

# Center for Teaching Excellence – Reflective Practice Teaching Circles Mini-Grant Application ~ 2014-2015

## *Cover Sheet*

DUE NO LATE THAN 4:30 pm on October 10, 2014

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Project Title: Material Resources in Teaching Liberal Studies English

Collaborating Faculty Names: **Maha Alawdat, Rachel Griffo, Maria Bodenshatz, Kittiphong Praphan, Oriana Gatta, Rachael Warmington, Carolyn Wisniewski, Helen Sitler, Lynn Shelly, Tomoko Nuske,**

Amount Requested: \$418.23

### **Brief Project Abstract (attach longer proposal):**

For this project, our teaching circle is asking for funding to purchase materials that we will experiment with in our Liberal Studies English (LSE) courses (Composition I, Composition II, and Humanities Literature). These materials include items like large post-it paper on which groups of students can write together; small post-it notes that help students to organize written thoughts individually and physically move them around; crayons that allow students to highlight, trace, and categorize different types of thoughts on their paper; and index cards that they can use in a variety of interactive ways for their own writing and to write collaboratively.

The use of materials such as these is not new, particularly in education classrooms, but a conversation in our first Teaching Circle (September 3) showed that few of have used materials like these in our teaching in significant ways, despite knowing how useful they are to our own writing practices. In that first meeting, we also had a presentation by Helen Sitler, Professor of English Education, who showed us how she uses these materials not just to teach her English Education students how to teach secondary education students, but also in her LSE courses. The value of these sorts of materials and their influence on student engagement has been explored in depth by education researchers like Howard Gardner in his numerous publications on learning styles, as well as in publications on writing tutoring (see Miles, et al, *Writing Lab Newsletter*, 26.2, 2001). As teachers in English Studies, we are also interested in exploring theories described by Jody Shipka in *Toward a Composition Made Whole* (2011). Shipka “critiques previous research on the writing process for neglecting the embodied, spatial, multimodal, and technologically mediated aspects of writing and calls for a new method for studying the composing process, one that underscores the significance of space, time, material dimensions, modalities, bodily actions, technological choices, and social interactions.” Rather than assuming that nowadays, all writing takes place on computers and other hi-tech media, we’d like to see how

these low-fi technologies, these tactile, kinetic, and tangible technologies, can be used in our own classrooms; we think that the chance to experiment with different activities and different approaches across the three LSE courses will provide ample amounts of data for conversation and possibly scholarship in our teaching circle and beyond.

Each member of the teaching circle will use several of the tools throughout the year in his/her LSE courses. In our meetings, we'll talk about how we've used the materials. We will then present our findings and practical applications to our department; we'd hope to perhaps co-author a short article on our findings as well, probably for the journal *Pedagogy*, which is interested in pieces on the teaching of writing from a practical perspective.

When Professor Sitler presented to us, she explained that she spends her own money to provide these materials for her students to use, but not all of us are able to do so. Instead, we are asking the Center for Teaching Excellence Reflective Practice project to fund these supplies so we, too, can practice using these tools with our students.

Our hope is that the discoveries we make from using these materials in our teaching will help our department Chair decide to fund and sustain a materials closet for all LSE faculty (50+ faculty teaching almost 250 sections of LSE courses per semester to over 3000 students) to encourage more active learning and student engagement across the university's core English curriculum. The results of this innovative and experimental teaching project could easily have a lasting impact on students across the entire university for years to come.

**Budget** (prices provided by walmart.com)

<b>Item</b>	<b>x1</b>	<b>x8*</b>
Post-it Easel Pads Super Sticky Self-Stick Tabletop Easel Pad, 20" x 23", White	20.68	165.44
Crayola Classic Color Pack Crayons, 64 Count	2.97	23.76
Post-it Notes Super Sticky Super Sticky Notes, 3 x 3, Asstd Neon/Electric, 5 90-Sheet Pads/Pack	8.49	67.92
Oxford Ruled Index Cards, 5" x 8", Blue/Violet/Canary/Green/Cherry, 100/Pack	3.90	31.20
Crayola Colored Drawing Chalk, Assorted Colors 12 Sticks/Set	3.16	25.28
Sharpie Liquid Highlighters Set of 10, Assorted	10.12	80.96
Subtotal		394.56
tax		23.67
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$418.23</b>

\*having eight of each item will allow most of us to have our own set of tools, which will make it easier for us to use them whenever the impetus arises or we want to work it into our class plan (rather than have to constantly coordinate an exchange system).