Memorandum of Understanding

Section 1. Program Participants:

Your Independent School District (The District), the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement and the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at The University of Texas at Austin (The University) agree to enter into a collaborative partnership with the principal purpose of implementing the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot for RHE 306: Rhetoric and Writing.

Section 2. Program Description:

The Students Partnering for Undergraduate Rhetoric Success (SPURS) Dual Credit Pilot is designed to offer a web-based, dual credit Rhetoric and Writing (RHE 306) course to underrepresented high school students. The SPURS Dual Credit Pilot allows high school students to earn 3 hours of college rhetoric and writing credit upon satisfactory completion of the course. Concurrently, students earn high school credit for an English Language Arts class that serves as an Advanced Measure under the Texas Education Agency Distinguished Achievement Program. To allow for a course-equivalency crosswalk, the high school course title can be one of the following TEA-approved courses: Practical Writing Skills and Research and Technical Writing. RHE 306 corresponds to ENGL 1301 in the Texas Common Course Numbering System. UT Austin will be the sole provider of rhetoric and writing curriculum during the fall and spring semesters.

Through the SPURS Program/Curriculum Coordinator, high school teachers and students in the program are introduced to rhetorical theory, academic argument, and a process model of composing. University Assistant Instructors who teach Rhetoric and Writing (RHE) classes provide online feedback to students regarding their essays via electronic communication on the SPURS website and grade students’ final essays. UT students in RHE classes will participate in peer reviews when the high school students visit The University of Texas at Austin campus. Program goals include the following:

- Improve college-level writing skills of students at high schools that are underrepresented at postsecondary institutions.

- Provide interactive experiences and resources to participating high school students that promote a college-going culture.

- Develop skills to teach college-level writing among faculty at high schools that are underrepresented at postsecondary institutions.

The SPURS Dual Credit Pilot is designed to foster improved reading and writing skills in an academic vein. Additionally, research indicates that students who obtain dual credit are more likely to attend institutions of higher education.
Another focus of the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot is to connect students from underrepresented high schools to an academic community of readers and writers. This connection will implement discussion of rhetoric and writing, analysis of written arguments, and essay writing activities. The SPURS Dual Credit Pilot requires frequent connection to the Internet for teachers and students to access course curriculum, to communicate with faculty through online forums and to upload essay content to the SPURS website.

The SPURS Dual Credit Pilot uses a socio-cognitive perspective and incorporates exemplary English instruction by Dr. Judith Langer at the National Center on English Learning & Achievement:

- Students learn skills and knowledge in multiple lesson types.
- Teachers make connections across instruction, curriculum and life.
- Students learn strategies for ways to do the work.
- Teachers integrate test preparation into instruction.
- Students are expected to be creative thinkers.
- Classroom fosters cognitive collaboration.

Since the program will involve Internet connection for high school students to access course content, to contact the Curriculum Coordinator and Assistant Instructors, and to submit essay content online, students will practice computer literacy needed for the workplace. Additionally, the SPURS reading and writing program goals will align with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for the high school component of the course. The reading and writing skills will be tested on the TAKS, SAT, and AP exams.

Section 3. Program Elements:

The SPURS Dual Credit Pilot consists of five (5) main elements:

- A web-based, dual credit (high school/university) Rhetoric and Writing (RHE 306) course;
- University of Texas at Austin Course Instructor/Curriculum Coordinator who provides the course curriculum to partner high school teachers;
- A weeklong summer teacher professional development workshop at The University of Texas at Austin;
- A two-day winter teacher professional development workshop at The University of Texas at Austin; and
High school student visitation to the University of Texas at Austin.

Section 4. Program Responsibilities:

The responsibilities to carry out the five (5) elements of the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot will be shared between The District and The University.

4.1 Responsibilities of the University of Texas at Austin:

4.1.1 Administration and Maintenance of the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot.
The course offered in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot will be maintained on secured servers operated by The University of Texas at Austin and maintained by the Department of Rhetoric and Writing. The course materials and curriculum will be defined by the Department of Rhetoric and Writing.

