

Minnesota State University, Mankato Strategic Priority Funding Step 2: Invited Full Proposal

Sub-Meet Use Only
12
Proposal Tracking
Number

*** Please **do not** use this form until invited to do so by the Planning Sub-Meet. ***

Proposal Name: Center for Academic Success Online Writing Center

This proposal is being submitted for a project that supports (please indicate priority by checking the appropriate circle):

- Global Solutions Applied Doctoral Institution Extended Learning
 Quality and Excellence Campus of the Future

Total Funds Requested for Expenditure in FY14 (2013-2014 academic year) \$ 30,000

Primary Contact Name Kathryn Inskeep _____ Campus Mailing Address ML 125

Primary Email Address kathryn.inskeep@mnsu.edu _____ Phone Number x 2699

Please note:

- Upon notification of funding, the primary contact recipient will work with the Assessment and Evaluation Sub-Meet to prepare an assessment plan. Funds will only be released upon successful completion and approval of the assessment plan.
- A Mid-Year Report will be due January 13, 2014, and an Annual Report will be due June 30, 2014.

Primary Contact Signature Kathryn Inskeep _____ Date 1/11/13

Co-Applicant Name(s) and Signature(s): _____ Date _____
 _____ Date _____
 _____ Date _____
 _____ Date _____

I have reviewed the following proposal:

Department Director/Chair Signature* [Signature] _____ Date 1/11/13

Department Director/Chair Signature* _____ Date _____

Department Director/Chair Signature* _____ Date _____

Dean Signature* [Signature] _____ Date 1/12/13

Dean Signature* _____ Date _____

Dean Signature* _____ Date _____

Division/Vice President Signature* [Signature] _____ Date 1/14/13

Division/Vice President Signature* _____ Date _____

RECEIVED

Date Submitted to Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment: JAN 11 2013
 (Deadline is January 11, 2013)

*Signatures needed for all affected units, departments and colleges. Attached additional cover/signature sheets as needed.

Strategic Priority Funding Proposal

Full Proposal: Step 2

(Please limit the proposal narrative and attachments to 10 pages)

Proposal Name: Center for Academic Success Online Writing Center

1. Provide a clear description of the project being proposed. (5 points)

Mission: to provide quality academic writing support for all students.

The CAS Writing Center strives to help students become more confident and competent writers through a variety of resources and services. Our primary service is our writing tutorial service wherein students can schedule to meet with a trained writing consultant (graduate assistant or peer tutor) to discuss their writing concerns. In these writing conferences, students and consultants engage in impactful conversations about writing, ranging from disciplinary conventions to source usage, from process to finer points of grammar.¹

Challenge: to make our writing support services accessible to all students.

Unfortunately, not all students are able to participate in these writing conferences, not from lack of desire but lack of accessibility. In particular, nontraditional, graduate, online, and extended learning students have distinct writing support needs coupled with limited flexibility in their schedules. Face-to-face conferences in our facility during regular center or extended library hours are not always practical or even possible. To meet the needs of all MSU, Mankato students we:

- introduced asynchronous online tutoring in Spring 2010
- piloted an expansion of asynchronous online tutoring in Fall 2011
- launched synchronous online tutoring in Fall 2012

Despite minimal promotion, in Fall 2012 we logged over 40 online hours, primarily with online and graduate students. We doubled this number in Spring 2012. For Fall 2012, we conducted 80 online appointments using both synchronous and asynchronous platforms.

Doubtless, there are many more students who would benefit from writing support delivered online, but we are not in a position to reach out to them due to limited resources, inadequate technology, and informal tutor training. It is clear that the increasing demand for online writing support surpasses our ability to meet the needs of this emerging market without diverting resources away from our in-demand traditional support offered in the CAS Writing Center. Supervision for off-hours, off-site online tutoring is also a concern.

Proposal: to develop an online writing center.

