Dear Colleague:

Thanks for your interest in our study of automated essay scoring. To reiterate, our "challenge" to you is to try to "beat" our automated scoring system, *e-rater*. Again, the "game" you have agreed to play is to write essays that *e-rater* will find to be problematical, assigning scores that are either too high or too low, relative to those assigned by human readers.

Here's what we'd like you to do. In the other attachments you will find the following:

- A description of how *e-rater* works
- Information about the GRE Writing Assessment: how essays are scored and samples of essays that received various scores
- An essay prompt for the Issue type essay and one for the Argument type

(The information about the GRE Writing Assessment and sample essays can also be found at http://www.gre.org/twotasks.html.)

Please write two essays for the Issue prompt – one that you feel will elicit an *e-rater* score that is *lower* than deserved, and one that is *higher* than deserved. Then write an essay of each kind for the Argument prompt. (If you can't write all four essays, we'd still like you to participate.) Feel free to use any means to generate the essays. For example, if you teach, you might work with your students, asking them to write essays, which you could either submit as written or modify to conform to your predictions. When you write your essays, please:

(1) Use single spacing

(2) Use two carriage returns (i.e., hit 'enter' twice) to space between paragraphs. Please DO NOT use 'tabs' to indicate new paragraphs

(3) Save your essays as ascii TEXT - ONLY

(4) Identify each essay by placing, in the upper right corner, a number from 1 to 4

(5) Indicate, in a separate file or e-mail, your prediction for each essay, i.e., whether it will get a **higher** or **lower** score from *e-rater* than deserved, and the reasons for each of your predictions. Also, indicate which topic each essay (1 to 4) addresses -- *Worker Apathy*, *Roller Skating*, *Non-Conformity/Success*, or *Absence of Choice*.

(6) Tell us who you are: your title, institutional affiliation, and, briefly, how your education, experience, or interests relate to the automated essay scoring

When you have finished, please send us your essays electronically (dpowers@ets.org). If possible, we'd like to get your essays by September 17. The essays that you submit will be scored by *e-rater* and by human readers in order to evaluate your predictions.

We will treat all information confidentially. Project reports will not link study participants with the essays that they write. Although we can't compensate you for your time, we will provide feedback on how successful your challenges were, as well as a summary of the challenges made by other participants. (We'll also award $250 to a writer whose essay is greatly

undervalued by *e-rater*, and $250 to another whose essay is greatly overrated.) If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Don Powers
Principal Research Scientist
Educational Testing Service