<div align="center">**MEMORANDUM**</div>

TO: Rachel Cumberbatch, J. C. Preston, Becky Mercer, and Peter Schroeder
FROM: Howard Green, Editor
DATE: April 23, 2013
SUBJECT: "Open Source Software as Solution in State Funded Community
                Colleges"

First of all, great work on this white paper. Your thorough research and knowledge of this issue really shines through in the level of information and careful and well-supported treatment of the subject. You provide a solid overview of the evolving role of community colleges, the students they serve, and the challenges they face. You go on to make a compelling case for the use of open source software (OSS) in the community college system, while carefully examining the pros and cons of open source. It is clear that you are very well informed and ardent in your assertions, and your paper strongly held my interest as a reader.

In this analysis I will address some of the organizational, visual and stylistic elements in which I feel there is some room for improvement. My suggested emendations are aimed squarely at strengthening and clarifying your rhetorical arguments to improve its impact on your intended audience. To accomplish this, your first task is to clearly define your audience and purpose.

Who are your readers? Decision makers.

Your goal in preparing and writing this paper is to appeal directly to Community College officials with the authority to make policy decisions about how best to serve their students. These individuals, administrators, board members, educators and politicians are well aware of the fiscal issues facing the community college system and are looking for ways address these challenges while still providing the best possible educational tools. If your intention is to motivate these decision makers to see open source as the solution, that purpose must be made absolutely clear in your paper.

A stronger organizational structure would help to clarify the paper's purpose and improve its effectiveness. As written, the report provides a detailed background on open source software and lists its numerous advantages and disadvantages of open source compared with traditional commercial, closed software applications. You could make a more compelling argument by weighing the advantages and disadvantages of OSS in the context of the tangible problem you present.

Defining this core problem will help you better organize the rest of the paper. You should focus on how each topic relates to this main rhetorical point. For example, it is a good idea to contextualize your background on community colleges primarily in

terms of how the system might benefit from OSS. Focus your discussion of OSS around how it can help community colleges better serve their students. Lead with the main argument and move from broader to more specific information. Craft subsequent topic and section to support and build upon the core idea.

Begin with the Problem and the Solution

The Problem: Community colleges are poor. They serve a highly diverse student population, many of whom are completing four-year degrees entirely within the community college system. These schools lack the financial resources and strategic partnerships of four-year colleges and universities. Software comprises a substantial chunk of that financial burden; standard, licensed platforms like Microsoft and Adobe are ubiquitous in both education and the professional world, but represent a major expense for students and institutions alike.

The solution: Open source software alternatives may offer the functionality of most commonly used programs at low to no cost.

The Problem - Solution paradigm is the core of your rhetorical argument.

Busy readers want to get to your main idea quickly, without having to first wade through a lot of text. Both your executive summary and the paper proper lead with a detailed background on community colleges. However the theme of your paper, open source software, only appears after a considerable amount of text. While the benefits and challenges facing community colleges is important and necessary background information, open source is the focus of your paper and you should strive to get to this point as soon as possible.

Organization and Structure: Building the case for Open Source Software

After a lengthy introduction you offer a fairly detailed introduction to OSS, demonstrating several relevant examples of the technology. You then move on to a section titled "Argument for open source." (I will expand on the topic of section titles and headings below.) This is the meat of your paper in my option, and you could improve the overall organization by placing the entire discussion were placed under this heading. This section could immediately follow your statement of purpose and lead directly into your detailed exploration of OSS.
The following section, "The Pros of Open Source Software" presents a list of these advantages, summarizing each feature and explaining its primary benefit. You follow this with a similarly constructed section titled "Argument Against Open Source", listing the disadvantages of implementing OSS.

While these sections are highly informative, you should always aim to place the most significant and relevant features upfront. It might be helpful for the reader to see these positive and negative features evaluated alongside one another, again in the context of the core problem. You might consider interspersing these pros and cons by broader topic. You might compare, for example, the support of licensed software publishers vs. that offered by the open source community, or the immediate cost savings of open source vs. the benefits of using industry standard tools.

As it is, the case you present for and against implementing OSS are more or less equal. You should strive to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of open source software in light of your reader's primary question: "Will investing in OSS save my community college money, while still allowing us to provide our students the best educational experience possible." In other words, **what's in it for me?**

I have included a suggested outline with this memo that might give you some ideas for revising the organizational structure the paper. I've also provided some revised heading titles and levels as well. I will discuss this topic in detail in the next section.

Other Issues of Style, Mechanics and Visual Design

HEADINGS
Your section headings are clear and descriptive for the most part, but you could make them even stronger and more consistent. Some of your headings are either vaguely worded or awkwardly constructed, for example:

"Who has reacted to the problem thus far and in what way?"

There is also some inconsistency in your heading conventions. Some are constructed as full sentences, while others are clipped and give us very little information about the section, such as the following example:

"The Technology"

You could strengthen the meaning and effectiveness of your headers by using active voice and employing parallelism, a consistent structure, voice and tone for all headings. The use of parallel structure for headings stresses a narrative cohesion between sections. Well-constructed headings may either be active statements or questions that lead the reader into the section.

Visually, it is helpful to set headings in a different type size, weight, font or even color, and space them apart from other headers and paragraphs. Many of your sections could be split into multiple heading and subheadings levels, which would also improve the organization and scannability of the document. Remember that your intended readers are busy people and will likely scan this paper. Strong

descriptive and well-designed headings will help make the document more scannable and better accommodate these readers' needs.

PARAGRAPHS
You can also employ parallel structure in sentences and paragraphs as well. While the language and grammar of the text is generally active and engaging, you frequently revert to passive voice and meandering sentence composition. There are also a fair number of long, unbroken blocks of text. Look for opportunities to break these blocks into tight paragraphs and combine or condense long, unwieldy sentences. Doing so will improve the paper's readability and accessibility.

I have rewritten and attached a segment of the original text to serve as an example of improved structure, readability, accessibility and tone. I've also included a brief style sheet for the entire document.

FRONT AND BACK MATTER
Place the executive summary on its own page. Refer to the MLA, APA and our internal style guide for handling citations and references.

GRAPHICS AND ILLUSTRATONS
Finally, while your paper did not include any graphics, tables or charts and may not require any, you might consider adding some to help your readers visualize your key points. You could, for example, include a table showing pricing and functionality of several commercial software products alongside their open source alternatives, a pie chart showing software-licensing fees as a proportion of community college budgets, or side-by-side screenshots of open and closed source software products that might be used in a higher education setting.

Once again, congratulations on completing such a comprehensive and fascinating first draft. I hope you will find my suggestions helpful in preparing your revisions. I look forward to reading your revised draft in two weeks. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if I can clarify any of these suggested emendations.

Best of luck and thank you again for your continuing efforts.

Howard Green, Editor

Attachments:
Style Sheet
Revised Outline
Section of Rewritten Text