

## Incorporating Sustainability Projects into Business and Technical Writing Classes: Expansion and Improvement

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### Overview

A grant from South Carolina Sustainable Universities Initiative supported the second year of sustainability-related client-based writing projects in Clemson University English Department business and technical writing classes. The program involves students in conducting research on environmental problems and solutions on campus and in the community, and then writing reports, promotional materials, and other documents based on the research. Students in participating classes work with campus and community clients who need the research and documents. In our second year, we expanded the program and made improvements based on what we learned in the first year.

### Program Outcomes

Specifically, our goals for the second year of the program were to:

1. Increase the number of spring classes participating in the program and bring new faculty into the program.
2. Involve fall and summer classes in the program, in addition to spring classes, by helping teachers who participated in Spring 2003 continue their work with their clients in Summer 2003 and Fall 2004.
3. Enhance the workshop based on feedback from our first year.

We achieved these goals and enjoyed another successful year of the program.

**Increased Spring 2004 participation.** The number of spring sections involved in the program did increase. Twelve sections of English 304 (Business Writing) and English 314 (Technical Writing) participated in Spring 2003. Six faculty, six clients, and about 280 students were involved (see table, below). All of the faculty and clients attended the November 10, 2003 workshop that launched the program.

We were pleased to work with two returning faculty (Fishman and Gresham) and two returning clients (Clemson Elementary School and the Environmental Committee), as well as welcome the eight new participants. Involving new participants broadened the base of faculty and clients who have benefited from the program and who now advocate for its mission of environmental awareness and active learning.

### Spring 2004 Client-Based Program

Faculty	Client	Classes	Overall Goals of Deliverables
Kristi Apostel	Utility Services (Jeff Hinson)	Two Technical Writing	Report and promote the goals and activities of utility services, focusing on conservation efforts
Ashley Cowden	Office of Environmental Health and Safety (Robin Newberry)	Two Technical Writing	Develop environmental impact policies for campus departments; educate campus community about stormwater and spill issues
Teddi Fishman	Geology Department (Richard Warner)	One Technical Writing	Promote the geology major, including its connection to the environment
Tamara Flinchum	Cooper Library (Teri Alexander, Jan Comfort, Priscilla Munson)	Three Business Writing	Encourage recycling and trash awareness in library; promote electronic databases in government documents section

Morgan Gresham	Clemson Elementary School (Gina McLellan)	One Technical Writing	Develop and explain (1) environmental awareness activities for families of third- graders, and (2) ways for CES teachers to incorporate the school's barn into lessons
Teresa Vosburgh	Environmental Committee (Donna London)	Three Technical Writing	Update the university's environmental audit

The twelve classes that participated in the program in Spring 2004 produced 82 deliverables for the clients. Copies of a selection of the deliverables are included with this report. The deliverables represent a wide range of written documents:

- 24 reports
- 17 posters
- 10 brochures
- 7 web sites
- 5 fact sheets
- 5 tutorials
- 3 lengthy booklets/manuals
- 1 PowerPoint presentation
- 10 others

**Addition of summer and fall courses.** We also achieved our second goal of creating continuity in the program by extending it into the summer and fall. Faculty who would be teaching business or technical writing in the summer or fall, and who had already participated in the program in 2002-3, were encouraged to incorporate client-based projects into their summer or fall courses. We suggested that they maintain their relationship with their Spring 2003 client and have their next classes revise or enhance the spring deliverables, or create new materials for the same client.

Five sections (about 120 students) participated in the program in summer and fall 2003. Michael Neal's two summer sections of Technical Writing produced drafts of seven grant proposals for Code Elementary School's Blue Ridge Field outdoor learning project. Summer Taylor's fall Technical Writing class wrote work process procedures for the AMECO division of Fluor Corporation. And Renee Love's two fall sections of Business Writing revised the product flyers created by her spring classes for the Clemson Farmer's Market and produced new flyers for additional products.

In addition, Michael Neal involved several MA in Professional Communication graduate students in the Code Elementary School project. These students tackled complex aspects of the project, such as applying for non-profit status, digital video editing, and coordinating the completion of the 7 grants drafted by his summer writing classes. The graduate students completed these projects in fulfillment of the master's project requirement for the degree.

Several Summer 2004 technical writing classes are also slated to involve client-based projects.

**Enhancement of workshop.** The feedback on the 2002 workshop was very positive, as reported last year. We enhanced the 2003 workshop by responding to requests for additional time in the teacher training segment and additional time in the one-on-one client-teacher meeting segment. Summer Taylor also continued last year's practice of meeting with the faculty every two weeks during the Spring 2004 semester in order to allow the faculty to share ideas and troubleshoot problems. We also added materials produced by last year's faculty to the binder of teaching materials given to this year's faculty.

## Dissemination

The faculty and students involved in the Spring 2004 program presented a Showcase of Client-Based Projects for the campus and local communities on April 12, 2004 in the Studio for Student Communication at Clemson. The six participating faculty members each chose one or more students from their classes to prepare and present a PowerPoint presentation about their classes' projects and what the students had learned from the experience. Approximately 45 people attended the Showcase, including the six clients, Clemson faculty from five different

departments, the Provost, an Associate Dean, and several corporate professionals who are interested in becoming clients in the future.

Summer Taylor has been asked to write a chapter for *Assessment in Technical and Professional Communication* (SUNY Press, forthcoming) regarding management and assessment of large-scale client-based programs such as this one. The chapter is due in June and the book is scheduled for publication by the end of 2004. Dr. Taylor met with the editors of the book at a writing conference in March to discuss plans for the chapter, and the editors were enthusiastic about the client-based program and its applicability and appeal to other universities across the country.

In September 2003, Dr. Taylor and Prof. Haque presented a paper titled “Learning from and With the Campus: Incorporating Sustainability Projects into Business and Technical Writing Classes” at the Greening of the Campus Conference in Muncie, Indiana.