At present, we are minimally able to support online requests and completely unable to expand online tutoring without sacrificing our face-to-face services, which have seen statistically significant growth since Spring 2010 (see attachment). An online writing center will extend our outreach to these students and support graduate, online, and extended learning programs.

Funding will enable us to purchase the necessary web-conferencing software (Blackboard Collaborate [see attached brochure]) that integrates with D2L (current webconferencing products used by the university, Adobe Connect and Any Meeting, do not) and allows tutors and writers to:

- connect in real time via video, audio and text chat
- share and edit documents
- record sessions for quality purposes
- address all stages of writing (asynchronous online tutoring for writing is limited in efficacy; it can work for students who have complete drafts, but not for students who experience difficulty in understanding the assignment, selecting and narrowing a focus, or developing a working thesis and outline, etc.).

¹ On the efficacy of writing conferences, see Muriel Harris's *Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference*, NCTE, 1986.

Funding will also support the hiring and training of 2 graduate assistants from 100% online programs to provide 40 hours of tutoring per week, including weekend and evening hours.

2. Identify the university strategic priority advanced by this project and explain the direct connection between the strategic priority and project. (20 points)

This project addresses the following strategic priorities:

Think and Act like a Doctoral Institution: Foster the thriving and robust academic culture of a university with applied doctoral programs

The development of an online writing center will help the University think and act like a university with applied doctoral programs. Specifically, this project falls under Goal 2 of this Strategic Priority: "Allocate University resources and align administrative structures in support of education and research" ("MSU Strategic Plan 2010-2015" 22). The University's objective to "provide state-of-the art applied graduate programs with national reputations and international reach" focuses on developing and expanding programs, increasing research support for faculty and research opportunities for students, and financially supporting students through graduate assistantships.

Since a key performance indicator of this strategic priority is increasing the "Dollar amount of graduate student support through assistantships and fellowships," supporting 2 additional GAs will demonstrate the university's commitment to students enrolled in 100% online graduate programs. I believe, however, that this focus can extend to supporting graduate students not just financially, but academically as well.

An online writing center will provide the kind of access to services and resources that can lead to academic success. Writing Centers contribute to creating a "thriving and robust academic culture," with many graduate schools having their own dedicated writing centers (e.g. The Graduate Writing Center at Yale; The Graduate Writing Center at Penn State; the UCLA Graduate Writing Center; The Graduate Writing Center at Baylor). The current CAS Writing Center serves graduate students, many of them online. Increasing and improving our online tutorial service will benefit the many students enrolled in graduate programs, such as:

- An international student writing a thesis to fulfill the degree requirements for an MA in TESL. Her work required a more extensive reading and consultation than can be accomplished in a 60 minute face-to-face appointment twice a week (the maximum allowable tutoring sessions per week). In Spring 2011, we dedicated 30 asynchronous online appointments to this student, lasting until the week of her defense.
- A non-native speaker of English who resides and works full time in Rochester, MN pursuing an MSW is only on campus Fridays and Saturdays and can only meet after 5pm (after our regular hours). After an initial face-to-face appointment (specially arranged to accommodate her availability), we conducted 7 skype sessions with this student in Fall 2012.

Despite prevalent misconceptions about the purpose of writing centers, writing support is not just for basic writers in need of remediation. In fact, students enrolled in graduate programs, especially those students who have been outside of academia for several years, require significant writing support. As Plakhtonik & Rocco (2012) note, faculty expectations of graduate students' writing abilities are frequently overestimated. A national survey conducted by Baer, Cook & Baldi (2006) confirms that only 40% of 4-year college graduates demonstrate proficiency in the kinds of research and writing skills required of graduate students. These concerns are borne out in Switzer & Perdue's (2011) research based on the graduate students they see in their writing center where two thirds of students pursuing graduate degrees "lack the skills needed to conduct a comprehensive literature review and to identify significance in their own research." While the lack of preparation of graduate students in academic research and writing skills is observed across the board, doctoral nursing students are particularly at risk, which leads to low persistence and completion rates (Cohen 2011).

