

CHAPTER 10

Proposals

Proposals put forth plans of action that seek to persuade readers they should be implemented. Like commentary, proposals involve analyzing issues and clarifying differences. But proposals focus more centrally on defining problems and proposing solutions.

This difference between commentaries and proposals is not an absolute one but a matter of emphasis. After all, the perspectives writers make available in commentaries have consequences for solving problems. Whether or not writers of commentaries make it explicit, their perspectives often imply certain policies, courses of action, and ways of living. The difference is proposals emphasize this dimension. The focus of attention shifts from an explanation of the writer's understanding to what can be done.

Let's look at a situation that might call for a proposal. A local community group thinks that a vacant lot the city owns could be converted into a neighborhood park. The group knows there's strong support for local parks among city residents and municipal officials. But it also knows that the city's resources are limited, so any proposal involving spending would need ample justification—to show that the proposed park would solve a problem of some urgency. So the group might show that, compared to other areas of the city, the neighborhood lacks recreational facilities. Or, if the lot has given rise to other problems—for example, as a site for drug dealing—the group might argue that a park could simultaneously solve that problem.

In its proposal, the group would need to show that the proposed solution will have the intended effects. If the group claims drug dealing is part of the problem, then its proposal needs to explain exactly how turning the lot into a park can get rid of the dealers. But this isn't enough. The group would also need to show that the solution deals with the problem in the best, most appropriate way, given the alternatives available and the needs and values of the people affected (perhaps drug dealing could be dealt with more cheaply and effectively through increased police surveillance; perhaps the lot is too small to serve all age groups, and the neighborhood and city would be better off expanding a park in an adjoining neighborhood).

A proposal that is both capable of solving the problem and suitable for doing so is said to be *feasible*. To have a chance of being implemented, a proposal needs to establish that it passes the *feasibility test*—that its solution will have the intended effects and that it fits the situation.

Proposals typically require research. The community group proposing the park could strengthen its case by showing that the proposed park fits the needs of the neighborhood, given the age and interests of its residents. This information could be obtained by surveying households, as could specifics about the kinds of recreational facilities to include in the park.

Proposals must convince readers—to fund a project, implement a solution, or change a policy. Proposals are a form of persuasive writing, and clear statements of problems and solutions, demonstrations of feasibility, documentation through research, and careful organization all help make a proposal persuasive to readers.

WRITING FROM EXPERIENCE

In our daily lives, we are constantly making proposals. Analyze one such proposal by describing an instance in which you encountered a situation, defined it as a problem, and proposed a solution. Explain the steps you followed to define the problem, consider alternatives, anticipate objections, and formulate a feasible solution—even though you probably did not experience the problem solving you engaged in as a series of steps. Looking back on this experience, what made your solution successful or unsuccessful? Were there any unforeseen consequences?

READINGS

Workers Without Borders

Jennifer Gordon

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Jennifer Gordon is professor of labor and immigration law at Fordham Law School. This proposal appeared in the New York Times on March 10, 2009.

AMERICANS are hardly in the mood to welcome new immigrants. The last thing we need, the reasoning goes, is more competition for increasingly scarce jobs. But the need for immigration reform is more urgent than ever. The current system hurts wages and working conditions—for everyone.

From Jennifer Gordon. "Workers Without Borders." *The New York Times* March 10, 2009. © 2008 The New York Times. All rights reserved. Used by permission and protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States. The printing, copying, redistribution, or retransmission of the Material without express written permission is prohibited.

Today, millions of undocumented immigrants accept whatever wage is offered. They don't protest out of fear of being fired or deported. A few hundred thousand guest workers, brought in for seasonal and agricultural jobs, know that asserting their rights could result in a swift flight home. This system traps migrants in bad jobs and ends up lowering wages all around.

The solution lies in greater mobility for migrants and a new emphasis on workers' rights. If migrants could move between jobs, they would be free to expose abusive employers. They would flow to regions with a shortage of workers, and would also be able to return to their home countries when the outlook there brightened, or if jobs dried up here.

Imagine if the United States began admitting migrants on the condition that they join a network of workers' organizations here and in their home countries—a sort of transnational union. Migrants could work here legally. They could take jobs anywhere in the country and stay as long as they liked. But they would have to promise to report employers that violated labor laws. They could lose their visas by breaking that promise.

This plan, which I call Transnational Labor Citizenship, would give employers access to many more workers on fair terms. It would give people from countries like Mexico greater opportunities to earn the remittances upon which their families and economies rely. It would address the inconsistency and inhumanity of policies that support free trade in goods and jobs but bar the free movement of people.

How could we make this happen? Congress could certainly mandate the change. If that seems unlikely, we could start with a bilateral labor migration agreement with a country like Mexico, making membership in a transnational workers' organization and a commitment to uphold workplace laws a requirement for Mexicans to obtain work here.

We might try a smaller pilot project involving a single union in an industry like residential construction or agriculture. One model would be the Farm Labor Organizing Committee's guest worker union, which protects migrant agricultural workers on some North Carolina farms. The union provides representation and benefits wherever the workers are. It has organizers near North Carolina's tobacco and cucumber fields, and an office in Mexico, where the laborers return home for the winter.

Migrant mobility has been tried with success in the European Union. When the Union expanded in 2004 to include eight Eastern European countries, workers in Western Europe feared a flood of job seekers who would drive down wages. In Britain, for example, the volume of newcomers from countries like Poland was staggering. Instead of the prediction of roughly 50,000 migrants in four years, more than a million arrived.

Yet, as far as economists can tell, the influx did not take a serious toll on native workers' wages or employment. (Of course, what happens in the global downturn remains to be seen.) Migrants who were not trapped in exploitative jobs flocked to areas that needed workers and shunned the intense competition of big cities. And when job opportunities grew in Poland or shrank in Britain, fully half went home again.

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To be sure, Europe's approach has its problems. Some migrants were cheated on their wages and worked in unsafe conditions. This illustrates that mobility alone is not enough. We also need good workplace protections, and effective support to realize them.

Unions could play a key role in rights enforcement if they embraced migrants as potential members, becoming for the first time truly transnational institutions. And government could partner with workers' organizations. Recently, the New York Department of Labor announced that it had begun to work with immigrant centers and unions to catch violators. This is a promising example of a new alliance to protect the rights of both immigrants and native-born workers.

Like it or not, until we address the vast inequalities across the globe, those who want to migrate will find a way. Despite stepped-up enforcement at the borders, hundreds of thousands of immigrants still come illegally to the United States every year. Raids terrorize immigrants but do not make them go home. Instead, rigid quotas, harsh immigration laws and heavy-handed enforcement lock people in. As the recession deepens, undocumented immigrants will hunker down more. They may work less, for worse pay, but they will be terrified to go home out of fear they can never return.

The United States needs an open and fair system, not a holding pen. The best way forward is to create an immigration system with protection for all workers at its core.

Analysis: Developing a Solution

Jennifer Gordon's proposal for a transnational organization of workers without borders starts with a problem that many Americans will recognize immediately—namely that undocumented workers are providing the labor for employers in the United States in agriculture, construction, gardening, hotels, restaurants, meat packing, manufacturing, and other industries. She doesn't spend much time laying out the problem, aside from noting it "traps migrants in bad jobs and ends up lowering wages all around." Her focus rather is on the solution and how to implement it. To make her case for migrant mobility, she cites the experience of the European Union. This is meant to be reassuring in that the influx of migrant workers did not lower native workers' wages or limit their employment. But in a key rhetorical move, she also concedes problems, in that some workers "were cheated on their wages and worked in unsafe conditions." Notice how this sets her up to make a refinement in her proposal by saying that workplace protection, as well as mobility, is a crucial part of her proposal.

