CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
AND
FREMONT --- NEWARK
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

#92-0004
This proposal is a grant request. This proposal presents an individualized and efficient method for instructors to help students with diverse abilities improve their writing skills. The project director is developing a computer-aided technique for annotating student papers in a manner that explains errors in simple terms, rather than in the abbreviated notations commonly utilized by English instructors. The procedure can be adapted to different levels of language comprehension and, thus, better meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students, older and working adults, English as a Second Language students and others in basic skills courses, as well as those in the transfer program.
Computer Coaching to Improve Student Writing

This proposal presents an individualized and efficient method for instructors to help students with diverse abilities improve their writing skills. The project director is developing a computer-aided technique for annotating student papers in a manner that explains errors in simple terms, rather than in the abbreviated notations commonly utilized by English instructors. The procedure can be adapted to different levels of language comprehension and, thus, better meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students, older and working adults, English as a Second Language students and others in basic skills courses, as well as those in the transfer program.

The proposal provides for the research and development necessary to adapt this technique to two levels of student understanding (basic skills and transfer), completion of an instructor's manual and documented software for both IBM and Macintosh computers, and three two-hour workshops, each of which will provide ten composition instructors with the materials and techniques for their utilization. The software will permit instructors to insert individualized instructions based on problems he or she identifies in each student's writing. The manual will explain writing and revision techniques and projects that instructors can employ to help their students become more comfortable and successful in writing.

Although the initial focus of this proposal is the project director's college, the manual and software will be made available to other California community colleges, so that they too may better meet the systemwide need for individualizing instruction of writing skills for an increasingly diverse student enrollment. Attention will be called to the materials through articles in professional publications, conference demonstrations, and brochures mailed to each community college English Department.
Fremont-Newark Community College District

Computer Coaching to Improve Student Writing

1. Specific Educational Program Being Addressed

A. Improving teaching abilities of faculty members.

This is a primary focus of the Computer Coaching project in that it proposes staff development workshops for instructors of remedial, vocational and transfer-level English classes, Limited English Proficiency, English as a Second Language, deaf students and for other interested faculty members.

The materials developed will be distributed at three two-hour sessions, each introducing ten teachers to the project concepts, manual, documented software and classroom activities designed to help students become more comfortable with and successful in writing. Demonstrations also are planned for professional conferences attended by instructors from other California community colleges.

B. Special learning needs of educationally disadvantaged students.

The academic society of the 1990's faces a student population in which one in every four college freshmen each year is assigned to remedial classes. At Ohlone, one in two English students enrolls in remedial English; 37 percent are linguistically differentiated; and 71 percent of the students being tutored in the English Writing Lab speak English as a second language. At present, 153 deaf students are enrolled in the Ohlone College Deaf Center program

The technique proposed in this project is intended to facilitate the learning of standard English usage, grammar, punctuation and composition for these students, as well as those in collegiate-level courses. Computer-aided coaching can be adapted to accommodate different levels of language comprehension, so that students better understand comments and suggestions noted by instructors on their written assignments; beyond this, it frees teacher time so instructors can make more suggestions on papers and confer more often with
students.

C. Instruction of new clientele including older, working adults.

Computer-aided coaching will integrate effectively at Ohlone's new Newark Technical Training Center, where computerized basic skills instruction is an integral part of the core program. The center is in operation now and funding for computers is pending from local donations.

Currently under consideration for Title III support, the center is designed to provide vocational instruction, training and retraining in basic skills and four designated technical areas. The facility will develop partnerships between the college and local businesses/industries and serve Fremont/Newark residents and the through-commute population working or living in the east and south San Francisco Bay regions. Both its location in Newark and its relationship with the business community are expected to draw an increasing number of older, working adults and other new clientele to the college.

In addition, computer-aided coaching will be used in classes for working adults and new clientele coming to the main campus. Many of these students have full-time day employment and register for one or two evening courses. Enrollment figures indicated that 36.3 percent of Ohlone's Fall 1991 students were enrolled in only night classes.

D. Improvement in traditional instructional programs.

This project directly affects the method by which language skills are taught because it improves the way instructors respond to student writing. The project director has developed a computer-aided program for annotating student papers. Errors are identified and suggestions are made in easy-to-understand terms, rather than in the abbreviated notations commonly used by teachers.

