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## Grant and Proposal Writing

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# Grant Writing

Students Engage in Real-World Projects



Dr. Elizabeth Giddens  
Photo taken by Sarah Jones

*The MAPW Grant and Proposal Writing course presents students an opportunity to research, plan, draft, and finalize a set of proposals including a business sales proposal, a letter proposal to a foundation, and a grant application to a government agency. The assignments also involve students in work with actual organizations or clients, as well as in collaboration with classmates and organization representatives. Dr. Elizabeth Giddens, teaches the course, and in the following Q&A, she provides some insight into the course content and opportunities for professional development.*

Could you provide a brief description of the Grant and Proposal Writing course and your favorite part about teaching the course?

It's a course to introduce folks to proposal and grant writing. Because almost every professional writer will work on a proposal at some point, MAPW students in all three concentrations—as well as students from other disciplines—benefit from learning how to locate, read, and respond to calls for proposals. Creative writers are likely to write for funding to support their work. Nonprofit writers will write case statements, letter proposals, and competitive proposals for their employers, and business writers will work on sales proposals. Proposal writing is ubiquitous in professional work.

I enjoy seeing students engage in the creative and strategic process of responding to a Request For Proposals (RFP) and designing a proposal that is compelling and pragmatic. It's no good to write a proposal for work that cannot be done on time and on budget, so writers have to work within constraints, and that process is quite creative.

What sort of projects are developed in the class? What is your favorite one and why?

Students write a business proposal, a letter proposal, and a narrative for a competitive foundation or government proposal. They also conduct peer and green-team reviews of others' draft proposals and proposal ideas. I like the green-team reviews because they encourage students to offer each other constructive advice and brainstorming in real time.

Could you share with us some of the student projects that have been submitted and have led to funded grants or to job opportunities?

Over the years a number of students have included the work from this class in their portfolios and résumés. The class has helped students get jobs in nonprofits and in government offices.

In addition to hands-on experience with proposal and grant writing, what other professional development opportunities have you seen the students develop throughout their time in the class?

Students learn to collaborate, to read carefully, and to revise with the particular needs of an audience in mind. To write a good proposal one must, in turns, craft compelling, even poetic prose as well as practical and precise explanatory prose. Writing proposals engages the full range of writing skills from envisioning, creating, planning, researching, and revising to refining and polishing. Proposal writing is a demanding, complex task, but it is also something that an engaged student can learn and succeed at. Professional proposal writers are well paid for their skills, too.