Σ FOR CRITICAL INQUIRY

1. Anyone making a proposal has to consider the ratio between defining the problem (and its urgency for action) and the proposed solution. Consider how Jennifer Gordon does this. What does she assume about her readers in doing so?

2. Identify the reasons Gordon offers for her proposal. What unstated enabling assumptions is she making?
3. What objections might one make to Gordon's proposal? How do you think she would respond?

Proposal for Funding

Poets of Place (POP!)

Sarah Ehrich and Meredith Jordan

Sarah Ehrich and Meredith Jordan were creative writing students in Writing, Literature & Publishing's M.F.A. program when they wrote this proposal for grant funding from the Graduate Student Association. They were successful in securing the grant, and POP! took place in the summer of 2011.

POETS OF PLACE (POP!)

Instructors: Sarah Ehrich, Meredith Jordan

Description of Project

The overriding theme guiding Poets of Place (POP!) is the meaningful interaction between inside/outside—inside and outside the classroom, inside and outside of our communities, inside and outside of ourselves.

POP! will be a free, part-time summer poetry-writing program for Boston Public School teenagers. We will meet twice weekly for 1.5 and 3 hours each meeting over the month of July, dividing our time between the classroom—where we will navigate poetic craft through lessons and workshops—and the field—where we will explore Boston neighborhoods, using primary and sensory research as the material for exploring our theme and for writing poems.

The meetings will work toward and culminate in a **Final Project/Event** open to the public at the end of the month. At this event, students will showcase the work they have done through sharing their poems. They will be a leading force involved in all aspects of the event—from planning to emcee-ing to performing. We also plan to have an established, local poet to participate in the event and visit one of our sessions.

Rationale

At the core of the program is the belief that creative expression builds *confidence* and gives students a means to engage with and think deeply about the interplay of their external and internal experience.

POP! will operate on the principle that environment plays a key part in shaping individual and communal identities and that being aware of the complex interaction between our surroundings and ourselves is an important step on the way to *self-understanding*, *critical thinking* and becoming a *community leader*.

In addition, POP! is in part a response to the continued separation between schools and neighborhood communities in Boston. The public schools, serving predominantly black and Latino students¹, are facing a budgetary crisis. In the “Redesign and Reinvest” plan, the City of Boston plans to shut down or merge 18 public schools to save money; this plan highlights the further division between schools and geographical community. Through POP!, students will explore this separation and how to be an engaged *leader* in their communities.

Like Emerson’s recent initiative, EmersonWrites, the Saturday creative writing workshops offered to high school students during the school year, POP! will break down divisions in Boston, reaching out to its own surrounding communities and connecting Boston Public Schools with Emerson College. In this way, POP! will contribute to the larger goal of increasing the number of Boston students who graduate from college, a priority of Mayor Menino’s administration. POP! will give students a *college setting* experience in order to make higher learning a realizable goal.

Outcomes

- ▶ *Confidence and Self-Understanding*: Legitimizing creative and personal voice through exploratory creative writing exercises.
- ▶ *Critical Thinking*: Using field research, exploratory writing, classroom discussion, and revision to analyze the theme of inside/outside.
- ▶ *Community Leadership*: Exploring and understanding communities in Boston and sharing new knowledge through organizing and implementing the Final Event.
- ▶ *College Mind-Set*: Exposure to a college setting and personal investment in education and learning through a creative project.

Logistics

Students and Recruitment

- ▶ *10 students from Boston Public Schools*:

Through connections with students participating in EmersonWrites, and school visits in late May, we plan to recruit 10 dedicated students. We will have an online application that will include a writing sample and statement of interest. In just under three weeks of recruiting, EmersonWrites was able to enroll 40 students. In the same amount of time, we will be able to meet our enrollment goal.

¹According to the BPS website, the breakdown is as follows: Hispanic (39%), Black (37%), White (13%), Asian (9%), Other/Multiracial (2%). 74% of BPS students are eligible to receive free & reduced-price meals in school (65% free, 9% reduced).

► *Rising Sophomores and Juniors:*

The sophomore and junior years in high school are important in terms of thinking about college. To address our goal of college mind-set, we will target this age-group.

Classroom

► *Emerson Setting:*

Wednesday evenings from 5:30–7:00, we will meet in an Emerson classroom. Students will be exposed to a college setting.

We will also have one Monday evening session for a debriefing after excursion #3 and final event preparation.

► *Lessons and Exploratory Writing:*

In the classroom portion of the program, students will gain knowledge in poetic craft and will be given time to write, share and revise their work. They will also take part in analytic classroom discussion to engage deeply with our theme.

Field Work

► *Saturday Excursions:*

Over three Saturdays from 11:00–2:00pm, we will explore three different communities in Boston. We will spend our lunch hour (1:00–2:00) eating at a neighborhood restaurant, discussing the excursion, and writing.

► *Introduction to Research:*

Students will learn how to gather sensory data and conduct primary research to inform our conversation and writing about inside/outside.

Final Project/Event

► *Community Leadership:*

Students will be involved in all aspects of organizing and implementing the final event. It will be a chance for them to share their discoveries with their communities and others.

► The Final Event will take place Wednesday evening (7/27), from 6:00–8:00pm.

► We will rent a community space (art gallery, local restaurant, or performance venue) to hold a poetry reading showcasing the students' work.

► An established poet from the Boston community will also be present at the event and share some of his or her work.

► The students may ask family and friends to attend the event, bringing together members from varying communities throughout Boston.

► A final magazine combining the students' work will be on display and copies will be available.

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Curriculum Outline/Calendar:

Wednesday, 7/6	Introduction to course theme, goals and final event. Lesson: Inspiration and Tone Why we are moved to write and how we communicate that inner impulse. Writing Exercise and Workshop #1
Saturday, 7/9	Excursion #1 Chinatown: gate, public park, and writing/restaurant.
Wednesday, 7/13	Debrief after excursion #1 Lesson: Imagery and Figurative Language How to bring meaningful sensory experience to the page. Visit from established poet who will be reading at the final event. Writing Exercise and Workshop #2
Saturday, 7/16	Excursion #2 Jamaica Plain: comparing different T-stops and writing/restaurant.
Wednesday, 7/ 20	Debrief after excursion #2 Lesson: Shape of the Poem and Revision What different forms does poetry take and why? What are some revision exercises to improve drafts of poems? Revision Exercise and Revision Workshop
Saturday, 7/ 23	Excursion #3 East Boston: public park and writing/restaurant.
Monday, 7/25	Debrief after excursion #3 Final event preparation.
Wednesday, 7/27	Final Event

Credentials and Professional Development

Sarah Ehrich:

My most important professional pursuits have been working with teenagers. After college, I spent two years as a full-time tutor and teaching assistant at Match Charter High School in Boston. After, I worked for another two years as an Admissions Counselor at Brandeis University, guiding teenagers and their families through the college application process. Currently, I work as a writing tutor at a Boston Public School, Snowden International, and co-teach a poetry course with EmersonWrites.

These experiences have exposed me to the persistent problem of the achievement gap in this country and have instilled in me a passion for using writing as a means to

giving students fundamental tools for success. I have both tutored students for MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) and taught them poetry, and I discovered the latter led to significant gains in confidence, self-awareness, investment in learning and critical thinking.

Teaching teenagers through POP! is a means to continue working toward the positive results I have seen in programs like EmersonWrites.

Meredith Jordan:

My previous teaching and mentorship experience qualifies me to be an instructor for POP! As an undergraduate, I took part in the teaching program titled the Young Poet's Society. For this creative writing enrichment program, I prepared 90-minute lesson plans for sixth and seventh grade students. After presenting a lesson on figurative language and the mechanics of poetry, I engaged the students in creative writing exercises. POP! would follow a similar format balancing a lesson with time to creatively write. I was also fortunate to become a peer mentor for the Honor Fraternity Phi Sigma Pi (PSP) during my time as an undergraduate. As the initiate advisor for PSP, I was responsible for coordinating service events for a class of 21 students where the students gained leadership skills and reached out to the community. At Emerson, I took the WR600 teaching class, which gave me concrete ideas on classroom management and lesson plan ideas. As part of my graduate fellowship, I worked with Professor Pablo Medina and reviewed his students' papers for a fiction course during the Spring 2011 semester. This gave me experience evaluating students' work.