The program includes all the standard corrections employed by most English teachers; also, it allows instructors to revise the statements and create additions that may better serve a certain student or group of students. The comments may be inserted in any type of written assignment from brief exercises and drafts to fully developed papers. This decreases the time required for correcting papers, giving teachers more opportunity to tailor their more complete comments to the needs of specific students. Because many comments are positive in nature, students receive more explicit feedback and experience greater encouragement and satisfaction while writing and revising their writing assignments.

This proposal provides for refining the software program so that it uses terminology appropriate for students in the two most common levels of English composition: remedial and transfer. Instructors in other disciplines requiring written assignments, such as social studies and philosophy, also can use the program to foster continual awareness of the value of good writing skills. Another ramification is that trained instructors can adapt it to meet a variety of individualized needs: for example, word usage unique to second language students, terminology used in the workplace, and non-conforming language patterns common among the
deaf.
E. Nontraditional forms of instruction

As explained above, this project is based upon individualized instruction, geared to meet the language comprehension and interests of diverse groups of students. Trained instructors can extend the technique in lessons that lead students through a series of writing problems or composition styles. This would be particularly feasible at the college’s Newark Technical Training Center, where workplace goals and skills can be incorporated, and, when more computers are available, at the main campus Writing Lab, where independent study programs could be initiated.

F. Basic Agenda Items (Listed in ranked order)
   (1) Educational Standards.
       The quality of instruction, both in learning and in teaching, will be improved by this project in that it expands a tested method for individualizing and clarifying comments on student papers, so they better meet the needs of students and give them a higher success ratio. It also enhances teaching techniques through development of an instructor’s manual and documented software, which are explained at workshops for Ohlone and other community college instructors.

       An important side effect of this project will be that it encourages faculty members to update their teaching techniques and to utilize computerized technology. Although Ohlone is recognized as a stable educational institution with a 25-year history, there has been a lack of institutional commitment to faculty development with the result that many staff members have become isolated from outside ideas and the new information necessary for preparing students for the 21st Century. Faculty members are eager to move forward, and the project can be a catalyst in achieving that goal.

       The individualized format of this project will improve retention of underrepresented students by virtue of their receiving instruction better suited to their needs and interests. Many of these students become discouraged during the process of trying to read and understand instructors’ notations on their written work. Often they lack the confidence and initiative needed to approach a teacher and ask for an explanation.

       Computer-aided coaching Provides them with a written critique geared to their reading level and interests. As a more direct and comfortable link with the instructor, it fosters a better understanding between the instructor and individual students. It also introduces students to interacting with computers, a skill applicable to other course work, utilization of library resources, and future job opportunities.

   (2) ESL and Basic Skills
       The need for increasing and improving ESL instruction in the Fremont-Newark Community College District is evidenced by marked shifts in the ethnic profile of the area during the past ten years and projections indicating continuance of this trend. A major factor has been a large influx of population from Pacific Rim countries: Residents
of Vietnamese ancestry increased by 636.8 percent, Asian Indians by 417.2 percent and Japanese by 73.7 percent. The black population increased 82.7 percent and Hispanics 26.8 percent, while the white population increased only 9.5 percent.

A primary purpose of this project is to enhance instruction of ESL and other precollege English courses through providing individualized feedback on student writing in readily understandable language. Computer-aided coaching applies as well to ESL courses and Writing Lab assignments on the college's main campus as it does to the core basic skills program at Newark Technical Training Center.

(3) Transfer Education
Computer-aided coaching will assist both under-represented students and the more traditional students in preparing for and succeeding in transfer-level courses. The technique provides students with individualized comments that assist them in improving their writing, a skill necessary for survival in a transfer program. The type of assistance this project offers students will become all the more valuable as restricted funding increases the competition for entry into the University of California and California State University System.

(4) Under-represented Student Success in Vocational Education
As an integral part of the basic skills core at the Newark Technical Training (and retraining) Center and the occupational education program on the main campus, computer-aided coaching will offer the type of individualized attention needed by under-represented students aiming for vocational careers or seeking to upgrade or change their career field. Instructors for these classes can revise the project's documented software to include workplace language and references that will be more relevant to these students' goals and the local labor market. Computer-aided instruction also will be utilized in the Business English and Communications class, which is included in vocational programs. Certainly an increased understanding of standard English and an increased ability to use it correctly will better prepare these students for employment and improve their success in meeting intermediate and long-term labor-market requirements.

