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FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY

PROPOSAL

FOR A

CULTURAL, WRITING, LANGUAGE, AND LITERACY CENTER

FORSYTH LIBRARY

Forward Thinking. World Ready.

FORSYTH LIBRARY and the Cultural, Writing, Language, And Literacy Center

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposal reflects a desire for creating a Cultural, Writing, Language, and Literacy Center that would distinguish Fort Hays State University from other institutions with regard to support for international programs, writing programs, and literacy instruction. In doing so, the proposal carefully considers the goals and objectives of the Kansas Board of Regents Foresight 2020 strategic agenda, the University's Dare to Dream strategy, the AASCU's Red Balloon project and the mission, vision, and values of Forsyth Library.

The Library's mission, vision, and values statements speak about "learning, teaching, research, knowledge, and engagement" and complement the implicit understanding that academic libraries provide the foundation for literacy and culture at their parent institutions. The application of these core values has become apparent through significant partnerships and activities that consistently occur at Forsyth Library. Integrating these core values into enhanced versions of the Writing Center and the ESL program could lead to a series of innovative practices and consistent benefits for our students.

One solution for integrating these core values involves the formation of a Cultural, Writing, Language, and Literacy Center within the Library. The Center would have a broad mission and vision of preparing study-abroad students, offering a learning environment for international students who require ESL instruction, serving as a learning lab for students interested in become TESOL instructors, and answering the literacy and writing needs of all students. Instruction could occur through small group or individual face-to-face training, through the use of software applications such as Rosetta Stone, through Web 2.0 applications, or through the use of immersive and mobile technologies.

During the past decade, Forsyth Library has housed the Writing Center and has worked with the English Department to support the Writing Center mission. As part of this working relationship, the Library has provided furniture and limited oversight for the facility. In addition to the providing a designated space for the Writing Center, the Library also provides a learning environment for ESL instruction. During the past several years, ESL instruction has occurred in the Harsh Room located in the basement of the Library. When not used for the ESL instruction, the Harsh Room serves as a classroom space for College of Education courses and as a juvenile collection room.

Although both the Writing Center and the ESL program have succeeded, an opportunity for examining best practices for enhancing support for the Writing Center and ESL program exists. Those methods involve an awareness of new instructional methods, the application of new technologies, and the threading of literacy awareness through study abroad activities, the improvement of writing skills, and ESL instruction. Forsyth Library will provide the location for the Center, support technologies used within the Center, and offer foundational literacy instruction. However, consistent direction for the Center would occur through academic departments, the ESL program, and the Graduate School.

The main floor of the Library offers the optimum location for the Center for two key reasons. A main floor location aligns the Center with other service areas within Forsyth Library for the purpose of establishing a centralized service area. In addition, a main floor location blends the Center into other Learning Commons and Center for Civic Leadership activities. However, this proposal remains contingent on the renovation of the Forsyth Library facility and the capability of the Library staff to redesign collection spaces. The Library benefits through the location of a learning environment that responds to institutional needs and by becoming the central point for literacy instruction.

RATIONALE AND VISION FOR THE CENTER

During late 2007 and early 2008, the University began integrating design elements and initiatives from the Dare to Dream strategy as a strategic plan that emphasized not only enrollment growth but also the excellence of the institution into the year 2020. The proposal for the construction of a Cultural, Writing, Language, and Literacy Center within Forsyth Library considers methods for supporting and supplementing the institution's "Commitment to Global Engagement" and "Commitment to Learning Outcomes." The proposal for the Center focuses on the capability of the Library to assist students with their desire to learn about other cultures and languages, support the internationalization of the campus, and improve the communication, writing, and research skills of students.

In addition, the proposal aligns with key facets of the Kansas Board of Regents Foresight 2020 strategic agenda and the AASCU Red Balloon Project. As an example, Strategic Goal #3 of Foresight 2020 considers methods for improving persistence and completion rates. Strategic Goal #4 focuses on the "foundational skills essential for success in work and in life." Objective 4.1 addresses the "identification and measurement of foundational skills such as oral and written communication, technical

and numerical literacy, critical thinking, and problem solving." (Foresight 2020) As the Red Balloon Project investigates new models for course design, it also underscores the vision for undergraduate research and the value of student-centered learning that provides the underpinning for the proposed Center. (Red Balloon Project)

The "Cultural, Writing, Language, and Literacy Center" is a conceptual name that attempts to bring resources together for the support of students and faculty interested in study-abroad activities, on- and off-campus students who require assistance with writing, international students enrolled in English as a Second Language courses, and the integration of different types of literacy into the learning environment. Library resources that could support the Center include location, hours of operation, technologies, and staff. Leadership for the Center would occur through academic departments, the ESL program, and the Graduate School.

