Sample preliminary proposals

Hello, Professor Cheers,

I just read about your recent alternative spring break trip to Washington D.C. and New York, and that project sounded so impressive--and so closely related to a project my English 1A students are working on--that I am emboldened to make this request to a total stranger.

Would it be possible for you to visit my class at some point this semester and share some of your wisdom about how to design and promote an alternative spring break?

You wouldn't need to work up a presentation (unless you already have one), and we wouldn't need more than 20-30 minutes of your time, including time for questions. I could also send you a list of questions beforehand, if you like.

The class meets TTh from 10:30-11:45 in BBC 128.

I know there isn't much time left, but I have some flexibility in my schedule and could work you in pretty much anywhere, though sooner would be better than later.

I have attached the assignment sheet so you can see what the students are working on. We started the semester with an essay by Rick Steves called "How to Travel as a Political Act," if that gives you a sense of my intentions with this.

If you can't work this in--which would be totally understandable--I would like to visit you during your office hours and ask a few questions of my own. I have launched a Facutly-Led Program to Ireland that focused on an international film festival, and that was great in its own way, but I am very interested in developing something with deeper political resonance and something with a service learning dimension.

Thank you for considering my request, and congratulations on your Civil Rights trip. It sounds amazing.

Best regards,

Julie Sparks

English Department

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Dear Ms. Victa,

I discovered the website description of the alternative summer break you are leading to Oaxaca this summer, and it sounds both impressive and also very relevant to a proposal assignment I just started using in English 1A.

I'm sorry I didn't discover your website sooner, but if it isn't too late for this semester, would you be able to visit my class and share your insights about both the value of this kind of travel and strategies for making a successful program? Since it's a class in rhetoric and composition, our focus is on persuading people to support and/or participate in the program, but the research part is also important, and that's what they're working on now.

You wouldn't need to work up a formal presentation (unless you already have one), and we wouldn't need more than 20-30 minutes of your time, including time for questions. I could also send you a list of questions beforehand, if you like.

The class meets TTh from 10:30-11:45 in BBC 128.

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Thank you for considering my request, and congratulations on your Oaxaca trip. It sounds amazing.

Best regards,

Julie Sparks
English Department

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Hi Susie and Greta,

I know you're very busy, and that I should have asked you this before the semester started, when I first put "guest speaker" on the syllabus for my English 1A class, but I'm going to ask you anyway.

My English 1A class is currently working on designing alternative spring breaks or faculty-led programs as a way to practice making proposals and doing research. I've attached the assignment sheet so you can see what they have to do.

They have already chosen sites and teams and are currently researching the places where their hypothetical classes/trips would be set.

What they could use from you (either or both of you) is whatever wisdom you'd like to share on how to do this kind of research and (more importantly) the rhetorical side of this work--how to persuade people to support and participate in this kind of travel. Of course, you can also make a pitch for the educational value and fun that comes along with it.

We wouldn't need more than 20-30 minutes of your time, including time for questions. I could also send you a list of questions beforehand, if you like. The class meets TTh from 10:30-11:45 in BBC 128.

I know there isn't much time left, but I have some flexibility in my schedule and could work you in pretty much anywhere, though sooner would be better than later.

I have also invited two SJSU people who have led alternative spring break classes, Professor Duane Cheers, who recently took students on a civil rights ASB, and Diana Victa, who is taking some students to Oaxaca this summer. She's with the Cesar Chavez Community Action Center. I haven't heard back from them yet (just sent the invites this morning), but I will take as many of you as I can get. I'd be delighted with any other potential speakers you would recommend. Those whose projects have a service-learning component would be especially valuable.

Of course, I know it's late in the game to be setting up guest speakers, but if it doesn't work this semester, maybe in the fall. I will have 4 sections doing this project by then.

Thanks for considering this. I hope you can come.

Julie

Follow-up Letter

Thank you, Diana!

This Thursday would be great, as we will also have a visit from Susie Morris, who oversees the Faculty-Led Programs. (In case you aren't familiar with the term, these are short study-abroad excursions that are somewhat like alternative spring breaks except they don't always contain a service-learning component.)

I can work around your schedule and Susie's.

It would be great to have you both there together, if you are interested in meeting each other, but I could also take one guest speaker in the beginning of class and one later, if you would prefer.

I am going to ask my students tomorrow if they have specific questions for either or both of you. I have some of my own, which I'm just going to type in below. I'm including both sets of questions so you will have a sense of what each is covering. They're pretty similar, really, with the focus being on the writing/rhetoric needed to make these programs work but also some general questions about studying abroad and alternative spring breaks.

I am also hoping to hear from Duane Cheers, who led a civil rights themed alternative spring break to Washington DC and NYC this spring, but for this Thursday it will probably just be the 3 of us.

You can either answer my questions here, by just typing in your responses by email, in which case I can share the transcript with my students and leave your class visit for other material, or you can work the questions into your presentation.

Questions from Julie:

For Diana--

1. Did you go on an alternative spring break as a student? If not, how did you get involved with them?
2. Can you describe your position at SJSU, what you are responsible for?
3. Can you tell us about your Oaxaca program? (We already read and discussed your website, but it was a while ago.)
4. What kinds of proposals did you have to write to get your Oaxaca program approved, including those that went to people in Oaxaca and any community members here who might offer expertise, technical support and/or donations?
5. Can you tell us some rhetorical strategies you use(d) to make these proposals work?
6. What do you think are the most important benefits to students who embark on an alternative spring break program?
7. Is there anything else you'd like my students to know about alternative spring breaks?

For Susie--

1. What kind of study abroad did you do as a student? What did you like best about them?
2. What FLP classes have you led yourself?
3. Can you describe your current position at SJSU?
4. Do you ever get proposals for new FLP classes from students requesting a particular location or a particular class? If not, would you consider such a request?
5. What kinds of proposals have you made to get an FLP program approved?
6. I know you have instituted some changes to the SJSU FLP program to upgrade and professionalize the whole enterprise. What kinds of proposals have you made to senior administrators to make this happen?
7. Can you tell us some rhetorical strategies you use(d) to make these proposals work?
8. What do you think are the most important benefits to students who embark on a study-abroad program?
9. Is there anything else you'd like my students to know about study abroad?

Thank you again, both of you, for taking the time to do this at such short notice. I know my students are going to be very interested, and I really appreciate it!

Warm regards,

Julie