(5) Quality of Human Resources
Implementation of this project will be accomplished through three two-hour faculty development workshops, each providing ten instructors with the concepts and materials required to utilize computer-aided coaching. Similar demonstrations are planned at professional conferences for California community college instructors.

The intent is to raise the standards of instructional quality as faculty members learn and develop new methods for communicating effectively with diverse groups of students. Computer-aided coaching provides a technique through which they can improve and individualize evaluations of student writing and adjust instruction to better meet the diverse needs and interests of their students.
2. Specific Problems Being Addressed

The system-wide problem addressed by this proposal is as follows: Educationally disadvantaged students, older and working students, under-represented students all need individual attention to improve their writing skills; however, their teachers often do not have the time to give all these students this individual attention.

The project director has developed a computer-aided technique for annotating student papers in a manner that explains errors in easily understood terms, rather than in the abbreviated notations commonly utilized by English instructors. The procedure can be adapted to different levels of language comprehension and, thus, better meet the needs of the groups cited, as well as those in ESL classes, Ohlone’s program for the deaf and transfer courses. It allows instructors to revise the statements and create additions incorporating language and references familiar to the individual or group served. Students receive more explicit (and legible) feedback and experience greater encouragement and success in their writing assignments.

Computer-aided coaching grew out of the project director’s experience with computer-assisted composition classes. While teaching English in computer labs for the past five years, the project director experimented with inserting her critique comments in student compositions created on the computer. She found that programming the most common errors facilitated this process and decreased the amount of time required for evaluating papers. Students reacted positively, indicating they better understood their writing errors and demonstrating major improvement in their writing skills.

Another problem addressed by the project is the need to encourage faculty members to experiment with computer technology and new teaching techniques. This proposal calls for faculty development workshops introducing the concept and materials and inviting instructors to become innovative in its applications.

Finally, an age-old complaint should be mentioned: Too often it appears that the only teachers concerned about the quality of student writing are those instructing English classes. An alternate viewpoint is that more teachers in other disciplines would comment on student writing errors if they had the time. Utilization of this computer-aided coaching program would give teachers in any discipline this opportunity, as well as a method for adding comments pertinent to their instructional area to student papers.
3. Population To Be Served

All students registered at Ohlone College potentially are part of the target population for this project; however, the initial focus is on students enrolled in remedial and transfer-level English composition courses. Considered part of these groupings are multicultural, under-represented, ESL, Limited English Proficiency and deaf students. Computer-aided coaching also can be utilized by instructors of other disciplines.

The need for this individualized and more effective approach to critiquing student writing is evident in the instructional problems posed by the college’s cultural diversity, English class enrollment patterns, specialized program for the deaf and renewed commitment to vocational training/re-training: Approximately half of the population in the college’s service area consists of minorities; half of the English students enroll in remedial courses; the ESL program has climbed from two courses and four classes when it started in fall 1989 to four courses and nine classes in fall 1991; and basic English skills are an integral part of the core curriculum for vocational students and at the Newark Technical Training Center.

In order for these diverse groups to feel comfortable and experience success in English language and writing courses, it is necessary that the feedback on their assignments be in terms and references that are meaningful to them and that relate to their goals. Too often providing this type of individualized attention requires more time than English instructors have available.

This proposal provides for refining a software program for evaluating student papers, so instructor comments are made in terms and sentence structure easily understood by the two initial target groups. In addition, the suggestions are more legible to students than the usual hand-written notations. Use of a computer also allows teachers to insert their remarks more quickly, to encourage critical thinking and to adapt the technique to meet a variety of individualized needs: for example, word usage unique to Limited English Proficiency and second language students, terminology used in the workplace, and nonconforming language patterns common among the deaf.

The short-term impact of this project on the two target groups is that instructor feedback on classroom assignments is easier to understand, more relevant, more legible and returned sooner, hence, the comments are more helpful for students as they correct and rewrite papers and as they prepare for their next assignments. The technique increases one-on-one communication between instructor and student. The result is that students learn to utilize and write standard English faster. This raises their grades; they feel more comfortable in the class; they are less likely to drop out; and they start communicating with others more effectively.