In brief, this concept builds on the belief that the Library and University can enrich the learning environment for all students through an emphasis on literacy on a much different scale. The concept responds to the needs of a prospective study-abroad student by asking that student to become not only proficient in the language of the host country but to also become "literate" with regard to the culture of the host country. Integrating an approach to literacy within the Writing Center speaks to the opportunity for students to improve both their writing and their research skills. An emphasis on literacy within the English as a Second Language program offers an opportunity for international students to not only become more proficient with the English language but to also become more literate about American culture.

Promoting Cultural Awareness, Writing Excellence, Language Competencies, and Literacy Instruction

Study-Abroad Preparation

Given the mantra of "Forward Thinking, World Ready," this proposal suggests that the Center answer the specific needs of FHSU students preparing to study abroad or pursue multi-national careers. Thus, the focus of this portion of the Center mission rests on the premise of giving students the tools needed to achieve sensitivity toward cultural norms, to prepare to experience another individual's literacy, and to become ready to compete in the global marketplace (Kline 1). With this in mind, the Center

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would serve the key purpose of providing orientation, cultural instruction, and language training for a student or faculty member involved in study-abroad opportunities.

The University faces an interesting challenge with regard to the preparation of prospective study-abroad faculty and students. The study-abroad opportunity moves those individuals from a culture in which they have fluent command in literacy to a culture where they may feel illiterate. One of the key responses to this challenge focuses on language learning within the study-abroad context and an opportunity for the Library to work closely with the Department of Modern Languages. Another response to the challenge of preparing individuals for life in another country could occur through interaction with individuals at the study-abroad location through video conferencing technologies. This proposal also advocates the use of Rosetta Stone as another possible preparatory tool. As also suggested for ESL training, Web 2.0 technologies should play a crucial role as well.

One important use of technologies should involve the use of telepresence. This vision for the Center includes a concept labeled as "windows to the world" that would connect Forsyth Library to the libraries of institution partners through high-definition video conferencing. Prospective study-abroad faculty and students would have the opportunity to interact with students and faculty from the host country and to gain a window to the culture of the host country. With this approach, prospective study-abroad faculty and students can construct a frame of reference that includes the capability to share opinions, the interpretation of events, and stories (Brecht and Robinson 1993).

This frame of reference may lead to a greater awareness of sub-cultures that make up all cultures. Factors such as ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, or social class may have a much different impact from culture to culture and may lend different meanings to something as subtle as a gesture. Gaining an awareness of these factors may lead to greater advances gained within pedagogical practice and out-of-class learning. (Kline 14)

 Accomplishing this focus also requires a consistent library presence. A 2008 survey of 153 ARL member libraries summarizes efforts by academic libraries to support study-abroad students with this statement:

> "We do not have any particular initiatives aimed at study abroad participants. We have a large number of distance students (remote users) to begin with and we provide the same level of support for study abroad students as we do for distance students. At this point we are not sure that the students heading off to study abroad programs know that the services we have for distance users apply to them. Anecdotally, we do get feedback every semester from students who go

abroad and tell us that their access to our library's databases and full-text journals was a lifesaver." (Lindell 13)

An opportunity exists for the University, the Study Abroad program, and the Library in terms of support for study-abroad faculty and students. As with other academic libraries, Forsyth Library will support students and faculty engaged in study-abroad experiences through partnerships with libraries found at study-abroad locations and will provide the information resources needed to prepare students and faculty through print and online collections. The delivery of resources could occur through Libguides, Camtasia, Web 2.0 technologies or other forms of online tutorials. Given some discussion and innovative thought, though, the Library support for study-abroad students and faculty could become noteworthy. (Lindell)

Writing Center

The Writing Center remains as a significant place for building skills that students need to become competitive in both the classroom and the workplace. At the present, the Writing Center features a small tutoring area, an office, and a computer lab. Although the Library offers a location for the Writing Center, this proposal recommends a closer—almost symbiotic--relationship between the Library and the English Department with regard to the Writing Center. This symbiotic relationship should occur through the intersection of information literacy instruction and tutoring to improve writing skills. Given the vast amount of print, online, and other learning resources that the Library provides, support for the ability to conduct research should align with support for the ability to write.

