The objective of this proposal is to improve the communication skills of NCAR’s diversified staff. As we know, the key to building relationships is communication. For this funded proposal, we mainly focused on improving individual communication skills and technical writing for our ESL and native-English staff. Overall, we successfully organized various programs with a broad participation, including ESL staff, native staff, Advanced Study Program (ASP) fellows, and visitors.

a) *Academic writing class at the CU International English Center*

Funds were budgeted for four staff members to take the English as a Second Language (ESLG) 1210 Academic Writing for Foreign Students course offered by the International English Center at the University of Colorado (CU), Boulder. The class was three hours per week for a duration of 10 weeks. As soon as the opportunity was announced, four spots were filled quickly by our staff. All four staff members were satisfied from the writing class and received good grades (three A’s and one B). Since the center has provided this class for many years, they are experienced in dealing with individuals with different writing levels. The class conducts a placement test and offers many individual coaching opportunities and writing exercises. In addition, the class also provides various tools for grammatical rules, vocabulary, building paragraphs, and constructing papers. One of the students wrote, “I think the overall classes were very beneficial for me. I will recommend these classes!” Another wrote, “The official registration process, formal teaching program, and intensive interactions in the small class room encouraged our staff participants to fully commit to the studies and resulted in good outcomes …”

b) *Individual speech coaching classes provided by Clear Talk Mastery*

Seven students took Level One and four students took Level Two of Clear Talk Mastery for their speech training and presentation skills. The funds from this award, with the help of each participant’s home division, supported eight of the eleven students in the speech training. The three other participants were supported by their home divisions at 100%. When the Level One group started, the average
speech intelligibility was 35%, with a minimum of 22.5% and a maximum of 46%. When they finished the program, the average intelligibility was 73%, with a minimum of 61% and a maximum of 96%. When the Level Two group started, the average speech intelligibility was 46%, with a minimum of 33% and a maximum of 63%. When they finished the program, the average speech intelligibility was 62%, with a minimum of 53% and a maximum of 71%.

A continued interest in this training class is expressed by even more ESL staff members. Some divisions are even willing to pay for improving their staff’s English as they become aware of this program.

The speech training is very useful for our ESL staff to improve their speech intelligibility. So far, 31 UCAR employees have taken various speech classes of different levels from Clear Talk Mastery. As part of the speech training, each participant not only gains communication skills for public presentations, casual conversations, and conversing on the phone, but also learns effective ways to practice these communication skills. The communication skills are beneficial to not only our ESL staff but also our native English speakers. In fact, many native English speakers have expressed interest in gaining more communication skills. Therefore, we highly recommend Human Resources to organize this kind of training in the future when the possibility surfaces.

c) Individual editing/coaching for English technical writing

In our proposal, we planned to initiate a pilot program, working with Your English School (YES), to focus on our Asian staff’s needs. However, YES felt they didn’t have enough teachers who were specialized in science writing, so we unfortunately cancelled the plan.

Another proposed activity was to have a writing class taught by Mary Golden. The ESL committee worked with her on the class preparation. However, due to a family issue and time constraint, Golden could not teach within the timeframe of this grant. In the end, the ESL committee decided to cancel this class as well.

Consequently, the ESL committee decided to combine the available funds planned for the YES program with the funds for Golden’s writing class to strengthen the proposed individual writing/coaching program, which is one of the five activities in our original proposal. We selected three well-qualified individuals to form our editor pool (Mary Golden, Steve Olson, and Debra Biasca). We then opened the opportunity to all UCAR staff, not just the ESL staff. The editing program started 1 October 2012 and ended 31 March 2013. Nine
people used this editing service, with some using the service twice. The total number of hours our staff used for the editing/coaching service was 75.5 hours (Mary: 24.5 hrs, Steve: 40 hrs, Debra:11 hrs).

The relatively low level of staff participation for this particular program may be due to the following reasons: 1) Even though the ESL staff expressed interest in this program, their manuscripts were not in the final stages during the time of when this editorial service was offered. They wish the program could remain at NCAR on a permanent basis. 2) Lack of awareness about the existence of the program, despite the announcement being posted through various channels, such as the Staff Notes Daily, the mailing lists of the UCAR ESL, the Asian Circle, the ASP, and the UCAR bulletin board as well as the UCAR ESL website.

Announcements were made before, during, and even close to the end of the program. However, lots of NCAR staff were still not aware of this opportunity except for those who happened to have manuscripts almost ready for editing or those who regularly check the Staff Notes Daily. In addition, there are always new staff employees coming on board in between the posting of our announcements, so they tend to miss them. One new employee “Googled” the program and found it at the UCAR ESL website, but only after the program had already ended.

The editing/coaching program is very valuable for all of UCAR staff, not just for our ESL staff. Everyone needs somebody else to read and review their writings in order to ensure clear communication is met between colleagues and also to the public. Unfortunately, proof-reading from colleagues is mostly constrained by their time, and their valuable feedback may sometimes intertwine with their own writing style, which can be confusing to ESL staff who are trying to understand their grammatical mistakes. Perhaps UCAR can benefit from a professional in-house editorial assistant, which would improve the work efficiency of the UCAR staff.

Another suggestion, to ensure all those involved in the program understand the contract and procedures, is for the PI to always be included in the administrative exchanges of all contract paperwork, in case there is any confusion.

d) Writing Workshops

As part of the contract to the editors, we asked them to summarize the problems they experienced while editing our staff’s papers at the end of the program. Two
of the editors (Olson and Biasca) individually gave a 90-minute lecture on technical writing, which was opened to all staff.

In addition to the above writing workshops, we used the remaining funds from the editing program for two more writing workshops. Laurie Albright and Teresa Noland from Finish Your Damn Dissertation LLC together presented two writing workshops; in addition, Alice Levine from Alice Levine Editorial Services conducted a half-day writing workshop.

These five writing workshops touched many different areas, with some of them taught at very advanced levels. Even though there are five writing workshops within a two month timeframe, all the workshops were well received; 22 people participated in the first workshop and 14 attended the second by Finish Your Damn Dissertation LLC; 12 people attended Alice Levine’s workshop, 20 in Debra’s, and 7 in Steve’s, considering his lecture was held during bad weather and at an inconvenient location. Some native speakers participated in our writing workshops and valued the training highly. One of them wrote, “Thanks very much for organizing this! Helpful, enjoyable workshop.”
The writing workshop by Laurie Albright and Teresa Noland