The long-term impact is that students become more comfortable communicating and writing in standard English. For multicultural, under-represented, ESL, Limited English Proficiency and deaf students this can be a key factor in their integration into the workforce and American
society. The number prepared to transfer to a four-year institution will increase and that transfer students will have better language skills and more confidence in their writing than in the past. Also, students who use the computer labs for keyboarding their assignments acquire computer skills that can be applied to other courses, library research, and the workplace; and instructors are encouraged to experiment with a different teaching method.
4. Objectives

A. The documented software for computer-aided coaching and an accompanying instructors’ manual will be prepared and reproduced. (March 31, 1993)

B. The project director will conduct three two-hour workshops, each introducing ten Ohlone teachers to the project concepts, materials and classroom activities designed to help students become more comfortable and successful in using standard English. (April 9, April 20 and May 10, 1993)

C. The project and the project materials will be publicized on the Ohlone campus and at other California community college Instructional Vice Presidents and English Departments and distributed (at cost) to those requesting copies. (June 30, 1993)

D. The materials will be publicized in professional publications and at appropriate conferences. (June 1, 1993)

E. The number of English faculty members with the ability to utilize computer-aided instruction techniques will increase at least 40 percent. (May 30, 1993)

F. Follow-up evaluations of the project’s effectiveness for participating instructors and students will be completed. (June 30, 1994)
This project will accomplish the following activities:

- **Research and development:** During the first two months, fuller testing and data collection will be made on the model computer-aided instruction program the director has initiated.

  The project director and the assisting professor also will study instructional methods proven effective for this project's target groups, investigate learning techniques allied with computer-aided instruction, research related printed materials and software programs, visit and interview personnel at California English departments where computer-aided instruction is employed, and attend professional workshops and/or conferences that include sessions on this topic. The project will be publicized as described in the Dissemination Plan, Section VIII. A.

- **Draft preparation, pilot testing, revision and duplication of materials:** The documented software for computer-aided coaching and a draft for the accompanying instructor's manual will be prepared, subjected to pilot testing, revised and reproduced in an appropriate format and number for dissemination.

- **Instructor workshops and dissemination:** The project director will conduct three two-hour workshops, each introducing ten Ohlone teachers to the project concepts, documented software, manual, methods for adapting the program to particular students and groups of students, and classroom activities designed to help students become more comfortable and successful in communicating and writing standard English. The project materials will be disseminated.

- **Follow-up study:** Evaluation forms requesting comments on computer-aided instruction and the workshop content will be distributed to faculty members participating in the workshops. The results will be collated and distributed to English instructors and included in the final state report.

At the end of fall 1993 and spring 1994 semesters, faculty members who have utilized the computer-aided coaching in the classroom and their students will be asked to evaluate its effectiveness. These results will be collated and distributed to appropriate faculty members and administrators and to the state Chancellor's Office. Revisions will be made to the software and manual if recommended.
6. Expected Outcomes

A. Project objectives

Success of the project will be evaluated by the degree to which it achieves the performance objectives set forth in Section IV. This will include feedback remarks from Ohlone and other community college instructors who participate in the training workshops and from Ohlone students who receive computer-aided coaching in their courses.

B. Impact of the project

On both a system-wide and campus level, it is expected that instructors trained in computer-aided coaching will integrate the technique into their courses and, as relevant, adapt it to meet the needs and interests of multicultural, remedial, ESL and deaf students, as well as students in vocational and transfer-level English composition classes. As a result, these students will find course materials more meaningful and understandable, will receive more individual attention, and will experience greater success with learning standard English usage and composition formats than they have in the past. This will be demonstrated in higher retention rates and grades in the courses impacted. On a broader perspective, it must be noted that wider usage and understanding of a common language- in this instance, standard English-can help overcome many of the differences evident in this increasingly multicultural society.

C. Potential for continued support

Project materials will be institutionalized by Ohlone English Department instructors and other faculty members who adapt computer-aided coaching to their teaching situations. If additional funding is required for follow-up studies and/or major revisions to the software and/or instructor’s manual, it will be requested from the district or the Ohlone Foundation.