This program will give me valuable teaching experience that will further my career goal to become a teacher of creative writing. I will gain skills in curriculum development in planning the coursework and classroom leadership as I manage a classroom of ten high school students. This project also furthers my fundamental belief the creative expression is important to learning and vital way for young people to express themselves.

POP! BUDGET

Expense Type		Cost
<i>Recruitment Costs</i>	Flyers (50 color copies)	\$20.00
	Transportation to BPS locations (5-8 school visits)	\$40.00
<i>Supplies and Materials</i>	Notebooks (1 per student)	\$20.00
	Pens and Dry Erase Markers	\$15.00
	Printing for Workshop and Handouts (6 classes)	\$60.00
<i>Saturday Excursions</i>	Transportation (12 people, 3 excursions)	\$145.00
	Lunch (10 students and 2 instructors, 3 excursions)	\$360.00
<i>Final Event</i>	Venue	\$300.00
	Refreshments	\$150.00
	Rentals (microphone, video camera, projector)	\$200.00
<i>Magazine</i>	50 magazines at \$6 each with color cover	\$300.00
		Total \$1,610.00

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Analysis: Making Purposes Visible

In some instances, such as Jennifer Gordon’s “Workers Without Borders,” proposals appear in the form of an essay. In other instances, however, such as Sarah Ehrich and Meredith Jordan’s Poets of Place (POP!), proposal writers use widely recognized conventions to make their purposes visible to a funding agency—in this case arranging the proposal into sections that describe the proposed activity, explain its rationale, and present the projected outcomes. Here the writers are attempting initially to persuade readers that their proposal has a worthy goal and meets a real need. Then, as readers turn to the following sections on logistics and the day-by-day breakdown of activities, they can judge for themselves whether the design of the proposed project is capable of promoting the outcomes just designated.

Σ FOR CRITICAL INQUIRY

1. Consider the case Sarah Ehrich and Meredith Jordan make on behalf of their summer poetry project. Notice in particular the order of supporting points in the Rationale section. What does the principle of organization seem to be? Why have they arranged things in this order? What effect does the order of ideas have on readers? Does the Rationale section seem to set up the Outcomes section?
2. How do the next three sections—Logistics, Curriculum Outline/Calendar, and Credentials and Professional Development—relate to the Rationale and Outcomes sections? Do they seem a logical extension?
3. Compare the POP! proposal to the Proposal for a Campus Coffee House in the Writers’ Workshop section at the end of the chapter. Notice the coffee house proposal labels main sections Problem and Solution instead of Description, Rationale, and Outcomes. What effect does this have on readers? What other differences do you see?

Research Proposal

Training Fighters, Making Men: A Study of Amateur Boxers and Trainers

Stacy Yi

Stacy Yi wrote this proposal for a class on urban ethnography that called on her to design a research project based on fieldwork.

Background

Significant research has been devoted to the sport of boxing, the majority of which has concerned itself with the economic achievements and careers of professional fighters (Dudley, 2002; Wacquant, 1998; Early, 1996; Hare, 1971; Weinberg & Arond, 1957). Yet the sport of boxing is pursued not only by professional pugilists but also by amateur and recreational boxers, for whom economic success and fame are not necessarily the

primary motivation. Rather, for a substantial number of athletes, boxing affords a set of possibilities that may not be available elsewhere. In a time of deindustrialization, changing social circumstances, and transformation of urban space, pugilism may enable the formation of identity accessible in few other social spaces. With declining employment opportunities, especially for inner-city men of color, the workplace is not always available as a site for young men to construct masculine selves. Thus, the boxing gym may offer one of the last social realms for the construction of identity, the expression of masculinity, and the negotiation of violence and aggression.

Objectives

Mention the terms “manly art” and “sweet science of bruising,” or merely the word boxing, and gender is implicit. Yet in order to understand the forms of masculinity implicit in the sport, gender must be analyzed explicitly. The research I propose examines the formation of identity in a boxing gym to understand how competitive amateur fighters use the culture of training and bodily discipline to create forms of masculinity. Michel Foucault suggests that discipline is a form of power that takes the body as its object; in institutions such as prisons, schools, the military, and, as I would contend, the gym, bodies are manipulated, trained, and thus transformed (Foucault, 1977). I would like to understand how the discipline demanded in the gym facilitates the production and transformation of masculinities and attendant forms of incorporated identity¹ (Connerton, 1989).

Understanding the formation of identity requires apprehending the social relations cultivated in the boxing gym. For this reason, my research examines the relationships developed between trainers and their boxers. Coaches and fighters characterize their relationships as those of life mentoring and deep social trust rather than as merely athletic. As coaches consider it their responsibility to provide both athletic and life guidance, I would like to understand the experiences that inform and shape the advice they impart and how they disseminate such information. Many trainers have, in their pasts, participated in criminal activity, been incarcerated, and engaged in a process of rehabilitation. I would like to discern how trainers simultaneously coach their athletes and discourage them from partaking in similar criminal activity. Thus my project seeks to examine the effect trainer-knowledge has on their athletes in relation to crime and life choices.

Focusing on trainers and amateur athletes, my specific research questions are: (1) what identities are created and performed in the boxing gym? (2) how do trainer-amateur boxer

¹In his work *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton makes the distinction between “assigned” and “incorporated” identities. Whereas assigned identities are largely non-negotiable, incorporated identities, such as forms of masculinity, are those individuals seek to produce or attempt to transform (Connerton, 1989).

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relationships factor in identity formation ? (3) how do trainers influence life choices and train their boxers in extra-athletic ways?

Research Plan and Methodological Approaches

My research will be conducted at Harry's East Side Gym. To examine the process by which identity is constructed and social relations between trainers and their athletes forged, I will employ two methods: participant observation and interviewing. Participant observation will allow me to document the patterns of social interaction in Harry's East Side Gym and to examine the multiple ways identity is formed and trainer guidance delivered (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Interviewing will allow me to investigate the dynamics of the relationships among boxing, identity formation, masculine selfhood, and life choices.

Participant Observation. Over the course of one year, I will follow a group of 25–30 amateur athletes, who train for the Golden Gloves of New York City, the most prestigious annual amateur event in boxing, and their trainers. I will recruit my sample based upon 5 trainers with whom I have established a close working relationship and who have agreed to collaborate with me. I plan to observe these athletes and their mentors beginning in September 2003, when training typically commences, and through the course of the tournament, which runs January through May. I also plan to observe the group after the tournament has finished—over the summer months—to study how the fighters use the gym and interact with their trainers when competition is not imminent. Over this year, I will examine the mundane daily activities and regimens of boxers and their trainers in the gym five days a week. I will also accompany them to the tournament in order to observe their extraordinary experiences of competition, talking with them before and after the fights. As they prepare for the Golden Gloves, I plan to analyze the social relations between the amateurs and their trainers, examining how homosocial bonding develops and shapes the process of training. I plan to study how the athlete-coach relationship emerges and influences the decisions boxers make about labor, leisure, and crime.

Interviewing. In addition to participant observation, I will also conduct 25–30 extensive, open-ended interviews with the amateur boxers and their trainers. One goal of the interviews is to identify the range of recurring themes associated with identity, mentoring, violence, and life choices. These interviews will focus on the meanings that informants attach to their participation in the sport, the range of experiences they have had with boxing, and the alternatives boxing may offer to street crime. In structuring and conducting these interviews, I am particularly interested in fighters' own expectations of training and competition: why they became involved and how they assess their progress. Of crucial importance is how they conceptualize violence and corporeal harm in the sport and how

they envision their participation in this dynamic of physical conflict. I will also examine the connections between their activities in the gym and other aspects of their lives, such as labor, leisure, education, and family.