4.1.2 Registration of Students through Continuing Education at The University of Texas at Austin.

After acquiring an official, permanent UT EID via the university web site, the students will register in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot via the Division of Continuing and Innovative Education Center (CIE). In order to enroll officially in a CIE dual credit course, students will need to provide a completed SPURS Dual Credit Pilot student application, high school transcript, and a signed CIE Dual Credit enrollment form. The CIE will charge a $100.00 per student registration fee in addition to the program operating fee of $150.00 per student.

4.1.3 Awarding credit from The University of Texas at Austin.

Students will register in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot via the Division of Continuing and Innovative Education (CIE) and be enrolled in the course under specific CIE course unique numbers. Once the student successfully completes the course, the course letter grades are recorded in the Office of the Registrar at The University of Texas at Austin. The credits for the grades are usually transferable to colleges and universities, but each student is advised to check with his/her planned collegiate program before registration, even if he/she plans to attend The University of Texas at Austin. RHE 306 corresponds to ENGL 1301 in the Texas Common Course Numbering System.

The RHE 306 letter grades are sent to each partner high school, and the individual high school awards high school credits at its discretion. Students who receive a grade of ‘D’ or ‘F’ in RHE 306 must submit a Q-drop form. A Q-drop denotes that the students’ final grade will not be permanently recorded on a University of Texas at Austin transcript. Students may retake RHE 306 in the semester when it is provided by paying the standard program fee of $250.00. Reimbursements will not be issued for students who have failed a course.
4.1.4 **Conducting professional development workshops.** Two professional development workshops will be conducted for the partner teachers assigned to the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot in The District.

4.1.4.1 **Summer professional development workshop.** A weeklong summer professional development workshop for partner teachers will be held at The University of Texas at Austin. Each teacher participating in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot must attend the summer workshop to implement the program curriculum. If scheduling conflicts occur for the teachers, a make-up session must be scheduled. The Department of Rhetoric and Writing and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin will be responsible for the following at the workshop:

- Scheduling the necessary facilities to hold the workshop;
- Conducting the summer workshop;
- Crediting teachers with professional development hours;
- Introducing prospective teachers or administrators to the course curriculum; and
- Providing instructional materials.

4.1.4.2 **Winter professional development workshop.** A two-day winter professional development workshop for partner teachers will be held at The University of Texas at Austin. The partner teacher assigned to the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot must attend the winter professional development workshop to prepare for the spring semester. The workshop will be held within the month of January. If scheduling conflicts occur for the teachers, a make-up session must be scheduled. The Department of Rhetoric and Writing and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin will be responsible for the following at the workshop:

- Scheduling the necessary facilities to hold the workshop;
- Conducting the winter workshop;
- Crediting teachers with professional development hours;
- Introducing prospective teachers or administrators to the course curriculum; and
- Providing instructional materials.

4.1.5 **Maintain a web-based instructional experience.** Student participation and interaction will be done electronically through the Internet with the Curriculum Coordinator and Assistant Instructors who teach Rhetoric and Writing (RHE) classes. The Department of Rhetoric and Writing and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin will administer and maintain a web site. Curriculum will be accessed through the Internet, and drafts of word-processed papers will be submitted in electronic format for Assistant Instructor review and evaluation.
4.1.6 The University of Texas at Austin Program/Curriculum Coordinator. The Program/Curriculum Coordinator will develop the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot curriculum and partner with each participating high school teacher to implement the curriculum. The Program/Curriculum Coordinator will have the following responsibilities for the classroom component.

- Create and distribute curriculum in collaboration with Department of Rhetoric and Writing faculty.
- Oversee the course website content.
- Facilitate summer/winter teacher professional development workshops;
- Provide weekly lesson/unit modules.
- Collaborate with Assistant Instructors and High School Teachers to evaluate students’ essays.
- Visit each participating campus at least once per semester.
- Facilitate high school students’ visit to the UT Austin campus.
- Facilitate writing workshops for high school students during campus visits.