Grow Extended Learning: Greatly expand the reach of our extended learning programs

Funding this project will address the needs of extended learning students, as articulated in goal #4 of this strategic priority: "Work collaboratively across internal university departments to evaluate the needs of on-line and off-campus students, improve and maintain processes and services to support these students." This project will extend resources for students enrolled in off-campus and online programs. Indeed, this project is inspired by the students in these programs who request writing support that meets their academic writing needs and works with their schedules. Consider the following example:

- A student enrolled in the online dental hygiene degree completion program residing in Lancaster, PA cannot utilize our traditional in-person writing conference service. Since Fall 2011 to December 2012, we have logged 40 asynchronous online appointments with this student.

We have worked as best we can with our available resources to work with this student and others in similar circumstances, but we know that we could do better with improved technology and training, not to mention tutoring from graduate assistants who have experienced firsthand the challenges of learning in online environments. Since credit generation in online courses has increased and is continuing to increase, more attention needs to be directed in helping students in these courses to succeed in their coursework, particularly their writing. Similarly, the expansion of our Edina facility merits an expansion of academic services, not just course and program offerings.

Create the Campus of the Future: Reinvigorate our physical home and build the campus of the future.

The campus of the future is not just a physical space, but an online environment. Building an online learning environment that is safe, welcoming, and technologically sound is a priority as we prepare to educate and matriculate 21st century learners. A “multi-modal friendly” campus is one that is prepared for the challenges of working with students who are digital natives. These students thrive under specific conditions that do not always align neatly with the traditional university. For instance, 21st century learners value interaction, flexibility, fast response time, collaboration, and inductive discovery. Frequently described as “experiential, engaged, and constantly connected, with a strong need for immediacy,” these learners succeed best in learning environments that are “active, social, and learner-centered” (Educating the Net Generation, 2005). To optimize their digital skill set (intuitive visual communication, strong visual-spatial skills, and multitasking), the online tutoring environment needs to be designed to suit these competencies.

For the past 20 years, Writing Centers have taken up the challenge of integrating technology into collaborative tutoring practices (Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009). Muriel Harris has steadfastly pushed for greater technological fluency in writing center pedagogy and practice in order to meet the needs of digital learners. She has warned that “writing centers without the technology or staff to work with these students will find themselves no longer in sync with how writers write and with what writers need to know about writing processes as they are affected by technology” (2000, p.194). Writing Center professionals see the most potential in synchronous online tutoring that allows real-time screen sharing paired with video, audio, or text chat (Neaderhiser & Wolfe, 2009). The Writing Center should be a part of the Campus of the Future, and this means creating a digital learning environment that embraces the thoughtful use of technology. Benchmarks for this kind of online writing center are the Live Online Instruction offered by the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Synchronous Online Writing Lab offered by the Center for Writing at the University of Michigan, Sweetland.

Rather than outsource the tutoring of MSU, Mankato students to for-profit providers such as Smarthinking,² staffed with tutors who have no institutional knowledge of MSU, Mankato and have strict limitations on the duration of appointments, we can develop a strong online writing center that is tailored to our students' needs. By staffing the CAS Online Writing Center with MSU, Mankato graduate students—trained in the best practices for online tutoring—we can create the conditions that allow tutors and tutees to build meaningful, collaborative relationships that are vital to fostering the growth of these students as academic writers.

Embody Quality and Excellence: Measure and continuously improve our work to ensure excellence in all that we do.

This project promotes quality and excellence in everything we do through the development of a smart integration of technology and writing center pedagogy to create a quality online writing center to be staffed by highly trained and talented graduate assistants.

This strategic priority calls for our community to “demonstrate pride in our institution through our ability to provide services to one another, to students, and to our external partners.” Academic writing support is a valuable service to our students in their coursework and beyond. Writing skills are highly valued by employers, and applicants with demonstrable proficiency in writing have an important edge in a competitive job market. Facility with collaborating in online environments further prepares students for the challenges of the global economy of the 21st century. By supporting students in their writing, the university will matriculate students who have the skills necessary to compete in a difficult marketplace.