Based upon these open-ended interviews, I will then re-interview the group of boxers and trainers with a structured battery of questions about the factors involved in their senses of identity, their connection with boxing and with the mentor-mentee relationship. I will standardize my list of questions in order to facilitate a comparison of my respondents' answers. Together, these methods will enable an understanding of how identity and masculinity are formed, contested, or perhaps exposed as unstable. They will also provide an elucidation of how trainers intervene, inform and shape this process.

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Analysis: Research Proposals

Research proposals are similar in many respects to other types of proposals, whether to change a policy or improve a service. The same task of defining a problem and then proposing a satisfactory solution is common to all. What distinguishes a research proposal is that the problem is one of understanding something—the structure of DNA, the effects of asbestos on the health of South African miners, or the legacy of slavery in the United States—and the solution is to design a workable research plan to investigate the subject and produce new insights. Most research proposals seek to persuade the reader about the merit of the research and the researcher's ability to carry it out.

The research question or questions in a proposal are crucial. As you can see in this proposal, the research plan follows from the questions Stacy Yi wants to answer. Explaining the central research questions accomplishes two things in the

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proposal. First, it tells readers why the research is meaningful. Second, it enables them to judge whether the proposed plan of action is in fact well-suited to answer the questions.

Σ FOR CRITICAL INQUIRY

1. Consider the first two sections of “Training Fighters, Making Men.” How does the Background section identify a neglected area of study? How does the Objectives section raise specific questions about amateur boxers?
2. Evaluate the match between the research questions and the research plan in the proposal. Does the research plan seem capable of providing answers to the questions each of the fieldwork proposals raises? Why or why not?
3. How does the discussion of methodological approaches relate to the research plan and the research question? How does it add (or does it) to the persuasiveness of the research proposal?

Petitions

Tell Apple: Stop Slavery Practices at Foxconn’s Manufactories

Monica Balmelli

Support and Pass the California Dream Act

California Dream Network

Petitions are an indispensable part of a democratic society, offering citizens the means to express their views and call for changes in public policy. You might think of petitions as a sub-genre of proposals. The two petitions in this section provide good examples of how individuals and advocacy groups use petitions to propose change—to call on people to understand the urgency of their proposals and to give support by joining others in signing a petition.

The first petition “Tell Apple: Stop Slavery Practices at Foxconn’s Manufactories” was written by an individual, Monica Balmelli, and posted on the progressive Web site for online petitions Change.org. This petition calls for a change in labor policy at the Chinese plants of a major Apple supplier. You can read Monica Balmelli’s explanation “Why This Is Important” to understand the issues involved. You can read the report that Balmelli refers to, “Foxconn and Apple Fail to Fulfill Promises: Predicaments of Workers After the Suicides,” at Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour Web site www.sacom.hk.

The second comes from the successful campaign of the California Dream Network to pass two acts of legislation, AB130 and AB131, guaranteeing that undocumented students in the California state system of higher education can receive private and public financial aid. Both these bills were passed, and this selection opens with a brief explanation from the California Dream Network “How We Won.”



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Tell Apple: Stop Slavery Practices at Foxconn's Manufactories

Why This Is Important

I'm a music lover. So when Apple introduced the first iPod, I eagerly bought one. Several years later, I also bought an iPhone and an iPad. I love Apple so these were easy purchases. But when I learned about the suicides and slavery conditions at the Apple factories in China, I rethought my purchases, and started doing some research about these allegations.

Foxconn is the manufactory of Apple Inc. in China where workers are subjected to unlawful and dehumanizing working conditions.

According to Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM), workers are often forced to work 6–7 days a week, resulting in a monthly overtime 2–3 times over the legal limit. Many times these employees are enclosed and forced to work overtime until they reach their daily productivity goal. Furthermore, when this goal is not met, the workers are at the mercy of the abuse of the managers, which is so brutal that Foxconn has been forced to acknowledge this problem.

Even more disturbing are the suicides where exhausted workers jump out the factory windows. There have been reports that Foxconn employed counselors in order to support the workers with the intensive work pressured to avoid more suicides during labor hours. Additionally, I found some reports that jumping nets were placed outside windows.

There were also reports of unsafe exposure to dangerous chemicals and operation of machines without proper training and safety procedures, which often result in injuries that are not compensated.

Due to their low wages, workers are forced to live inside the factory. Sometimes these dorms are not only partially built, but they also lack electricity and water; and rooms are shared by 5–20 people. However, most damaging is the restriction on workers of forming unions and selecting their representatives in order to advocate for better working and living conditions.

SACOM has been evaluating and monitoring Apple promises for years now, but little or no improvement for these workers has been achieved. I have attached some of their reports and video in this petition.

Source: "Tell Apple: Stop Slavery Practices at Foxconn's Manufactories" by Monica Balmelli. <http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-apple-stop-slavery-practices-at-foxconns-manufactories>. Content on the site is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

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As a longtime Apple consumer, I feel responsible for supporting a product at such a high human cost. My Apple products are a big part of my life, but at what cost? I want to buy products made with dignity, not out of suicides and exploitation.

For that reason, I'm asking you to join me and tell Apple Inc. and Foxconn to stop this corporation malpractice. We want to see the workers in a safe work environment according to law, with all the requirements that a human being needs in order to be healthy and safe and to live a worthy life.

The Petition

We the undersigned are asking Apple Inc. to provide a safe, healthy, and worthy work environment for the employees at Foxconn manufactories.

As much as we, the consumers, like Apple products, we are not willing to compromise the dignity of other human beings. We are aware that the employees at Foxconn are forced to work long hours that exceed the legal overtime in China, and even without a meal and a break in order to meet the daily production goal. We are also aware of the abuse that the employees are subject by the managers in order to meet the expected production target. Furthermore, workers are exposed to dangerous chemicals, and operate machines without proper training and safety procedures, which unfortunately often results in injuries that are not compensated.

Another issue is the low wages, which force workers to live in dormitories that in most cases are not adapted for a decent and comfortable living. In many factories, the dorms are partly built, restricted from washing clothes, and electricity and water are limited.

For this reasons, we are asking Apple to remedy the labor conditions at Foxconn by:

1. Allowing workers to have a break and lunchtime, as the law labor requires in China.
2. Allowing workers to select representatives and organize unions according the Trade Union Law in China.
3. Providing compensation due to injuries and rights violations to workers.
4. Allowing an independent third party to monitor Foxconn labor policies.

As customers of Apple Inc., the quality of your products is equally important as the treatment of the workers at your overseas manufactories. Here in the USA, Apple plants and offices have outstanding working conditions, and we would like to see that vision transferred to the manufactories in China by eliminating the slavery sweatshops conditions. Therefore, we are advocating for collaboration between Apple and Foxconn in order to meet the goals above.

For the last years, Apple has delivered the best technology, but now it is time to deliver the best lawful work environment for the employees at Foxconn, whom after all, are the ones that have made all this success possible for the company by manufacturing quality products.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Support and Pass the California Dream Act

How We Won

Oct 10, 2011

Every year, about 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools and 40 percent of them reside in California. But in California, those students were blocked from accessing financial aid to further their studies—something that resulted in thousands of would-be college graduates not furthering their educations. Now, thanks to more than 12,400 supporters who signed a petition, made calls, and demanded equal access to education in California, the state will see thousands and thousands of new graduates each year.

