. We feel such students are best served by a team of two instructors who are jointly concerned for their students' welfare. As Lafauci and Richter report in Team Teaching at the College Level (New York: Pergamon Press, 1970), student learning problems come to light quickly when students' work is being scrutinized by more than one teacher, and students at many colleges feel as the Solano students did in the linked classes last year: in a team-taught class students feel doubly cared for.

In addition to serving the students, our project improves the teaching abilities of the instructors as they have an opportunity to learn on a daily basis from each other about teaching methods as well as fundamental concepts in fields outside their areas of expertise. The instructors who offered linked classes last year all testify that they found themselves using examples from their partners' disciplines in classes other than the linked ones. Ms. Wishner, whose English 1 class was linked with Biology, found herself using examples from biology in her Critical Thinking class; this brought a positive response from students in that class who were inspired to relate critical thinking precepts to what they knew about the scientific method, a natural link that was not apparent to the students until it was detailed for them.

In order to assure that students are aware of the linked classes we will offer, we also plan to meet with the Solano Counseling Department to familiarize counselors with the classes. Counselors are usually a student's first contact at the college and the primary force helping students plan schedules, so the counseling department needs to have awareness and understanding of the linked classes in order to recommend them to appropriate students.
4. Objectives

Proposal Objectives
The project’s main objectives are:

1. To improve traditional instruction by true team teaching, with an English and a content-area instructor present in almost all meetings of both classes, so that students understand the link between writing and reading skills and the content disciplines, and instructors are able to break down barriers between their disciplines.

2. To expand the offerings of linked classes to two more major departments of the college, increasing the range of options available to students with both academic and vocational goals.

In addition, the project is intended to enable counselors to be aware of the existence and advantages of the new linked classes so that counselors can accurately inform students of the option to take English 1 linked to another discipline and the advantages of doing so.

If the four classes in this project are successful, the college has made a commitment to offer the classes on a continuing basis and to allow teachers some scheduling flexibility, so team teaching will be possible. If teachers can offer linked classes without having to take on an overload, additional teachers will be willing to collaborate on joint courses, so we can expand the offerings to address the interests of students from many divisions at the college. We envision as a result of this project that linked English and content area classes can be offered each semester, and that students and counselors will come to see them as a reliable part of the schedule rather than "sometimes" offerings, taught only when the instructors have the time and energy to tackle many hours of gratis teaching in each other's classes without commensurate relief from other obligations.

In addition, we believe that as the courses continue, more and more students will feel as one English 1/Biology 15 student said, that the linked classes are "the best way to go." We feel the continued offering of these courses will be an important improvement in traditional instruction by breaking down traditional barriers between disciplines.
5. Workplan Narrative

[NO “WORKPLAN” ACCOMPANIES THIS DOCUMENT.]
6. Expected Outcomes

Expected Outcomes of project activities

Objective

In the proposed English-content area linked classes project, six members of the faculty, three from English and three from other disciplines, will team-teach English linked to content areas; also, the three-instructor team for first-year nursing students will work with an English instructor to plan and teach a technical writing course for nurses. In History, Biology, and Child Development, English instructors will present writing and reading skills in the context of the three content areas as content-area instructors incorporate writing and reading skills and methods. With both instructors present in both classes on most days, the curricula of the two disciplines will be integrated so that writing and reading become natural means of learning a discipline or career. The nursing students’ linked class will be a technical writing adjunct planned by nursing and English instructors who will coordinate the class throughout the semester.

Impact of the project

Students will learn more about using writing and reading skills in other areas of study and life than would be the case in traditional scheduling where English would be separate from all other work.

Faculty will learn more about the connections among their disciplines and will thus improve their teaching abilities. Linked course offerings will be doubled in number and the feasibility of true team teaching explored so that faculty, the bargaining unit, and the administration can determine appropriate workload credit for faculty undertaking team teaching. We hope the success of these courses and of the institutionalization of team teaching arrangements will encourage other faculty to develop more linked courses so that during the next three years we will be able to expand offerings to many of the major disciplines on campus.

Counselors will all know about the cognitive and psychological advantages of the new linked courses and the philosophy behind them, so this information will reach appropriate students.

Other schools will be able to use the materials and course plans generated by the project.

Potential for continued support after the expiration of the grant

The English department chairperson has agreed that if the Fall, 1991 classes are a success for students and faculty, and if faculty use the opportunity to define for each discipline involved exactly how much joint teaching time is required, an agreement will be made on workload credit given to instructors who undertake team-taught classes This is a significant commitment for the college to make because of the size of English 1 classes, which is limited so that
students can get the individualized attention that is needed by developing writers. Also, because each of the content area classes has different needs and enrollment limits, our project will determine the slightly different character (enrollment, number of team-taught hours conference time for teams, etc.) for each set of paired classes.

Adaptation to other institutions
The potential for adaptation to other institutions is clearly wide. In our area, we know of similar courses only at: U.C. Davis where writing is taught as an adjunct to content-area courses; Sacramento City College where courses are sometimes offered that integrate developmental rather than college-level reading and writing with various content-area courses. However, we believe the problem of students having difficulty applying their knowledge outside the classroom is universal, as are strong motivation of older working students to focus on their chosen interests, and the insecurities of developmental students when they first move into college-level classes. Therefore, many schools should find this project especially appropriate because community colleges often serve students who enter underprepared and insecure about their abilities to do college-level work, and students who wish to transfer to four-year schools.
7. Evaluation Plan

Evaluation plan
We will evaluate using mid- and end-of-semester anonymously written responses of students in the linked classes and of students in ordinary, unlinked English 1 and content-area courses when these alternative sections exist. The neutral questionnaire will survey the extent to which we have met our goals for our students and the extent to which these goals can be said to have been met for students not in linked classes. (This will be impossible in nursing where there is only one first-year class, so the students' responses cannot be compared with responses of nursing students in another, unlinked first-year class. Instead, we can survey current third-semester students about their perceptions of their writing and reading preparedness during their first year of study.) We will also attempt to interview students in both linked and unlinked classes regarding their experiences of taking the classes in the two different formats.
8. Dissemination Plan

Dissemination plan
On campus we will officially disseminate news of our project by presentations during faculty meetings and/or Flex-Cal meetings, and through an article in the campus publication Scholia. An article for the English Council of Two Year Colleges publication *inside english*, and a presentation at the California Reading Association are both possible as well, along with a conference or workshop for other colleges in the area.
9. Budget Narrative

[NO “BUDGET NARRATIVE” ACCOMPANIES THIS DOCUMENT.]