² For a critique of Smarthinking for tutoring writing, see Holly Moe's "Web Study of Smarthinking.com." Writing Lab Newsletter 25.2 (2000): 13-16.

3. Describe how the project will have a significant impact on students and deliver a significant return on investment to the university. (15 points)

Students using the online writing center will benefit from:

- Expanded access to writing support
- Quality online tutoring- support from online learners trained in technology and pedagogy
- Improved user experience due to the thoughtful implementation of technology- no more delays and disruptions due to cumbersome technology
- Faster response time through real-time video, audio, and text chat
- Full-range tutoring- no longer limited to complete or nearly complete drafts
- Extended review- tutorials will not be as limited in duration as there in our physical writing center (1 hour) or through Smarthinking (30 min)
- Interactivity and collaboration- previously not available through asynchronous e-mail exchanges and document review
- Continuity- students will be able to work with the same consultant throughout the duration of a longer submission

Outcome: an improved tutoring experience that will result in stronger, transferable writing skills. Academic success will aid in persistence and degree completion.

Students using the on-campus CAS writing center will benefit from:

- Improved access to face-to-face tutoring- no more competition from online requests that consume our regular tutoring hours
- Assurance of continued access to writing support should they opt to take off-campus or online courses

Outcome: an improved tutoring experience that will result in stronger, transferable writing skills. Increased satisfaction and skills will generate positive word of mouth and create more awareness of our services, improving our outreach to the MSU community.

Students staffing the online writing center will benefit from:

- The financial security that comes from a graduate assistantship- assistantships are competitive and students enrolled in 100% online graduate programs face severe disadvantages in obtaining them
- The training in writing center pedagogy and online tutoring- the knowledge and skills developed through their assistantships will give them an advantage when competing for online tutoring or teaching jobs.
- Experience with instructional technology for distance learning- web-conferencing skills continue to grow in importance. Our graduate assistants will have ample experience and competence in this area, improving their marketability for jobs and doctoral programs.

Outcome: a valuable assistantship that will support them in their academic pursuits and prepare them for future employment and learning opportunities.

Faculty teaching online, off-campus, or graduate courses will benefit from:

- A resource designed for their students- they can focus on covering course content without having to dedicate too much time for writing instruction. While the online writing center is not intended to replace in-class writing instruction, it will serve as a resource for supplemental writing support.

Outcome: faculty will have a place to refer their students for further help with their writing.

The university will benefit from:

- Increased skills and satisfaction of students obtaining academic writing support- higher success rates lead to higher persistence and completion rates.
- Increased assistantship opportunities for 100% online graduate students- even 2 more opportunities for an assistantship may be a deciding factor in attracting high ability students to our online graduate degree programs.
- Increased access to writing support to online, graduate, and off-campus students- students may be more likely to try an online or off-campus course knowing that they will have access to an online writing center.
- Committing to the growth of graduate, online, and off-campus programs by investing in academic support- many schools offer similar programs, but very few have substantial academic resources to support these students from their first classes through degree completion. The online writing center will help MSU,

Mankato distinguish itself from peer institutions through its demonstrated commitment to academic success.

Outcome: MSU, Mankato will help students go further by investing in the academic success of all students, not just traditional, on-campus students. Our students will have the writing skills needed to succeed in their coursework and complete their degrees. In turn, our graduates will have the writing skills necessary to contribute in professional, civic, and academic contexts and compete in the global marketplace.