The full California DREAM Act ensures that undocumented students in the state can apply for and receive private and public financial aid. From the beginning, the bill faced enormous hurdles, as misinformation flowed, the bill was tied up in committee and seemed like it wouldn't reach the floor for a vote in time, and, finally, lingered on the governor's desk as it awaited a signature.

But students from the California Dream Network mobilized around the petition, organized personal deliveries around the state, and encouraged supporters to make daily calls to legislators and the governor to make sure that the dreams of so many Californians would not be overlooked. It worked: On October 8, 2011, Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 131, the final half of the California Dream Network, into law!

The Petition

Greetings,

We, the undersigned, urge the State Legislature and Governor Brown to support equal access to higher education for all students and pass the California Dream Act (AB 130 and AB131).

Every year, approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high schools across the nation with 40 percent of them residing in the state of California. A significant number of these hard-working immigrant youth are student body presidents, honor students, dynamic community leaders, outstanding athletes, and aspiring professionals who desire to pursue and complete a higher education and contribute back to their communities. However, due to their immigration status undocumented students are unable to apply and receive state or federal financial aid and thus cannot pursue their educational goals at their full potential.

Both, AB 130 and AB 131 would ensure that California's investment in the education of immigrant youth continues beyond K–12 by granting hard-working undocumented

Source: "Support and Pass the California Dream Act." <http://www.change.org/petitions/support-and-pass-the-ca-dream-act-2>. Content on the site is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

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youth the opportunity to pursue and achieve their higher educational goals and thus create a more educated, innovative and competitive workforce. AB 130 would allow students that meet in-state tuition requirements to apply and receive scholarships derived from non-state funds at their respective colleges or universities. AB 131 would go one step further by allowing eligible students to apply and receive financial aid at California public colleges and universities. The types of financial aid these students would be eligible for include Cal Grants, Institutional Student Aid, and Board of Governors Fee Waiver.

The California Dream Act has enjoyed broad support in the past and reached the Governor's desk only to be vetoed in four different occasions: 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010. We urge you to take leadership and support immigrant youth to ensure the economic prosperity and future of California by signing the CA Dream Act into law in 2011.

The CA Dream Act has gained support from different faith groups, businesses, chambers of commerce, and community organizations such as the Greater Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, CHIRLA, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, ACLU, the University of California, and the California Federation of Teachers only to name a few.

Undocumented students are some of the most hard-working and brightest students in the nation who aspire to become teachers, engineers, politicians, doctors, and productive members of our society. At a time when the economic projections for the state of California suggest that by 2025, two of every five jobs will require a college graduate, we must ensure that all California students have equal access to higher education. It is in the best interest of our state's economy and future and that of the country to have an educated workforce to provide the innovation and leadership necessary to keep California at the forefront of the global economy and maintain its historic tradition as a national leader in enacting progressive legislation.

I strongly urge the State Legislature and Governor Brown to show leadership on this issue, and support and immediately pass the California Dream Act (AB 130 and AB 131) in 2011.

[Your name]

Analysis: The Signer's Identity

One interesting difference between the two petitions is the identity the petition makes available to the signer. Each petition, in a sense, offers a shared sense of common endeavor with the other signers. In "Tell Apple: Stop Slavery Practices at Foxconn's Manufactories," signers are identified in a general sense as consumers and in particular as Apple users and lovers. This enables a certain appeal on the part of signers for Apple to match the quality of its design and production with quality working conditions for the people who make the high-quality products. "Support and Pass

the California Dream Act,” on the other hand, opens by identifying signers simply as “we, the undersigned.” Who this “we” amounts to becomes clearer a bit later when the petition lists the many business, religious, civic, legal, community, and educational groups and institutions that support the act—projecting a strong sense of bipartisan support that cuts across political lines. Notice how the “we” is further modified in the next to last paragraph, when it is represented in terms of “our society” and “our state’s economy and future”—how signers, in effect, come together in their concern that California remain “at the forefront of the global economy.”

Σ» FOR CRITICAL INQUIRY

1. Consider how the background statement written by Monica Balmelli, “Why This Is Important,” sets up the call to sign the petition “Tell Apple: Stop Slavery Practices at Foxconn’s Manufactories.” Identify the reasons Balmelli gives for signing the petition. Identify which of these reasons appear in the petition itself. Compare the appeal Balmelli makes to readers to sign the petition to the appeal in the petition to Apple. Explain the differences and similarities.
2. Identify how undocumented students are portrayed in the “Support and Pass the California Dream Act” petition. Notice, for example, the term “hard-working” appears three times. What is the California Dream Network, the advocacy group that wrote the petition, trying to accomplish by this portrayal? How does this picture of undocumented students relate to other themes in the petition?
3. Compare the rhetorical situations that the petitions seem to be responding to. How is the call to write, the urgency of the petition, defined in each case? Can you imagine other ways of presenting the call to write? How do the two petitions respond? What do you see as interesting differences and similarities?

ETHICS OF WRITING

PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS

Understanding the situations that confront us in everyday life and in public affairs as problems that can be solved is a powerful way of making reality appear to be more manageable. Once you have defined a problem, it then becomes possible to think in terms of a solution.

It’s important to recognize that problems don’t just pop up out of the blue. They take shape according to the way people define them based on the urgencies they are feeling. In turn, depending on how the problem is defined, particular solutions seem more—or less—logical than others. Formulating a problem invariably means positioning yourself in relation to

what others think and believe—aligning yourself with particular values and beliefs and distancing yourself from others.

Problems, in other words, grow out of underlying differences and conflicts about values and beliefs which can lead to very different statements of the problem and thus to different proposed solutions. At the same time, defining social situations strictly as problems can paper over long-term conflicts and differences, causing experts and professionals to be culturally insensitive to the lay people they serve and, unthinkingly, impose their own values and beliefs in the name of solving problems.

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MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION

Web Site: Forgive Student Loan Debt to Stimulate the Economy

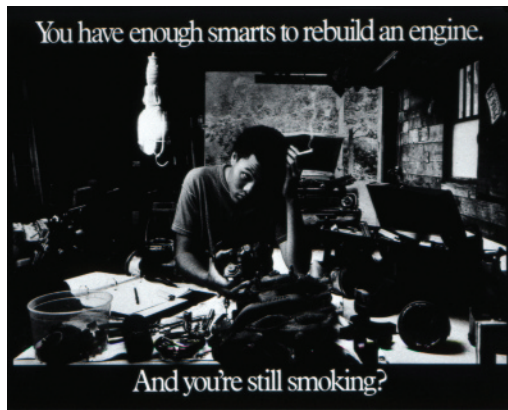
The Web site for Robert Applebaum's campaign Forgive Student Loan Debt is built around the proposal that calls on President Obama and Congress to abolish student loan debt as a means of economic stimulus. "Free us of our obligations to repay our out-of-control student loan debt," the proposal says, "and we, the hardworking, middle-class Americans who drive this economy will spend those extra dollars now." As you can see by browsing around the Web site, the basic appeal of the proposal appears repeatedly: ending student debt repayment is not just a bailout for one group but benefits everyone by spurring economic growth. Notice how the Web site is constructed of links that take readers to multiple genres and subgenres of writing (including proposal, FAQs, petition, blog, news stories, and reading lists), multiple media platforms (such as Facebook, Tumblr, and YouTube), and multiple modalities (from writing to audio and video, to T-shirts). Printed flyers like this one are standard features in advocacy campaigns of all sorts, combining, in this example, text and the campaign logo. Notice how it adds another dimension by offering tear-off tabs at the bottom with the campaign's URL.