This proposal envisions a new type of Writing Center that relies heavily on individual tutoring and the use of technologies. Rather than feature a computer lab, the new Writing Center should focus on individualized or small group tutoring areas. (Center). The use of video conferencing and mobile technologies should allow the Writing Center to connect with virtual students in a much more personal way.

The combination of traditional tutoring and the use of technologies such as telepresence and reusable learning objects should also allow the Writing Center to establish a consistent service model for virtual students. Combining high definition audio and video conferencing with cloud-based document delivery will allow virtual students to present their assignments to Writing Center staff and to interact with that staff while improving their writing and research skills.

<u>English as a Second Language Programming</u>

The proposed Cultural, Writing, Language , and Literacy Center moves away from an emphasis on the capability of international students to gain required proficiencies to an awareness that an all-encompassing approach to learning that integrates reading, writing, language, culture, and information literacy will benefit both the student and the institution. This proposal recommends the construction of an ESL facility that—just as the new approaches study-abroad opportunities and the Writing Center—relies heavily on individualized or small group tutoring and the use of Web 2.0 and immersive technologies.

The emphasis on an all-encompassing approach to learning has roots in the difficulties that face newly-arrived international students. In effect, this approach reverses the model discussed in the study-abroad section of this proposal. Rather than preparing faculty or students for a study-abroad experience in another country, the proposed model surveys the common problems that confront international students studying in the United States and attempts to provide solutions. The same technologies that allow prospective study-abroad students to communicate with international locations also allow international students to communicate with faculty and students in the United States.

Using Chinese students as an example, some have not mastered enough English to maintain pace in a subject that requires verbal skills. Others may have passed the standard English proficiency examination but continue to lack familiarity with American culture, have exclusively Asian friendships, and experience discomfort with non-Asian faculty (Lin 2-8). Although Forsyth Library has become a favorite study location for international students, the same difficulties exist. Resources and assistance exist in English. Because some international students may have different methods of organizing, thinking, feeling, and acting, they may also have a vastly different expectation of a reference librarian than American students.

These difficulties extend to the ability of international students to participate in meaningful research. Language barriers complicate the use of library systems and the Library of Congress classification system. As a result, the content of library instruction for many international students may need to focus on resources that reflect other cultures. These and other conclusions point to the need for library instruction that

moves well-beyond a broad overview of the library (Conteh-Morgan 29). Studies have shown that international students prefer a much higher amount of "hands-on" activities, a larger number of illustrations, step-by-step procedures, and a very small student to teacher ratio. All this requires a higher degree of enthusiasm, patience, and personalization within the library instruction model (Helms 305).

Forsyth Library has an opportunity to support international students through the teaching of information literacy skills that coincide with ESL instruction. The emphasis on literacy for ESL students, though, should also include discussions about all types of literacy. For example, ESL students could have the opportunity to discuss civic literacy and financial literacy during their instruction.

The close proximity of the Writing Center to the ESL facility could promote student interest in a Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages certificate. With the implementation of a TESOL certificate, one solution for the ongoing challenge of finding ESL instructors may exist.

An Emphasis on Literacy

This proposal suggests that the Library should thread the instruction of information literacy through the Study-Abroad program, the Writing Center, and the ESL program. However, the proposal also suggests a broader approach to literacy that involves cultural, civic, and other types of literacy. With this, the emphasis on literacy begins to fit a widely accepted definition:

> and "the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work and in the community – to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (Quigley, Folinsbee & Kraglund-Gauthier, 2006).

Although this definition covers a broad approach to information literacy, the real connection between information literacy and academic success occurs through the continual prompting of critical and reflective thinking. The application of information literacy should extend well-beyond the library and into the student's abilities to learn, solve problems, and make decisions in formal and informal settings.