4. Identify the specific measurable outcomes that will be used to measure the impact of the project. (10 points)

The Online Writing Center will:

- Increase the number of students seeking and receiving writing support, as measured by usage data
- Increase the diversity of students seeking and receiving writing support (graduate, native speakers, non trads, etc.), as measured by demographics data
- Improve the tutoring experience of online tutees, as measured by user evaluations
- Improve the writing skills of students in off-campus, online, and graduate courses, as measured by user and instructor feedback
- Increase the number of graduate assistantships for 100% online graduate students by 2
- Increase the overall competence of online writing consultants through specialized training and supportive supervision, as measured by tutor self-evaluations and supervisor observation/evaluation

5. Describe how the activities generated by this project will be sustained after strategic priority funding has ended, or if applicable, explain why the project does not need to be sustained. (5 points)

This is the pilot project for expanding the CAS's online tutoring. Initial start-up funding will cover the acquisition of software and the hiring and training of 2 graduate assistants. Continuing to support 2 graduate assistants can be accomplished through a combination of realigning current GA lines in the CAS and expanding the number of undergraduate peer tutors in writing. If demand for online writing support requires increases, we can reach out to stakeholders and forge partnerships to help us support and grow online tutoring for writing. If these partnerships do not work out, an online tutoring fee may be a possibility.

6. Provide a budget justification that explains why the funding being requested is required to support the project and outline the funding requested within the budget table below. (5 points)

Blackboard Collaborate Named Moderator license \$310 x 2 = \$620 (\$310 matching funds from Academic Affairs)
 GA Salary: \$9,000 (graduate assistant stipend per academic year) x 2 GAs = \$18,000
 GA Tuition Waiver: \$5,858 x 2 = \$11,716
 No Fringe is requested since this project falls under the job description of the Assistant Director for Writing/Languages/ESL.

Budget table:

	FY14	FY14 Matching Funds
Personnel		
Unclassified Salary (in-load, overload)		
Classified Salary		
Fringe ^a (Classified and Unclassified)		
Graduate Assistant Salary	\$9,000 x 2	
Graduate Assistant Tuition Reduction/Waiver ^b	\$5,858 x 2	
Non-Salary		
Student Help		
Purchased Services/Travel Expenses		
Supplies and Materials	\$620	\$310
Building Improvement/Construction Costs		
Equipment		
Other (please specify)		
Total Budget/Funding Requested	\$30,026	

^aNote: All current employees must be paid fringe benefits. Fringe should be estimated based on salary and position classification: Unclassified 30%, Classified 37%, Adjunct 7.65%.

^bEstimated Tuition Reduction/Waiver for full-year enrollment: Masters \$5,858, Doctoral \$10,000.

7. Identify any special considerations or needs required for this project (e.g. physical space, contractual obligations, IT support, or collaborations with/implications for other units). (5 points)

Since this project is online, relatively few special considerations are required for this project. They are:

- a contractual obligation with Blackboard Collaborate for 2 Named Moderator licenses which allows us to buy a virtual room for each tutor.
- IT support to integrate Blackboard Collaborate with D2L during initial set-up.

The opportunity to collaborate with other units clearly exists and is most welcome. We are happy to work with interested parties who recognize the need for online academic support in writing.

8. Provide a project timeline outlining key tasks and dates for completion. (5 points)

Contract for BlackBoard Collaborate Named Moderator licenses	February 2013
Post availability of graduate assistantships for 100% online learners	February 2013
Develop marketing plan and materials	March 2013
Screen, interview, and hire 2 graduate assistants	April 2013
Adapt current CRLA training material and develop new training material	May-June 2013
Provide CRLA and Online Tutoring Training	July 29 2013-August 9 2014
Implement marketing plan (outreach to stakeholders, web presence, etc)	August 2013
Update website to include online writing center pages	August 15 2013
Supervise and mentor online writing center graduate assistants	Fall 2013 & Spring 2014
Collect user feedback/evaluation	Continuous
Mid-Year report	January 13, 2014
Annual Report	June 30, 2014

Observed Value	Fall 2009	600	621	673	705	752
Expected Value		670.2	670.2	670.2	670.2	670.2
Chi Units		7.35308863	3.611817	0.011698	1.806983	9.983945091
Chi-Square Observed		22.76753208				
DF		4				
P		0.000140911				

