The University of Georgia

College of Family & Consumer Sciences

Department of Human Development and Family Science

(Example of accepted letter of intent)

April 16, 2012

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Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning
Instructional Plaza
The University of Georgia

RE: 2013-2014 Writing Fellows

In my role as Undergraduate Internship Coordinator in The Department of Human Development and Family Science (HDFS), I prepare students to seek and secure internships in the human services field. Because an internship is required for all HDFS students, it is important to structure the pre-internship and internship courses so students demonstrate their knowledge of departmental learning objectives, primarily their ability to critically evaluate and apply information as it relates to human development and family functioning.

As a selected writing fellow, I propose to integrate writing by re-constructing existing courses that serve to prepare and facilitate student experiences in field-based internships. I want to examine the most effective ways to incorporate writing into this class as a method to assess student understanding, but also enable them to explore themselves, their placement and the community. Additional writing opportunities will also prepare students for their internship and future careers.

Human Development and Family Science students are able to graduate with Provisional Family Life Educator Certification, which represents their ability to disseminate knowledge in various applied settings, e.g. parent education and youth development. Because internship placements vary in their mission and objectives, it is important that assignments focus on multiple modes of writing for diverse audiences, e.g. academic settings, social media, applied settings and private vs. public communication. To prepare students for internships in diverse settings, they enroll in HDFS 5900: Pre-Internship.

In this course, the primary objective is to seek and secure an internship while learning about professional development, ethics and other relevant topics. At the start of the course, students write an introductory, reflective paper where they begin to identify personal learning objectives. After visiting a potential site, students explain the placement's mission and services, as well as how their coursework has prepared them for the experience. Students then describe how specific responsibilities address departmental objectives. At

the end of the course, students finalize and explain how they will accomplish their personal learning objectives.

The assignments currently feel disjointed without clear connections between learning goals, assessment activities and learning activities, elements of Fink's (2003) Integrated Course Design. During the fall semester, I would like to work on connecting these assignments more intentionally so students work on synthesizing departmental and personal learning objectives. This will better prepare them to learn in and from the communities they enter during the internship. I want to re-construct the pre-internship course so that students:

1. Do in-depth research of three potential internship placements.
    a. Align departmental learning objectives in each
    b. Identify personal learning objectives in each
2. Select one placement
    a. Research the placement to understand mission, objectives and services
    b. Conduct a needs assessment to identify a community need
    c. Develop an extensive learning plan that addresses the community need
    d. The student will write an action plan that will be implemented during the internship experience.
3. In the internship course, students will
    a. Implement action plan
    b. Evaluate plan
    c. Present their project

This plan guides students towards an internship experience that represents service learning. During the research process, I want students to perform a needs assessment so they know the difference between what they *think* the community needs and what the community *actually* needs. This will inform the project that a student proposes to accomplish during their internship.

Students enrolled in HDFS 5910: Internship currently complete weekly assignments and reflections, as well as a final project. However, they are only brushing the surface of their awareness in their placement and community. To address this, I need to develop more effective ways to continue building on assignments students completed in the pre-internship course. In addition, students need to consistently develop elements of their project throughout the experience. Along with a final write-up that evaluates their community-based plan, students should also develop a portfolio with various representations of their work. In these ways, I hope students will explore themselves, their placement and the community to enhance their futures.

As a writing fellow, I want to better understand how to engage students in the internship placement process so that they develop ownership over their application of departmental objectives as they develop their own personal goals. I want to facilitate this by integrating writing opportunities with Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle and Fink's (2003) Integrated Course Design. Although my response will be individualized based on student

needs, I would like to learn effective techniques to be a critical reviewer so students can develop their learning goals beyond themselves and into the community. I believe that the opportunity to engage and learn from diverse faculty across the university will not only enhance my instruction and guidance, but also my students' experiences in the field.

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