Courtesy of Founder, Robert Applebaum, ForgiveStudentLoanDebt.com

Posters: Health Advocacy Campaigns

Since the 1964 Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health made the dangers of smoking widely known, organizations such as the American Lung Association and Centers for Disease Control have combined visual and verbal resources in public health posters that call on people to stop smoking or to not start in the first place. The challenge these anti-smoking campaigns have faced over the years is the relentless marketing of cigarettes by tobacco companies and the images of glamour, masculinity, sophistication, and pleasure that have been associated in the media and popular culture with smoking. To be persuasive, anti-smoking posters have to redefine the cultural meaning of smoking and the identities cigarette ads offer to smokers—to provide positive alternative images of nonsmokers. For background, go to “Visual Culture and Public Health Posters” at the U.S. National Library of Medicine Web site <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/visualculture/index.html> and click on “Anti-Smoking Campaigns.”

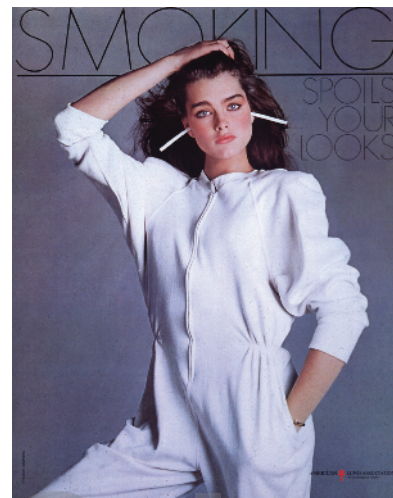


U.S. National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health

Consider how the four anti-smoking posters have created rhetorical stances that invite readers/viewers to take on identities as nonsmokers. Begin by examining the appeal of cigarette advertising. Cigarette ads from the past can be found easily online by Googling “cigarette advertising history” and hitting Images. Consider the four ads presented here and how they counter the allure of smoking. To what extent do they use fear of the dangers of smoking? To what extent do they project positive benefits of not smoking? How do the posters combine brief passages of written text with visual images to form one message?



Dejé de Fumar poster reproduced with permission. © 2012 American Lung Association. www.Lung.org



American Lung Association.

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California Department of Public Health

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Rhetorical Analysis

Analyze the argument in one (or more) of the proposals in this chapter. Pay particular attention to the enabling assumptions that connect the claim (the writer's proposal) and the evidence. Consider how the shape of the writer's argument is likely to influence readers' evaluations of whether the proposal is feasible or not.

Genre Awareness

Think of a current problem—campus-wide, local, national, or international. Imagine a feasible solution to the problem. You could write a formal proposal to solve the problem, as the students who proposed a campus coffee house did—see the Writers' Workshop section, later in this chapter. Let's assume you're really serious about getting your proposal implemented. What other genres of writing might you use to publicize your proposal?

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment, write a proposal that formulates a problem and offers a solution. Think of an existing situation that calls for attention, whether it is on campus or at the local, national, or international level. Something may be wrong that needs to be changed. Something may be lacking that needs to be added. Something worthwhile may not be working properly and therefore needs to be improved. Or it may be that a situation needs to be redefined in order to find new approaches and solutions.

Proposals can be group projects or done individually. Here are some possibilities:

- ▶ **Public policy proposals:** These range from op-ed pieces in newspapers, like Jennifer Gordon's "Workers Without Borders," to petitions and legislation that propose to do things such as change immigration laws, recognize gay and lesbian relationships, require a balanced budget, or devise a national health care plan.
- ▶ **Proposals for new or improved services:** Proposals call on government agencies, professional associations, educational institutions, and private foundations to provide new or improved services—for example in health care, education, and recreation. Sarah Ehrich and Meredith Jordan's proposal for a summer poetry program for Boston Public School teenagers and "Proposal for a Campus Coffee House" (see Writers' Workshop) are good examples of this type of proposal. You might write a proposal based on a situation you see on campus—to improve residential life, food service, social climate, advising, or academic programs. Or you may want to write a proposal for new or improved services in your local community or at the state or federal level.
- ▶ **Research proposals:** Stacy Yi's "Training Fighters, Making Men" offers an example of a research proposal. You might draw on one of the classes you're taking right now to write a research proposal. What is an interesting and important problem or issue that has emerged in readings, lectures, and discussions? How would you go about researching it?

Multimodal Composition

- ▶ Design a Web site for an advocacy campaign by an existing organization or one that you make up. Create a name and a logo for the campaign; include the goals and strategy of the campaign, its audience, and the types of written and visual material needed to carry out the campaign. The forgive student loan debt and anti-smoking campaigns in this chapter offer examples.
- ▶ Design a poster that promotes healthy behaviors, such as the anti-smoking messages. Consider the limits of "just say no" campaigns. Is it realistic to abolish a particular behavior or should you design messages calling on people to better manage risk in terms of diet, drinking, sexual behavior, drugs, and so on? How can you do this by linking an image and a catchy phrase or two?

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Invention

To think about proposals you might write, work through the following exercises. Your proposal may well grow out of a situation you are currently in, or it may stem from an experience you have had in the recent past.

1. Start by taking an inventory of the issues around you that might call for a solution. Begin by thinking small and local. What groups, clubs, teams, or other organizations do you belong to? What issues face these groups? What issues face students at your college or university?
2. Now broaden your thinking to national and international issues. What do you see as real problems? Which problems do you care enough about to spend time researching and proposing a solution to? Who might listen to you? What is the best forum for getting people to hear your proposal?
3. Once you have created your list of possibilities, narrow it down to the three most promising options, beginning with the ones you care most about or that have the potential to make your life (or that of others) markedly better.
4. Decide tentatively on the audience. Who can realistically make changes happen? To whom do you have realistic access? With whom do you have credibility? Create a list of possible audiences and consider the implications each audience holds for the successful implementation of your proposal. Your definition of the problem may change depending on your audience. Do these shifts in definition hold any consequences for you or for those you are trying to help?

Background Research: Formulating the Problem

By formulating problems, writers take situations that already exist and point out what aspects call for urgent attention and action. In this sense, problem formulation is always in part an interpretation—a way of establishing the relevance of a problem to readers.

Illegal drugs are a good example of how problems can be defined in a number of ways. Some would say, for example, the problem is that illegal drug trade results in police corruption and powerful underworld drug cartels. Others would argue that drugs are causing social decay and destroying the moral fiber of a generation of American young people. Still others would hold that Americans and drug laws haven't distinguished adequately between recreational drugs like marijuana and addictive drugs like heroin and cocaine. In the following chart, notice how different problem formulation leads to different proposals.

Issue	Illegal drug use		
Problem	Underworld drug trade	Social decay	Need for redefinition
Proposed Solution	Step up war against major drug dealers.	Educate and create jobs programs.	Decriminalize marijuana.
	Cut off drugs at point of distribution.	Eliminate conditions of drug use, such as poverty and hopelessness.	Make legal distinctions that recognize differences among drugs (recreational versus addictive).

Use the chart as a guide to analyze an existing situation by breaking it down into a number of problems and solutions. You will probably not be able to address in one proposal all the aspects of the situation that you identify as problems. In fact, you may find that the proposed solutions suggested by the various problems are contradictory or mutually exclusive.

Assessing Alternatives

Once you have identified a number of possible solutions to the problems you've defined, you can then assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of proposals. One way to do this is to test the feasibility of proposed solutions—their capability and suitability to solve problems. Again this can be done by using a chart:

Problem	What policy on international drug trade should the government follow?	
Proposed Solution	Legalize drug trade under state control.	Step up the war against international drug trade.
Capability	Unknown. Costs and benefits uncertain. Would require considerable administration. What about possible black market?	Could reduce amount of illegal drugs to enter the U.S. However, very costly to have widespread effect. What about domestic trade?
Suitability	Politically unpopular. Voters would interpret as a state endorsement of drug use.	Foreign policy implications must be carefully considered.

