MEMORANDUM

TO: Barry Thatcher, English Department Head

FROM: Jen England, Interim Design Center Director

DATE: March 16, 2015

RE: Department support for Girlhood Remixed Technology Camp 2015

I am writing to request departmental funding to support the Girlhood Remixed Technology Camp (GRTC) that will take place this summer from July 27 to July 31, 2015. This will be the third time the GRTC has been offered to local girls; the previous Camps took place during Summer 2012 and Summer 2013. No Camp was held last summer because our former Camp Director, Jen Almjeld, took employment at another university. This summer I will serve as Camp Director and once again will bring in area girls to campus to learn about media, technology, and identity.

**Camp Mission and Goals**

Girlhood Remixed Technology Camp (GRTC) is a technology and identity camp for local Las Cruces, NM, and El Paso, TX, 'tween (ages 10-13) girls. One of the main goals of the camp is to introduce the girls to different types of technology and empower them with the tools and language to challenge and construct their own online identities.

GRTC works to overcome the gender, economic, and cultural digital divides that negatively and disproportionately impact many of the area's students, especially young women.

Throughout camp the girls are exposed to a variety of "high tech" software programs such as Photoshop, InDesign, and iMovie, which are balanced with "low tech" programs such as Pixlr and Pinterest. The girls will have opportunities to experiment with photography, poetry, film, gaming, and engineering among others. These projects will allow the girls to question and build their online girl identities; additionally, campers will gain critical awareness of digital media and its role in their lives. The camp culminates in a closing ceremony where the girls showcase their projects to parents, family, and friends.

GRTC hopes to show 'tween girls that their voices and talents matter. Camp Founder and former director Jen Almjeld explains, "A number of research studies, including those by the American Association of University Women, suggest that it is during early adolescence that girls begin receiving cultural messages that technology is not for them. We hope this camp is a fun and safe space where girls can interact with adult mentors and other like-minded girls as they explore the ways technology impacts their lives."

**Camp Logistics**

In previous years, the GRTC ran as a four-day, three-night residential camp. This was made possible through a small grant from the Hancock Foundation, generous support from the English Department, and community donations. However, this model of camp was expensive and required extra supervision from volunteers for the overnight portion. This summer, the Camp will be a day camp only, running from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. As with past Camps, we will hold a Camp Closing Ceremony Friday at 6 p.m. for family and friends of the campers to come see the girls’ projects.

This summer’s Camp curriculum consists of about 30 hours of supervised computer lab work, which will take place primarily in the Design Center. The remaining 10 hours consist of “field work” for technology projects as well as journaling and discussions, and this will be conducted around campus and in Clara Belle Williams Hall 229. All hours will be facilitated by the Camp Director, Assistant Camp Director (Sarah Gzemski), and about 18 undergraduate, graduate, and faculty volunteers from the English Department, other NMSU departments, and the community.

This summer GRTC has space for 14 campers: local Las Cruces/Dona Ana County and El Paso area ‘tween girls ages 10 to 13. This number has been reduced from previous Camps enrollment numbers because we want the girls to have more individual time with the technology and volunteers and develop more of a mentoring atmosphere. Additionally, as the Design Center has 14 available computers, this allows each camper to essentially have her own designated workspace throughout Camp. Because one of the main objectives of the Camp – and an extension of NMSU’s land grant mission – is to serve those in this community who might otherwise not have access to such a technological and educational opportunity, the cost to register for Camp is kept low. Each camper will pay $20 and will be provided with lunch, snacks, a t-shirt, and a copy of all projects made during Camp.

**Need for the Camp**

During both summers the Camp previously ran, GRTC quickly filled up with interested campers. In fact, for the Summer 2013 Camp, during which I served as the Assistant Camp Director, we had a waitlist of more than 20 campers who we were not able to reserve spots for. I still have their contact information, and I will reach out to them again in case there are still some girls who are interested and who have not “aged out” of the Camp.

GRTC helps girls in several ways, including but not limited to:

* increasing access to and skills in various computer software programs and new media practices, regardless of socioeconomic status and at a time when research suggest girls’ interest in technology wanes
* increasing critical awareness of new media consumption and production practices with particular attention paid to gender and identity representation available to young, female technology users
* providing a safe and encouraging space to discuss and critically engage with issues related to girls’ self-esteem, such as body image, identity performance, bullying, online safety, etc.
* allowing girls a voice in telling their own stories of girlhood rather than merely consuming the narrow gender roles often given to them by mass media, social networking, and technology

Additionally, GRTC has garnered real interest from the graduate students in the English Department. Master’s and Ph.D. students in Rhetoric and Professional Communication as well as M.F.A. students in Creative Writing have already volunteered and began developing activities and workshops for the Camp. Some of these volunteers are returning while others will serve their first year. We also have support from an undergraduate engineering major, a local non-profit women’s organization leader, a local public relations person, and several people interested in documenting the Camp. I have had an overwhelmingly positive response from many different people about the return of the GRTC this summer.

GRTC offers benefits to volunteers, including but not limited to:

* increasing technology skills and enhancing teaching practices for undergraduate and graduate students
* offering experience in community outreach through planning and administering major outreach initiatives
* providing a networking opportunity for the university and community to meet and engage with one another

And finally, GRTC also offers benefits to the University and English Department by:

* furthering NMSU’s land grant mission
* offering an important professional development opportunity to undergraduate and graduate students interested in teaching and community outreach
* providing a space for additional research and outreach to be served, whether through local non-profit organizations, classroom practices, or research presentations and articles (for example, I will be presenting about GRTC at a community writing conference next Fall and co-authoring an article with former Camp Director Jen Almjeld and her mentor Kris Blair on this type of community engagement through writing and technology for *Computers and Composition Online*)

**Specific Request for English Department Funding and Camp Budget**

Previous Camp budgets exceeded $2,000 due in large part to funding GRTC overnight. This year, funding is needed to cover two main areas of expenses: camp preparation and food. While we seek monetary and food donations and already have received some[[1]](#footnote-1), we still need quite a bit of money to adequately serve the campers and volunteers.

While the money we receive from campers’ registrations ($20 per girl for a total of $280) will be used to reimburse volunteers who purchase food and supplies, it is imperative that we have the majority of these needs paid for prior to the Camp to ensure it runs smoothly.

We are asking for $300 from the English Department to help cover expenses related to Camp. While this request will not cover all expenses, we hope to be able to receive additional donations and possibly funding through grants such as the El Paso Electric Community Partner Program (https://www.epelectric.com/community/community-partner-program-manual) and the Vistex Foundation (http://www.vistexfoundation.org/apply.html), though these are, of course, not guaranteed.

Below is the estimated GRTC 2015 budget based on the previous Camps’ expenses:

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| **Item** | **Cost per Item** | **Quantity** | **Total** |
|  |  |  |  |
| Lunch | $7/person/day | 14 campers + 6 volunteers | $140.00 |
| Snacks + Drinks | $5/person/day | 14 campers + 6 volunteers | $100.00 |
| Flash drives | $27/10-pack | 14 campers + 6 volunteers | $54.00 + shipping(see http://www.amazon.com/Flash-Drive-Swivel-Design-Blue/dp/B00E4BHOFA/ref=sr\_1\_1?s=pc&ie=UTF8&qid=1426536902&sr=1-1) |
| T-shirts | $8/person | 14 campers + 10 or more volunteers + extra for sale to family | ~$240.00 |
| **Total Expenses** |  |  | ~$534.00 |

1. To date, two packages of water, pens and pencils, construction paper, glue, and old magazines have been donated [↑](#footnote-ref-1)