Service:

Description: Street Times City—Street Newspaper Organization

During the spring 2012 semester, I met frequently with various members of the non-profit street paper, Street Times City, to discuss and implement methods of persuasive writing and organizational identity issues in Houston. I secured software rights for their paper, and had frequent meetings with a grant proposal writer for Houston ISD. She and I determined the best course of action for the paper to secure sponsorship through disparate non-governmental organizations, among them charities and religious institutions. Before I left, she and I crafted some proposal letters that, as I understand, have been met with favorability: one $3,000 grant, two $5,000 grants. This has led to brokering partnerships in the community that a year ago didn’t exist.

Reflection:

At the beginning of this semester, I had no idea what it took to get grant money, and certainly no idea about how to craft language that would make an organization more willing to give it. Through my time with the staff of Street Times City and the help of Julie Timms, the grant writer, I am now much more confident in my ability to consider my audience. It’s kind of scary to think of the real-world implications of writing in this style: it could be the difference between support for the cause, and a complete shut-down of it!

Of course, the fascinating thing about it is that I have found a “practical” application for my skill set. I have always been faced with the question, “So what are you going to do with an English degree,” or “Isn’t that just a degree where you can read books all day?” Now, I can definitely apply what I know about persuasion and writing to something that makes a difference in the real world. Who knows, maybe along the way I’ll be able to incorporate my love of books into this arena!

Proficiencies:

I can now write with precision and clarity regarding real-world audiences. Without a doubt, I find that this skill set will translate to governmental or private sector work. It’s apparent that many businesses require financial support from diverse origins, and I have glimpsed the procedures involved in garnering these resources. Other than crafting letters that have netted over $13,000, I have established a more concrete notion of how communities inform and control the organizations that spring up in them.