Thus, new models should evolve from an emphasis on information literacy to the emergence of transliteracy and the emphasis on all types of literacy. Unlike the Web 2.0 approach that works as a

> "set of technologies and applications that enable efficient interaction among people, content, and data in support of collectively fostering new businesses, technology offerings, and social structures," (Forester)

transliteracy explores

> "the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and oral means through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks."

As such, the transliteracy approach stimulates discussion about remaining literate in a changing world and promotes the convergence of different types of literacy within instruction. Indeed, transliteracy embraces an accepted definition of literacy and then adapts literacy to the changing world.   Moreover, the transliteracy approach fuses information literacy with technologies that few of us had contemplated five-to-ten years ago.

This blending of approaches allows literacy instruction to describe how technologies provide a means for exploring information awareness and discerning the differences between reputable and disreputable information sources. From there, students should gain the capability to embed information processing into their decision-making and problem-solving skills and to gain a greater personal perspective about the knowledge that they have gained. All this translates into a greater ability to manage information and make greater connections between information, projects, and people. As students gain this ability, they also gain the ability to link learned knowledge, personal knowledge, personal experience, and insight with their values and ethics.

Again considering the print, online, and learning resources found within the Library, an opportunity exists to provoke an institutional emphasis on literacy that crosses academic boundaries. Integrating information literacy throughout study-abroad opportunities, writing center activities, and ESL instruction should allow new models for course development and evaluation to evolve (Conteh-Morgan 31).

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DEFINING GOALS, ASSESSMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Educational Opportunity Goals

This proposal offers the following educational opportunity goals:

- Provide a learning environment for study-abroad faculty and students

- Combine the skills and resources of the English Department and Forsyth Library to promote excellent writing and research skills

- Combine the skills and resources of the Department of Modern Languages, the Graduate School, and Forsyth Library to enhance and supplement study-abroad preparation

- Offer individualized or small group tutoring for writing center and ESL participants

- Establish literacy as an institutional focus

Assessment

Annual assessment of activities within the Center will occur. Participating entities should seek to ensure that goals and objectives of the Center align with the Foresight 2020 and Dare-to-Dream strategic agendas. The following tables provide an example of that alignment:

CULTURAL, WRITING, LANGUAGE, AND LITERACY CENTER

ALIGNING CENTER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WITH THE STRATEGIC AGENDAS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN KANSAS AND FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY

Center Goal 1 and Objectives	Foresight 2020 Goals and Objectives	Dare-to-Dream Goals and Objectives	Short-term Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators	Intermediate Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators	Long-term Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators
Goal 5: Establish literacy as an institutional focus	**Strategic Goal #4** Ensure that students earning credentials and degrees across the higher education system possess the foundational skills essential for success in work and in life. Objective **4.1** During the 2010-11 academic year, the Board of Regents' system-wide learner outcomes task force, in consultation with the university Chief Academic Officers, shall make recommendations regarding the identification and measurement of				

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foundational skills (such as oral and written communication, technical and numerical literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving) which institutions will report to the Board.

Center Goals 2 and 3 and Objectives	Foresight 2020 Goals and Objectives	Dare-to-Dream Goals and Objectives	Short-term Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators	Intermediate Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators	Long-term Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators
Goal 2: Combine the skills and resources of the Department of Modern Languages, the Graduate School, and Forsyth Library to enhance and supplement study-abroad preparation	**Strategic Goal #6** Enhance the regional and national reputation of Kansas universities through inspirational initiatives.				
Goal 3: Offer individualized or small group tutoring for writing center and ESL participants .	Objective **6.1** By June of 2011, Regents' universities will identify benchmarks of excellence in				

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comparison with

Peer institutions and establish goals to pursue in order to increase regional, national, and/or peer rankings.

Objective 6.2
By June of 2012, Regents' universities, according to mission, will identify areas for expansion of

Research capacity and/or focus and will establish goals to pursue.

Objective 6.3
Regents' universities will demonstrate increased collaboration including alignment within the Kansas higher education system through a biannual report.

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Implementation

This proposal suggests that planning for partnership activities could begin immediately and that implementation of the Center could occur during the proposed renovation of Forsyth Library. Next steps for planning involve meetings between representatives of participating entities and students for discussion about detailed models for implementation, goals, and objectives.

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