Planning

Relative Emphasis on the Problem and the Solution

In proposals, the amount of space devoted to formulating the problem and to explaining the solution may vary considerably, depending on the writer's situation and purposes. Look, for example, at the relative emphasis on the problem and on the solution in Stacy Yi's research proposal "Training Fighters, Making Men" and in Jennifer Gordon's "Workers Without Borders."

"Training Fighters, Making Men"

- ¶1: Gives background
- ¶2–5: States objectives of study and research questions (the problem)
- ¶6–10: Presents research plan and methods (the solution)
- ¶9: Indicates significance of research

Notice in this case that 50 percent of the proposal (¶1–5) is concerned with formulating the problem in the Background and Objectives sections, while the second half of the proposal (¶6–10) consists of explaining the solution in the Research Plan.

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This makes sense, for a research proposal needs to indicate how a researcher plans to answer her research question. On the other hand, Jennifer Gordon devotes only the first two paragraphs (out of 13 total) to formulating the problem and the rest to presenting a solution (in ¶3–13)

Developing a Working Outline

Review the writing and thinking you've done so far. Use the following guidelines to sketch a working outline of your proposal. The guidelines indicate the main issues that writers typically address to design persuasive proposals.

1. **State the problem:** Decide how readily readers will recognize the problem and how much agreement already exists about how to solve it. Your first task is to establish the relevance of the problem to your intended audience. Who does the problem affect? What makes it urgent? What will happen if the problem is not addressed?
2. **Describe the solution:** Because effective proposals present both general goals that appeal to shared values and attitudes and the specific solution to be accomplished, you need to state the goals you have identified and then state clearly how and why your proposed solution will work. Describe the solution and the steps needed to implement it. Decide on the level of detail required to give readers the necessary information to evaluate your proposal.
3. **Explain reasons:** Identify the best reasons in support of your proposal. Consider the available alternatives and to what length you need to address them. Finally, think about what counterarguments are likely to arise and to what length you need to deal with them.
4. **Ending:** Some proposals have short endings that reinforce the main point. Others, such as the advertisements commonly found in magazines and newspapers, end by calling on readers to do something.

Working Draft

Use the working outline you have developed to write a draft of your proposal.

Matching Problems and Solutions

Perhaps the most important feature of a persuasive proposal is the match between the problem as the writer defines it and the solution as the writer describes and explains it. Unless the two fit together in a logical and compelling way, readers are unlikely to have confidence in the proposal.

Proposal writers often link solutions to problems in two ways—in terms of long-term goals and specific objectives. Long-term goals project a vision of what the proposed solution can do over time, whereas specific objectives tell who is going to do what, when they are going to do it, what the projected results will be, and (in some instances) how the results will be measured.

As you design your proposal, consider how you can effectively present your goals and objectives. Your goals will give readers a sense of your values and offer common ground as the basis for readers' support, and your objectives will help convince readers you have a concrete plan of action that can succeed.

Peer Commentary

Once you have written a draft proposal, exchange drafts with a classmate. If you are working in a group, exchange drafts among groups. Write a commentary to the draft, using the following guidelines.

1. How does the proposal establish the need for something to be done—by defining a problem, describing a situation, using an example, providing facts and background information? Is the need for action convincing? Who is likely to recognize and want to address the main issue of the proposal? Who might feel excluded? Is there any way to include more potential supporters?
2. Where does the proposal first appear? Is it clear and easy to find? Put the proposal in your own words. If you cannot readily paraphrase it, explain why. What are the long-term goals? What are the specific objectives of the proposal? Is it clear who is going to do what, when, how much, and (if appropriate) how the results will be evaluated? Do you think the proposal will have the results intended? Why or why not? What other results might occur?
3. What reasons are offered on behalf of the proposal? Do you find these reasons persuasive? Why or why not? Are these the best reasons available? What other reasons might the writer use?
4. Does the solution appear to be feasible? Why or why not? Does the writer need to include more information to make the proposal seem more feasible? What would it take to convince you that this proposal would work?
5. Is the proposal addressed to an appropriate audience? Can the audience do anything to support the actions suggested in the proposal? If not, can you suggest a more appropriate audience? If so, does the way the proposal is written seem suitable for that audience? Point to specific places in the text that need revision. What kinds of changes would make the proposal work better for the audience?

Revising

Now that you have received feedback on your proposal, you can make the revisions you think are necessary—to make sure that the solution you propose follows logically and persuasively from the problem as you have defined it. To help you assess the relationship between your problem formulation and the solution you propose, consider this early draft of the problem and solution sections of the “Proposal for a Campus Coffee House.”

Notice two things. First, this proposal devotes approximately equal space to the problem and to the solution. Second, the early draft does not clearly separate the problem statement from the solution statement. In fact, as you can see, the problem

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is initially defined as the lack of a solution—a logical confusion that will make readers conclude that the reasoning is circular (the reason we need X is because we don't have it), which is not likely to be very persuasive. To see how the writer straightened out the relationship between problems and solutions, compare this early draft to the revised version that appears in Writers' Workshop.

Early Draft

The Problem: Drinking on Campus

The absence of an alcohol-free social life has become a major problem at Warehouse State. Because there are no alternatives, campus social life is dominated by the fraternities, whose parties make alcohol easily available to minors. Off campus, local bars that feature live bands are popular with students, and underage students have little difficulty obtaining and using fake IDs.

The Student Counseling Center currently counsels students with drinking problems and has recently instituted a peer counselor program to educate students about the risks of drinking. Such programs, however, will be limited and largely reactive unless there are alcohol-free alternatives to social life on campus.

The Solution: Campus Coffee House

The Student Management Club proposes to operate a campus coffee house with live entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights in order to provide an alcohol-free social environment on campus for 200 students (capacity of auxiliary dining room in Morgan Commons when set up cabaret-style).

Such a campus coffee house would have a number of benefits. It would help stop the high levels of drinking on campus by both legal and underage students (Martinez & Johnson, 2010), as well as the "binge drinking" that has increased the number of students admitted to the student infirmary for excessive drinking by almost 50% in the last four years. It would serve as a public endorsement of alcohol-free social life, enhance student culture by providing low-cost alcohol-free entertainment on campus, and support current ongoing alcohol abuse treatment and prevention programs.

WRITERS' WORKSHOP

A group of three students wrote the following “Proposal for a Campus Coffee House” in response to an assignment in a business writing class that called on students to produce a collaboratively written proposal to deal with a campus problem. Their commentary on the decisions they made formulating problems and solutions and designing the format appears after the proposal.

PROPOSAL

Proposal for a Campus Coffee House

To meet the problem of excessive drinking on campus, we propose that a coffee house, open on Friday and Saturday nights with live entertainment, be established in the auxiliary dining room in Morgan Commons and operated by the Student Management Club to provide an alcohol-free alternative to undergraduate social life.

