1. On-Line GE Advising Modules

2. Sally Murphy, Director of General Education; Academic Programs and Graduate Studies

3. **Total funds requested**: $20,500. $10,000 will be used for summer stipends of $2000 each for five advisors who will assist in developing advising content and help us make use of the technology. Each of the advisors will work on content in one of the following areas of specialty: pre-nursing, students with disabilities, athletes, sciences, pre-business, and general advising issues for freshmen. The additional $10,500 will be used to purchase three computers because several of our computers in the advisor’s offices are very old and slow and would not be able to manage real-time work on a common document (see description below), (approximately $2500 each) and webcams and microphones (approximately $100 for both) to allow live, face-to-face on-line advising for existing computers. Each of the GS faculty offices will have one computer with webcam and mic available, we will also purchase webcams and mics for Linda Beebe’s and Jason Owens’ computers. Approximately $500 will be reserved for designing the web pages and assuring ADA compliance. We anticipate that we may need to hire a student to assist with this part of the project.

4. **Brief description of project**: This project is aimed at developing dynamic and interactive virtual advising center for General Education and graduation degree requirements. Initially, the focus will be on freshman advising, which is the responsibility of the Office of General Education. If the advising materials and interactive design is successful with the freshmen, we will build out the materials, working with the advising staff in AACE, to the entire undergraduate student body.

Besides providing information to students, the GE Office plans to pilot an interactive GE check sheet using Google Docs’ capabilities. After confirming that Google Docs is a secured, non-public space that conforms to FERPA privacy requirements, we have begun to develop a GE worksheet that both the student and advisor can work on simultaneously while not together in the same room. The chat function of Google Docs can be used to allow questions and discussion while advisors share the document workspace with an advisee. Once we have the interactive GE worksheet developed and available to the advisors, we will add visual and verbal interaction capabilities to our virtual advising center (web cams and mics). Google Docs has the ability to facilitate visual/verbal interaction, which will make the advising more immediate and personal.

5. **Expected outcomes and target audience of the project**: We expect that we will be able to provide personal, one-on-one advising to a greater number of students by creating a GE Advising site available 24/7. While advisors will not staff the interactive function 24/7, during designated working hours, including some
evening hours, students will have the opportunity to meet an advisor on-line to plan their academic programs and get their questions answered.

6. **Strategic impact/benefits:** There is little question that students who seek regular advising are more likely to make good academic course choices and are therefore more likely to graduate in a timely manner. If getting such advising is made more convenient for students, more may seek such advising. For the freshmen, we strive to teach them the value of regular advising, something most are unfamiliar with having to do. Many freshmen are resistant to demonstrating their lack of knowledge about university life. If we can use the technologies with which the freshmen are more comfortable, we will facilitate more of them using advising services. While the URM population is that segment of our student body least likely to have their own computers, those who live on campus can use university computers or those in the dorms to get advising. With accurate and up-to-date information in the advising modules and the opportunity to ask questions through chat and/or web cam, we hope to reach many more students.

More importantly, if we can advise students virtually, we may also free more time to meet with students who need or prefer a live face-to-face meeting. We will have shorter lines outside the offices at peak periods. Reducing the time standing in line to see an advisor will improve the chances students will wait to see an advisor. In addition, the on-line modules that have specific relevance to majors or student activities (athletics) or student needs (SDRC) will make the site more useful to the students.

We hope this module can also be adapted for use for our on-line programs. We currently have little on-line advising support available for our on-line students.

7. **Timeline:** We hope to complete the content development, at least the rough draft of that content, during summer 2010 and have the static information available at the start of the fall term. We intend to have opportunities to work interactively in Google Docs space with students by the end of fall term. We will seek student feedback on the development of each component and adapt the design to meet student needs throughout the academic year. By fall 2011 we hope to have a web site that is well–tested and used by freshmen students. If we succeed, we will begin to build out the virtual advising center to include issues relevant to all students, freshmen through to graduation.

8. **Potential barriers to success:** It is difficult to see why this project would not succeed. We already provide advising in groups and on a one-on-one basis to the freshmen so the expertise is with the individuals named in this proposal. We need to understand the technological and design constraints on developing web pages for the campus but that is not a barrier, just knowledge we need to have that is readily available.