Observed Value	Fall 2009	600	621	673	705	752
Expected Value		610.5	610.5	610.5	610.5	610.5
Chi Units		0.180589681	0.18059			
Chi-Square Observed		0.361179361				
DF		1				
P		0.547851977				

Observed Value	Spring 2010	621	673	705	752
Expected Value		647	647		
Chi Units		1.044822257	1.044822		
Chi-Square Observed		2.089644513			
DF		1			
P		0.148300575			

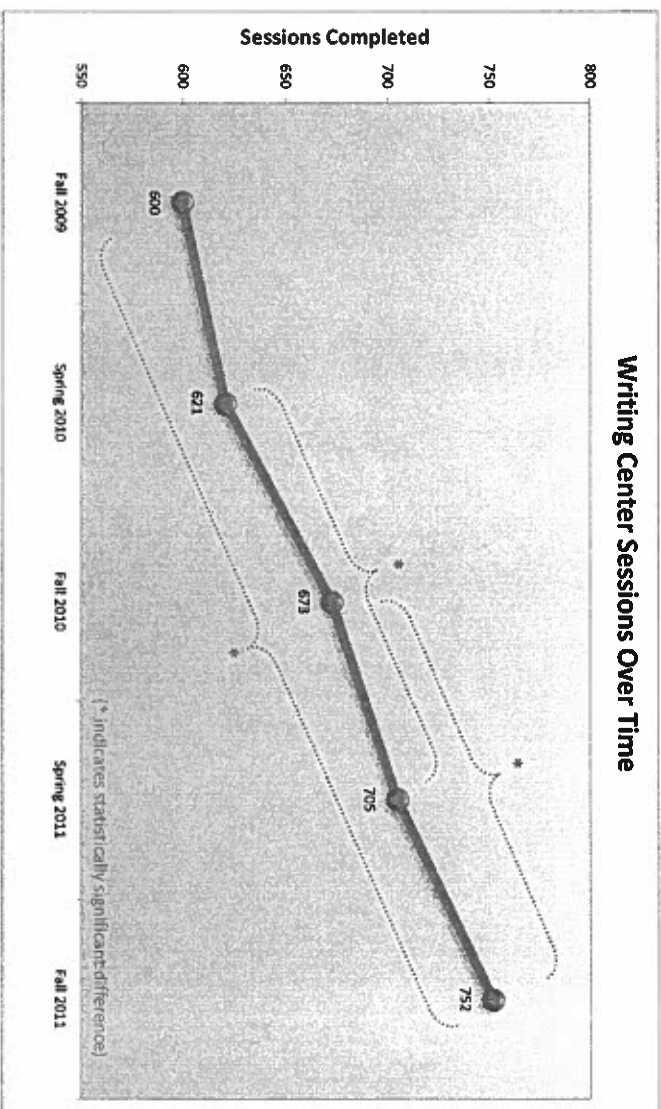
Observed Value	Fall 2009	600	621	673	705	752
Expected Value		676	676			
Chi Units		8.544378698	8.544379			
Chi-Square Obs		17.0887574				
DF		1				
P		0.0000356729				

Observed Value	Fall 2010	621	673	705	752
Expected Value		712.5	712.5		
Chi Units		2.189824561	2.189825		
Chi-Square Obs		4.379649123			
DF		1			
P		0.036370484			

Observed Value	Fall 2010	621	673	705	752
Expected Value		689	689		
Chi Units		0.371552975	0.371553		
Chi-Square Observed		0.743105951			
DF		1			
P		0.388667744			

Observed Value	Spring 2010	621	673	705	752
Expected Value		663	663		
Chi Units		2.660633484	2.660633		
Chi-Square Obs		5.321266968			
DF		1			
P		0.021066689			