4.1.7 The University of Texas at Austin RHE Assistant Instructors. The Department of Rhetoric and Writing will identify qualified graduate Assistant Instructors to provide online feedback to high school students regarding essay content and to grade final essays. The University of Texas at Austin personnel will have the following responsibilities:

- During a two-week period prior to the submission of final essays, Assistant Instructor’s will provide feedback for one comprehensive inquiry posed by high school students regarding essay content
- Evaluate final essays for high school students at assigned campuses
- Host Auditing high school students in RHE sections during campus visits
- Select undergraduate students in their RHE classes to participate in peer reviews of essay content during the high school students’ visit to the University of Texas at Austin campus

4.1.8 Student Visits to the University of Texas at Austin Campus. Students participating in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot will be offered the opportunity to visit The University of Texas at Austin. These visitation events will last for approximately eight hours and will be coordinated as a campus event and arranged between The University and The District. The District will arrange transportation to and from a student visitation event. Any accommodations necessary will also be the responsibility of The District. The visit will include activities similar to the following:
- A tour of the campus.
- A visit to a university RHE class.
- A writing workshop facilitated by the Program/Curriculum Coordinator and RHE Assistant Instructors.
- A Multicultural Information Center student panel.
- A presentation provided by the UT Office of Admissions.
- A tour of a dormitory.
- Interaction with current university students.

4.2 **Responsibilities of The District:**

The responsibilities of The District are as follows:

**4.2.1 Teacher Selection Requirements.** When identifying partner English teachers to implement the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot, The District must ensure that teachers have Advanced Placement or Gifted and Talented training. The University of Texas at Austin also recommends that selected teachers have a Master’s degree in English or a related field of study; however, this preferred qualification is not a requirement for participation.

**4.2.2 Student Eligibility Requirements.** Texas Administrative Code §4.85(b) identifies the requirements which must be met by each student who enrolls in a college course for dual credit. Additionally, only students with adequate academic preparation, having completed the necessary foundation coursework in high school and selected by the partner English teacher, will be allowed to participate in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot. Juniors and seniors in high school will be able to take the dual credit course if they meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Completion of Pre-AP English II or AP English I with a grade of A or B.
- Written recommendation from the Pre-AP or AP English teachers.
- Met passing requirements on state standardized tests in the English Language Arts areas of reading and writing.

**4.2.3 Class size requirements.** The District will ensure that each high school campus enrolls a minimum of 12 students and a maximum of 25 students in each classroom that offers the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot. Additional class periods can be added to accommodate more participating students at one campus.

**4.2.4 Distribute printed course materials to students.** Although a textbook will not be used for the 2012-2013 academic year, the District will be responsible for providing and distributing all necessary instructional materials to the students.

**4.2.5 Teacher Responsibilities.** The partner English teacher will have the following instructional responsibilities:

- Deliver weekly teaching modules
- Supplement curriculum based on specific student needs
- Provide feedback on rough draft formatting guidelines and content
- Grade final essays and share results with the Curriculum Coordinator and partner Assistant Instructor
- Provide grades for incremental assignments
- Attend required summer and winter teacher professional development workshops
- Accompany students on the UT campus visit
- Implement peer conferencing among high school students
- Maintain frequent communication with Program Coordinator and Assistant Instructors, primarily via email, including weekly updates.

4.2.6 Essay Submission. Participating high school teachers will be responsible for ensuring that at least 85% of the students enrolled in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot submit final draft of essay assignments. Using the provided rubric, high school teachers will grade all final essays and submit the scores to the Program/Curriculum Coordinator and to the Assistant Instructors assigned to their campuses. High school students will be required to post the final drafts of essays to the designated course website.

4.2.7 Provide classroom space for the SPURS Dual Credit course at the high school campus. The District must provide classroom space at the high school campus for the high school teacher to implement the dual credit course with enrolled students.

4.2.8 Provide adequate computer access as specified by The University of Texas at Austin to the students. The District must ensure that the participants in the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot will have frequent, regularly scheduled access to computers that meet the specifications defined by the Department of Rhetoric and Writing at The University of Texas at Austin.

4.2.9 Transportation for student visits to The University of Texas at Austin campus. Transportation to and from the visit and associated costs will be the responsibility of The District. Any accommodations necessary will also be the responsibility of The District.