D. Potential for adaptation to other institutions.

This project has been developed with the intent that computer-aided coaching will be adapted to meet the needs of other institutions. The products to be reproduced are a documented disk for computer-aided coaching and an accompanying instructor’s manual. They present and explain a computerized method for annotating student papers so that errors and suggestions are made in easy-to-understand terms, rather than in the brief notations commonly used by teachers. The program includes all the standard remarks employed by most English teachers; also, it allows instructors to modify the statements and create additions. The comments may be inserted in any type of written assignment from brief exercises and drafts to fully developed papers. The manual includes background on the project and directions for utilizing the computer-aided coaching disk and for adapting it to the needs of particular students and groups of students.
Copies of the abstract and letters offering copies of the materials (at cost) will be mailed to Instructional Vice Presidents, to English Department chairs at California community colleges and to others mandated by the Chancellor’s Office. Articles will be submitted to professional publications and demonstrations proposed for conferences attended by California community college instructors. If requested, workshops will be conducted at cost for instructors at other institutions.
Two evaluation reports on this project will be submitted:

- Preliminary report: Scheduled for completion by July 1, 1993, this report will summarize:
  1. the project's success in meeting the objectives and deadlines set forth in the Work Statement Form and narrative,
  2. the problems encountered,
  3. the methods found to be most effective and relevant,
  4. significant achievements. It will also list recommendations for revising the materials and/or for related projects that could be undertaken on a local, regional or statewide basis.

- Final report: At the close of fall and spring semesters 1993-94, the statistics called for in the Proposal Objectives (Item IV.) will be gathered, collated and evaluated. Feedback on the project’s effectiveness will be invited from participating instructors and students. The results will be summarized and communicated to the Project Monitor by July 1, 1994.
8. Dissemination Plan

A. The materials to be disseminated are a documented disk for computer-aided coaching and an accompanying instructor’s manual. These present and explain a computerized method for annotating student papers so that errors and suggestions are made in easy-to-understand terms, rather than in the abbreviated notations commonly used by teachers. The program includes all the standard remarks employed by most English teachers; also, it allows instructors to modify the statements and create additions. The manual includes background on the project and directions for utilizing the computer-aided coaching software and for adapting it to the needs of particular students and groups of students.

The dissemination plan is focused on two target audiences:

• On-campus instructors of English, ESL, deaf students and other courses that require written assignments.
  1. Months 2 and 3 (October-November) Publicize the project, materials being developed and workshop dates through the campus Newsletter, Ohlone Foundation newsletter and a public press release.
  2. Months 6 and 7 (February-March) Announce the workshops for interested instructors through the campus Newsletter, departmental meetings, mailbox flyers and memos from appropriate administrators to faculty members in their area.
  3. Months 8 and 9 (April-May) Distribute and explain the computer-aided coaching disk and accompanying instructors' manual at three workshops for instructors planning to utilize the program.
  4. Months 9 and 10 (May-June) Announce the availability of project materials for other interested faculty and staff members in the campus Newsletter, departmental meetings and mailbox flyers.
  5. Months 9 and 10 (May-June) Request that project materials be announced and distributed to interested faculty members during the fall orientation program. Place the project materials in the campus Writing Lab.

• Off-campus instructors of English, ESL, students with learning disabilities and other disciplines that require written assignments.
  1. Months 2 and 3 (October-November) Publicize the project and materials being developed through notices to professional publications, a public press release and a letter to the chairs for district high school English Departments.
  2. Months 2 and 3 (October-November) Write to at least four professional organizations and propose sessions on computer-aided coaching for upcoming workshops and/or conferences.
  3. Months 6 and 7 (February-March) Send flyers to Instructional Vice Presidents and English Department chairs at California community colleges and district high schools describing the project materials and offering to provide copies. Also announce that workshops on the technique can be scheduled at their
campus (at cost).

4. Months 8, 9 and 10 (April, May, June) Distribute project materials to requesting institutions.

5. (Open time-frame) Distribute project materials at workshops held during conferences and at other institutions.

B. Evaluation of the dissemination plan will be measured on campus by the number of faculty members who request copies of the project materials and the number who inquire about and participate in the workshops. Off campus, it will be measured by the number of responses received from professional organizations and other institutions.
9. Budget Narrative

[NO "BUDGET NARRATIVE" ACCOMPANIES THIS DOCUMENT.]