Observed Value	Spring 11	705	752
Expected Value		728.5	728.5
Chi Units		0.758064516	0.758065
Chi-Square Observed		1.516129032	
DF		1	
P		0.218206227	



Note: I have used what is called a "Chi-Square Goodness of Fit" Test to examine whether or not the differences in sessions at the writing center are due to sampling error (i.e. due to chance alone). Initial results indicated that there was an overall statistically significant difference across time. That is, it would not be appropriate to treat all semesters the same. I followed up this global finding with several finer-grained other tests (using the same chi-square method). Results of these subsequent analyses indicated that we have significantly increased the number of sessions attended from Fall 2009 to Fall 2011. Results also indicated that, while there are not typically significant differences from semester to semester, there were significant differences from Spring 2010 to Spring 2011 and from Fall 2010 to Fall 2011. These data suggest that there have been consistent yearly increases in the usage of the writing center (that are unlikely to have occurred by chance alone). Whatever set of changes were made after Fall 2009, they appear to be having a meaningful impact on service utilization.



INTEGRATE REAL-TIME CONTENT AND COLLABORATION INTO EXISTING COURSEWORK

Blackboard Collaborate and Desire2Learn Inc. (Desire2Learn) bring you a full-featured integration that effectively connects asynchronous and synchronous distance learning. With the Blackboard Collaborate Integration for Desire2Learn, you can schedule, deliver, and record real-time, online classes from within your familiar Desire2Learn Learning Environment.

For Instructors and Students

Now instructors can schedule and deliver classes using Blackboard Collaborate for real-time, multi-platform web conferencing that includes VoIP, integrated teleconferencing, multipoint video, interactive whiteboards, breakout rooms, application/desktop sharing, file transfer, indexed recording, and much more.

Students can launch an interactive Blackboard Collaborate session or recording directly from the Desire2Learn Learning Environment with a single click.

For IT and Technical Staff

Need deployment flexibility and simplicity? Install the integration quickly and securely into your existing Desire2Learn Learning Environment. Then you can connect to the Blackboard Collaborate instance you already host on your own server or access as a hosted service with Blackboard Collaborate.

The screenshot shows a web interface for creating a new room. The title is "New Room" and there are "List" and "New" buttons. Below the title are tabs for "Properties" and "Attendees". Under the "Properties" tab, there is a "General" section with fields for "Name" (set to "Algebra 101") and "Type" (set to "Eliminate"). There is also an "Availability" section with "Date Available" (Start Date: July 1, 2009, 1:00 PM) and "End Date" (July 2, 2009, 2:00 PM). At the bottom are "Cancel" and "Save" buttons. On the left side of the form, there are instructions: "Fill out this form and click the Save button", "You must specify a name, room type, start and end dates before you can add attendees", and "Click on List to return without saving changes".

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For CIOs, Provosts, and Other Administrators

Extend and leverage the investment you've made in Desire2Learn and achieve an even more personalized and active learning solution. With the Blackboard Collaborate Integration for Desire2Learn you can cost-effectively extend your online learning infrastructure to improve student outcomes.

Key Benefits

- ▶ Add real-time collaboration to distance learning courses
- ▶ Schedule and deliver Blackboard Collaborate sessions
- ▶ Attend live sessions with a single click
- ▶ Create, archive, and share session recordings
- ▶ Invite remote guest speakers to live sessions
- ▶ Designate moderator and participant roles
- ▶ Leverage your technology investment
- ▶ Use existing student and staff directory structures

What's Next?

Blackboard Collaborate and Desire2Learn Learning Environment are sold separately. The Blackboard Collaborate Integration for Desire2Learn is available exclusively through Desire2Learn.

The collaboration landscape is evolving. Don't wait. Integrate Blackboard Collaborate and Desire2Learn today!

To purchase the Desire2Learn Integration Pack, contact sales@desire2learn.com or call 1.888.772.0325 today. For more information about Blackboard Collaborate, contact CollaborateSales@blackboard.com.

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