Drafting the Proposal
Tips for SURF Application Writers

**Reflect on your own writing process.** What are your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to writing? Maybe you struggle more with moving from an idea to a draft, or maybe you need more help narrowing your ideas or organizing a draft. Being aware of your writing self is important, especially when you work on high stakes documents.

**Read the instructions CAREFULLY!**

- **Create a checklist.** What do you need to do to complete the process of applying for a SURF? Visit the SURF website and make a list of all the steps involved.

- Pay attention to **key words** in the SURF guidelines. Print out the instructions and use a highlighter to help you see the special words that give you hints about what the reviewers want you to do.

- Get a picture of your **audience**—who will be reviewing your proposal? What kinds of proposals do they want to see? What might an ideal proposal look like?

- Open your calendar and **make a plan to get started.** Include deadlines for developing a draft, getting feedback, and formatting the document according to SURF guidelines.

- If procrastination plagues you, check out these Writing Center handouts on these topics for help: [http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/index.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/index.html)

**Get Started**

- **Use the prompt as an idea generator**—turn each item into a question: “What do I hope to discover?” or “What is puzzling about this situation that interests me?” “Why do I care about this project?” “How will I accomplish my research?”

- Try a few techniques from the Writing Center’s brainstorming handout [http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/brainstorming.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/brainstorming.html). You might continue this process with a SURF peer advisor if/when you get stuck.

**Turn your Brainstorm into a Draft**

- **Begin to build your draft**—start writing wherever it seems easiest and build from there. You don’t have to begin at the beginning.
• **Work hard** until you reach an impasse, then set your draft aside to come back to another time

• **Revise at least once** before seeking outside help

• **Read your draft out loud.** You will be amazed how this technique can help you edit and improve your draft.