The Problem: Drinking on Campus

A recent study by the Student Health Center indicates high levels of drinking by undergraduates on campus (Martinez & Johnson, 2010). Both legal and underage students drink frequently (Fig. 1). They also increasingly engage in unhealthy “binge

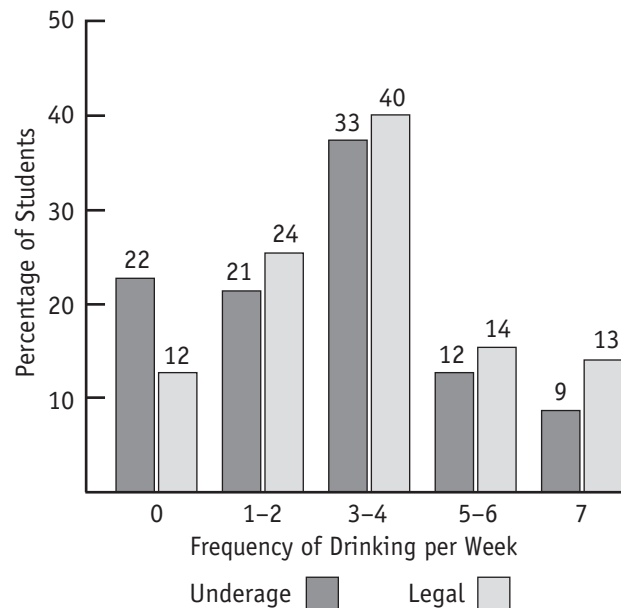


Fig. 1 Frequency of Drinking Per Week, Underage and Legal

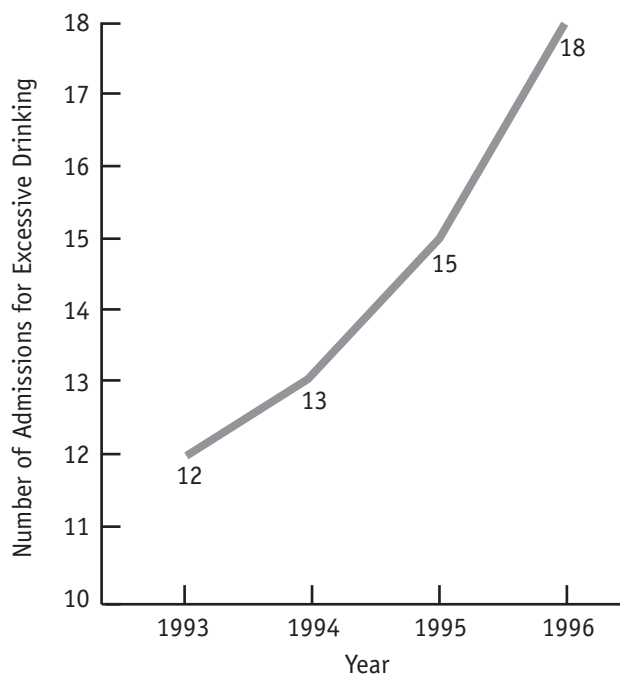


Fig. 2 Admissions to Student Infirmary for Excessive Drinking

drinking” to the point of unconsciousness. The number of students admitted to the student infirmary for excessive drinking has increased almost 50% in the past four years (Fig. 2). These patterns of drinking conform to those observed in a recent national study (Dollenmayer, 2008). Like many other colleges and universities, Warehouse State is faced with a serious student drinking problem (Weiss, 2007).

Currently there are few alternatives for students seeking an alcohol-free social life. Campus social life is dominated by the fraternities, whose parties make alcohol easily available to minors. Off campus, local bars that feature live bands are popular with students, and underage students have little difficulty obtaining and using fake IDs.

The Solution: Campus Coffee House

The Student Management Club proposes to operate a campus coffee house with live entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights in order to provide an alcohol-free social environment on campus for 200 students (capacity of auxiliary dining room in Morgan Commons when set up cabaret-style).

Such a campus coffee house would have a number of benefits. It would serve as a public endorsement of alcohol-free social life, enhance student culture by providing low-cost alcohol-free entertainment on campus, and support current ongoing alcohol abuse treatment and prevention programs. The Student Counseling Center currently counsels students with drinking problems and has recently instituted a promising peer counselor program to educate students about the risks of drinking. Such programs, however, will be limited and largely reactive unless there are alcohol-free alternatives to social life on campus.

Organizational Capability

The Student Management Club has the experience and expertise needed to run the proposed coffee house. Since 1991, it has successfully run a coffee counter in Adams Union, open five days a week from 8 to 3:30. Management majors are interested in expanding their work into the areas of arts programming and publicity.

Budget

The proposed campus coffee house will require initial funding of \$1,250 to begin operations. See cost breakdown in Table 1, Initial Expenditure. We believe, however, that such expenditures are one-time only and that the campus coffee house should become self-supporting. See projected budget in Table 2.

TABLE 1 INITIAL EXPENDITURES

Supplies (mugs, plates, spoons, forks, paper products, etc.)	\$ 750
Coffee, tea, milk, pastries	250
Publicity	250
Total	\$1,250

TABLE 2 PROJECTED BUDGET

Per evening of operation			
Income		Expenses	
(estimated)	\$400	Entertainment (band or singer)	\$100.00
		Staff (2 persons, 5 hrs each @\$5.35)	53.50
		Supplies	75.00
		Food	100.00
		Publicity	25.00
		Total	\$353.50

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- Martinez, M., & Johnson, R. (2010). Alcohol use and campus social life. Livingston, NM: Student Health Center, Warehouse State University.
- Weiss, I. (2007, December 2). Drinking deaths prompt concern on campus. *New York Times*, pp. 1, 7.

Writers' Commentary

Following are excerpts from a group meeting, which the participants taped. Here are some passages from the transcript where the three group members, Kathy, Andrea, and Bruce, talk about why they got involved in the coffee house project and how they went about writing the proposal.

KATHY: One of the things that has been interesting about working in this group is that the members come to it from different perspectives. Andrea and I see the coffee house more as a crusade against drinking, which we've watched do a lot of damage to some people we know. So that's a pretty big motivation to get involved, to provide alternatives. Bruce, I think, is into it more out of his interest in folk music and running coffee houses.

BRUCE: Yeah, I mean I do support the idea of having alcohol-free alternative places for students to go. That makes sense to me. But, I agree, definitely. My main thing is arts programming and administration, that whole business. If I can, that's what I want to do when I graduate.

Some of that came up when we were trying to think of reasons for the coffee house, and I was into how it would help promote the arts on campus. We ended up not using that stuff.

ANDREA: Right, but I think Kathy and I became more aware of how we had to make sure the proposal didn't sound moralistic. Remember at first we defined the problem as "drinking on campus" and only later changed it to "excessive drinking." We wanted the proposal to sound positive—that a coffee house would enhance student life.

BRUCE: Exactly. We didn't want it to sound like punishment. And you're right, the proposal doesn't really come out against drinking as the problem but against excessive drinking, binge drinking. I mean alcohol is legal for people over 21. Besides it's unrealistic to think a campus coffee house or anything else for that matter is going to end drinking on campus.

ANDREA: Another thing I felt we tried to do in the proposal was link the coffee house concept to other campus anti-drinking programs. I thought we did a pretty good job of listing benefits in the solution section.

Σ⇒ WORKSHOP QUESTIONS

1. Consider how well the proposed solution matches the problem defined in this proposal. Is the problem well defined and substantiated by adequate evidence? Does the proposed solution seem to offer a feasible approach to excessive drinking on campus? Are there other important factors the writers have not taken into account?
2. The writers, as you may have noticed, are reasonably concerned that their proposal not sound moralistic, even though Kathy and Andrea were initially interested in the idea because of their strong feelings about drinking. Do you think they have been successful in presenting their proposal as a “positive” step to “enhance student life”? If so, what is it about the proposal that creates this impression? If not, why?
3. Imagine that you are on a campus committee that reviews proposals and decides which ones to support. There are more worthy proposals than there are funds available, so you will have to make some hard decisions. The proposal for a campus coffee house is one of the finalists, and the committee plans to meet each group of proposers before making its decision. Draw up a list of questions you would ask Kathy, Andrea, and Bruce to help you make a decision.

REFLECTING ON YOUR WRITING

If you did a group proposal, when you have finished, hold a meeting to look back and evaluate the experience of working together.

1. Explore the reasons each member was drawn to the problem the proposal addresses. To what extent do these reasons overlap? How are they distinct from each other? How did they combine in the group? What influence did this have on writing the proposal?
2. Describe how the group went about writing the proposal. What parts went smoothly? What problems, if any, did the group have? How did individual members and the group deal with problems in the writing?

If you wrote an individual proposal, ask similar questions: What called you to the problem you address? What made it important or urgent? How did you go about writing the proposal? What was easy about it? What problems, if any, did you have? How did you deal with these problems?

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