**DATE: October 13, 2007**

**PROJECT TITLE: “Internships in Professional Writing: A Qualitative Study”**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Joan Q. Professor and John H. Doe**

**RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED RESEARCH**

**A. PROPOSED RESEARCH RATIONALE**

In 1993, Sherry Burgus Little published “The Technical Communication Internship: An Application of Experiential Learning Theory,” in which she reported the results from a study of internship programs in professional and technical communication. Little mailed a general questionnaire concerning curriculum structure to 114 professional and technical communication program directors at US universities. She sent follow-up questionnaires to the 39 respondents who indicated that they offered internships as part of their programs. This follow-up questionnaire addressed questions of how often the program director contacted the intern, how often the program director made on-site visits and kept in contact with internship supervisors, how the interns were evaluated, as well as the kinds of internships established and the types of writing that interns were undertaking. From her data, she concluded that there was no real consensus among professional and technical writing programs about the type, establishment, monitoring, and evaluation of internships that students undertake. As a result, Little called for more research in how experiential learning operates in academic contexts.

Since 1993, numerous scholars have heeded Little’s call for more study of experiential learning in professional and technical writing programs, but there has been no other comprehensive survey of internship components in professional and technical writing programs.

We would like to revisit Little’s original research by conducting our own questionnaire of professional and technical writing programs to see how their internship components have changed over the last ten years. Specifically, we would like to pay special attention to the pedagogical components of internships, with the goal of developing pedagogical tools that will allow internship instructors to provide guidance to interns.

### B. SPECIFIC PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

A copy of the questionnaire with a cover letter explaining the research project will be mailed to potential participants on November 19, 2003. Potential participants will be asked to complete the form and return it by mail to the principal investigator by December 15, 2003. Participants will have the option of including documents that will supplement the data. All data will be anonymous.

**C. SUBJECTS TO BE EMPLOYED**

No subjects will be employed in this research project.

**D. RECRUITMENT OF SUBJECTS AND OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT**

Questionnaires will be mailed to approximately 209 program administrators at U. S. colleges and universities that are publicly listed as having professional and technical writing programs with the Society for Technical Communication academic database or which are included in the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing’s list of undergraduate programs in technical communication.

**E. PROCEDURES FOR PAYMENT OF SUBJECTS**

No subjects will be paid in this research project.

**F. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Complete confidentiality of participants will be maintained at all times. Completed questionnaires will be kept in a locked file cabinet in 301C Heavilon Hall for no more than two years after the completion of the survey. At that time, all documents will be destroyed.

**G. POTENTIAL RISKS TO SUBJECTS**

The risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

**H. BENEFITS TO BE GAINED BY THE INDIVIDUAL AND/OR SOCIETY**

In recent years, more university departments and programs, especially those in the humanities, have become interested in providing students with experiential learning opportunities through internships. We feel that comprehensive information about pedagogical approaches to internships would benefit the growing number of humanities based programs that are interested in creating experiential learning environments. It would also benefit the professional writing community by providing up to date knowledge on the state of professional writing internship programs in U. S. colleges and universities.

### I. INVESTIGATOR’S EVALUATION OF THE RISK-BENEFIT RATIO

Since confidentiality will be maintained, respondents can reply anonymously. Therefore, the benefits to the larger academic community significantly outweigh any potential risks.

**J. WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

See attached.

### K. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

See attached questionnaire and cover letter.