

“The UA ‘Survivor’ Guide” in the Arizona Daily Wildcat:

Helping Students Navigate the World of the University

A Proposal Submitted to the UA Parents Association Grant Program by

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Funding should be deposited into the
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Summary of Proposal

This proposal is a request for \$4360.80 from the Parents Association to help the University Learning Center defray the cost of placing a weekly article related to learning in the student newspaper, the Arizona Daily Wildcat, for the fall 2006 and spring 2007 semesters. Our aim is to publish an article each week which asks student readers to reflect on their daily experiences and teaches them attitudes and skills that will help them be more effective learners at the university.

Overview of the University Learning Center

The University Learning Center (ULC) promotes student achievement and retention by helping students become independent, effective life-long learners and by supporting innovation in learning and teaching throughout the university community. Our central goal is to help students achieve their academic goals successfully and in a timely manner.

Toward that end we offer both face-to-face and online workshops on critical college skills such as time management, note-taking, and exam preparation; provide academic counseling for individual students; consult with instructors on how to improve student learning in their classes; sponsor special events related to academic success for students; and create and distribute (on the web and in print) a variety of materials to help students learn how to be more effective learners. These services are free to all students at the university.

In addition, as part of the Office of Enrollment Management, ULC staff develop and administer a variety of initiatives aimed to increase student retention. These include SuccessNet, the university's online early alert system, and a Departing Students initiative which aims to identify, gather data from, and ultimately to develop interventions to help students who are considering leaving the university without completing their degree.

Detailed statement of Proposal

Our biggest challenge at ULC is to find ways to get students to make use of all the support services that we and other campus units offer. This year we are adopting two new strategies to meet that challenge.

(1) *Students producing materials for students* – Most traditionally aged students are more likely to listen to advice from their peers than from 'grownups' with initials after their name, and the large majority of UA's undergraduate population is traditionally aged, that is, 18-22 years old. For this reason in all of the materials we produce we want to combine successful students' experience with research-based advice and use this combination to help other students. We want to let students speak to students while we maintain some level of editorial oversight. Right now we are developing materials together with undergraduate student interns recruited for the ULC.

(2) *Disseminating materials in formats and media that appeal to students* – The ULC staff and our student interns are planning ways to disseminate those new materials in a wide variety of contemporary formats and media, from updated online, interactive workshops to email (a Study Tip listserv sends a weekly tip to registered students) to eye-catching posters for the dorms. We even have students investigating how we might broadcast study tips as podcasts that students can listen to on their iPods and cell phones. We are also planning a PR blitz to instructors and academic advisors so they will direct their students to our materials.

One traditional medium that we didn't want to ignore is the print version of the campus newspaper, which the Wildcat staff estimates is read by 43,000 students, faculty and staff each day (Mike Spohn, Advertising Manager). This semester a group of 4 undergraduate preceptors working for ULC has been writing a weekly "UA 'Survivor' Guide" article for the Wildcat since

the first week of class and will continue through the fall semester; another group will write the articles in the spring. The article appears at the bottom of Page 3 every Wednesday.

The “Survivor Guide” is intended to encourage students to think about their encounters with the university in new ways, to help students learn from their experiences, and to suggest new strategies that they can try. The topics covered will often be useful ideas that are not usually talked about by faculty or staff. Four articles have appeared thus far and have addressed the following topics:

- “Start the Year STRONG!” (about support resources on campus) 8/23
- “Meet New People” 8/30
- “Preparing for an Exam!!!” 9/6
- “Where Can I Study?” 9/13

The September 20 piece will be about learning styles. Copies of two articles are attached at the end of this proposal.

The Wildcat charges a fee to publish any piece not written by its staff, and thus we must pay \$195 for each article that we run. For the 33 weeks of the academic year, this will cost ULC \$6240. (We have prorated our request to fund articles beginning November 1.)

ULC’s total annual budget for operations is \$11,565, of which almost half must be spent on telecommunications. Although we supplement this with income from teaching graduate and professional exam preparation courses, the cost of the Wildcat articles represents a large chunk out of our coffers. Nevertheless we will continue to publish articles as long as we can afford to because we think the Wildcat is one of the best avenues for reaching most students on campus.

Receiving a PA grant for 2006-07 will give us the time to arrange funding for future years. We plan to convince a variety of student organizations on campus—including ASUA, the 50 fraternities and sororities, and student clubs—to each sponsor one article (or more!) as part of their commitment to helping students succeed. But while initial reactions to our inquiries have been enthusiastic, we have not yet received any contributions. Grant support will allow us to continue to publish the “Survivor Guide” while we create and implement a funding campaign.

Itemized Budget

33 weeks of articles (2006-07 academic year)	\$ 6256.80
_ page article in Arizona Daily Wildcat, one time	\$ 189.60
ULC contribution: first 10 weeks of Fall 06	<u>- 1896.00</u>
Total request	\$ 4360.80

Additional funding sources:

1. A summer grant from the Teaching Teams Program funded an undergraduate student to design the template for the “Survivor Guide”.
2. ULC has committed \$500 for a graphic designer in the Learning Technologies Center to design a new graphic element to represent ULC in all its materials including the “Survivor Guide” (new graphic element to appear beginning in October).

Assessment

We will make use of regular Wildcat newspaper surveys of readers to collect data on readership of our articles. We will also collect data from students who use our services to find out what brought them to us. From data collected across this academic year we will make decisions about the future of the “Survivor Guide.”