Project 3A: Collaborative Research Proposal

Overview and Rationale
In many organizations, a formal research proposal (chapter 11), or a less formal research plan, is a necessary precursor to a full-length report, such as an informational report (chapter 12) or recommendation report (chapter 13). A research proposal is intended to help you:

- **Find and articulate a problem that can be addressed with research** (a problem as it exists for an actual group, company or organization)
- **Develop patterns of inquiry** with suitable research questions and methods,
- **Discover your strengths and weaknesses** as writers and researchers, so you can assign roles to budget your time and energy, and realistically manage your project expectations
- **Formally plan your project's lifecycle** for collaborating, drafting, sharing findings, getting feedback, revising and editing -- all of which should be established to the expectations of your team and instructor

Assignment Prompt
Proposing a research report is a problem-solving activity. The research proposal is not meant to propose a final “answer” to a problem. Instead, it is a “promise” to someone that you have a plan to perform useful research and writing about a problem and its potential solutions.

“Discovering” a problem to research can be a challenge, and it often requires collaboration among instructors and students to get beyond “tip-of-the-nose” problems. Problems affecting Detroit and Wayne State are often a good place to start (you can take a look at the board of governors’ meeting minutes or the WSU strategic plan), as well as problems related to the use or development of a technology affecting our fields, our institution or workplaces.

The research proposal is also a useful genre for your team as a guide intended to help you: (1) form as a team, (2) learn how to discover and analyze projects as ‘problems’, (3) articulate various research and writing strategies, and (4) establish standards for your work, which will be negotiated among team members and your instructor.

You can format your 3-6 page research proposal using Markel’s chapter 11 as a guideline, as this offers sound advice on types of research proposals (internal and external), meeting readers’ needs with a proposal, and the “logistics” of planning, drafting, revising and editing proposals. Markel suggests the following sections:

- **Summary**
  - An Overview of the Problem or Opportunity
  - The Proposed Program or Plan of Work
  - Qualifications and Experience

- **Introduction**
  - The introduction includes a strong draft of a problem statement, describing the problem or opportunity you will be addressing with your final report. Problem statements often take time to write well, and it's possible that your team will significantly revise your description of the problem in upcoming weeks (some technical communications courses spend entire semesters working on articulating problem
statements). Good drafts of problem statements show a high level of audience awareness, or a ‘reader-centered’ focus on the problem. In other words, they strive to articulate the problem from your reader perspectives (the readers of your proposal and/or your final report) or stakeholder perspectives on the problem, and they include perspectives on the problem from primary and/or secondary research. You may also consider labeling or categorizing parts of the problem based on your current evaluation techniques (Markel, p. 296) or criteria for evaluating the problem (financial, sustainability, staffing, technological improvements, etc.). Problem Statements can include subcategories, such as “Criteria”, “Categories”, “Rearranged and Updated Problem Statements” (if the problem is following a recent report), or “Incomplete Problem Statements”.

- The introduction contains a **Purpose and Audience Statement**, which builds on what you learned in the course thus far, and in Chapter 4, to articulate the purposes and audience of your proposal and final report. You should also show understanding of your readers’ needs (Chapter 11, p. 298). You should also justify your choice the genre for the final report you planning to write (an informational report or recommendation report, chapter 12 and 13).
- The introduction contains, if appropriate: a **background on the problem, a discussion of your key sources of information, the scope and organization of the remaining proposal, a discussion of any key words or technical terms.**

- **“The Proposed Program” or “Plan of Work”**
  - This section offers a description of how you will gather and analyze research. It is the section where your readers will justify their decision about whether or not to support (or fund) your proposal. This section should include:
    - Some preliminary research results/findings
    - Some justification for why you are engaged in forms of inquiry, such as:
      - site work (visiting and observing a site or online activity)
      - interview or survey work
      - data analysis (finding and representing salient data)
      - word work (thorough study of concepts or technical terms)
      - source work (secondary research / 3050 library guides)
    - Some understanding of how this leads to appropriate primary or secondary research methods (with reference to Chapter 5), and a list of research questions (p. 83 – 84).

- **Description of Qualifications:**
  - Describes your relevant skills and past work, as well as each participant’s strengths and weaknesses, likely roles as writers and researchers, and any organizational or departmental resources you have access to.

- **Budget:**
  - If appropriate, this section specifies how much the proposed program or work will cost, or (often the case in this class) the budgeting of your time and resources in terms of your **project’s lifecycle** for collaborating, drafting, sharing findings, getting feedback, revising and editing -- all of which should be established to the expectations of your team and instructor. This should include a timeline of dates and deliverables.

**Supporting Texts:**
- The research proposal (chapter 11), informational report (chapter 12) and recommendation report (chapter 13).
**Minimum Requirements**
- One 3-6 page research proposal composed as a team

**Due Date:**
Sunday, October 29, 2017, by 11:59 p.m. to Blackboard

**Grading**

**Collaborative Research Proposal Rubric – ENG 3050**

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<th>General Description</th>
<th>Assignment Specific</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Audience &amp; Purpose</strong></td>
<td>How well did you analyze the likely audiences for this communication?</td>
<td>Do you identify the appropriate audiences for both the memo and proposed project?</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>How well did you tailor this communication to that audience?</td>
<td>Have you thoroughly described the rhetorical situation?</td>
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<td>Is your document useful and persuasive for these intended audiences?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research</strong></td>
<td>How thoroughly did you investigate the subject(s) of this composition?</td>
<td>Is your plan based on adequate research?</td>
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<td>Did you select an appropriate and ethical research method?</td>
<td>Have you included research questions for both primary and secondary sources?</td>
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<td>Do you show the results of that research in this text?</td>
<td>Are all sources properly cited and documented?</td>
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<td><strong>Content &amp; Organization</strong></td>
<td>Does your content support your claim / purpose, and is it usable for your audiences?</td>
<td>Does your plan present specific and usable information throughout?</td>
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<td>Do you employ the appropriate superstructure for this audience and purpose?</td>
<td>Does the organization of your plan reflect a descending order of priority throughout?</td>
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<td>Do you employ standard forms of technical organization (i.e., moving from general to</td>
<td>If applicable, does your plan present a complete team plan?</td>
<td>20</td>
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Learning Objectives
By the end of this project, you will be able to prove your mastery the research proposal in terms of organization, and content (problem statements, purpose and audience statements, research methods, etc.). You will establish a working rapport with your group, negotiate standards for your research and writing, and you will be able to use this document to guide your research project.

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