4.2.10 Data Sharing Agreement. The University of Texas at Austin and The District shall have a data sharing agreement. With parental consent, The District shall provide student demographic data and academic achievement information to The University of Texas at Austin for all participating students that include the following: student’s full name, high school identification number, parent contact information, date of birth, ethnicity, gender, citizenship status, socioeconomic status (free, reduced, or full-price lunch), program-related English grades, beginning and end-of-year cumulative GPA, report card grades for all reporting periods, class rank, special program information, TAKS scores, AP scores, SAT/ACT scores, college generation, name of postsecondary institution, and intended major. As required by law, The University of Texas at Austin and The
District shall adhere to the confidentiality of student information according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the implementing regulations found in 34 CFR Part 99 (see 4.4).

4.2.11 **Provide financial support for The University of Texas at Austin staff necessary to implement the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot as defined by The University of Texas at Austin.**

4.2.11.1 **Cost.** The cost of the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot to The District will be defined on a per student basis. Program costs are dependent upon a variety of economic factors that may change from year to year. Consequently, the program costs will be evaluated and may be adjusted annually. The District will be responsible for paying program fees for each participating school. A fee of $250.00 per student will be due by September 30, 2012. This fee covers a standard operating fee of $150.00 and a course registration fee of $100.00. Reimbursements will not be issued for students who have failed a course or dropped a course after the University deadline.

4.2.11.2 **Payment.** All invoices concerning the SPURS Dual Credit Pilot are due payable, in full, to The University of Texas at Austin within thirty (30) days of receipt by The District. Invoices will be mailed in August of the fall semester.

Payments should be mailed and/or delivered to the following address:

The University of Texas at Austin  
SPURS Program  
6207 Sheridan Avenue, Suite 300  
Mail Code: E1600  
Austin, Texas 78723

4.3 **Agreement to Hold Harmless:**
To the extent authorized by the Constitution and laws of the State of Texas, each party will save and hold harmless the other party and its officers and employees from all claims, demands, causes of action, and judgments for taxes, license fees, excises, fine, and penalties; for supplies, services, or merchandise purchased by the other party; for wages and fringe benefits of the other party’s employees; and for injury or death of any person or damage to property that result directly or indirectly from the negligent acts or omissions of the other party or its officers, agents, employees, or students in the performance of this agreement.

4.4 **Confidentiality Provision:**
Both parties to this agreement are required by law to adhere to the confidentiality of student information according to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and the implementing regulations found in 34 CFR Part 99. FERPA is
specifically referenced in the Texas Public Information Act as an exception to records that are subject to disclosure to the public (Texas Govt. Code 552.001 et seq.). While in possession of FERPA records and data, only persons authorized to access the student data of the SPURS Program will be granted access as required by FERPA. Furthermore, data will be stored in a secure area as required by FERPA. All persons authorized to have access to student data understand that under FERPA they can be held individually liable for any and all applicable criminal and civil penalties imposed for breach of confidentiality.

**Section 5. Termination:**

In the event of a material failure by a Contracting Party to perform its duties and obligations in accordance with the terms of this Contract, the other party may terminate this Contract upon thirty (30) days’ advance written notice of termination setting forth the nature of the material failure; provided that, the material failure is through no fault of the terminating party. The termination will not be effective if the material failure is fully cured prior to the end of the thirty-day period.

Either party may terminate this Contract without cause upon thirty (30) days’ advance written notice of termination to the Other Party.

**Section 6. Term:**

This Memorandum of Understanding covers a period of one (1) academic year, beginning July 1, 2012, and ending June 30, 2013. All parties must sign this Memorandum of Understanding prior to the Summer 2012 workshop. This Memorandum of Understanding may be renewable, contingent upon resources being available to the SPURS Program.

Agreed and accepted on __________________________, 2012.

(date)

Your Independent School District

Signature: ________________________________
Printed Name: ________________________________
Title: ________________________________

The University of Texas at Austin

Signature: ________________________________
Printed Name: Debra Y. Stevens
Title: Business Contracts Administrator