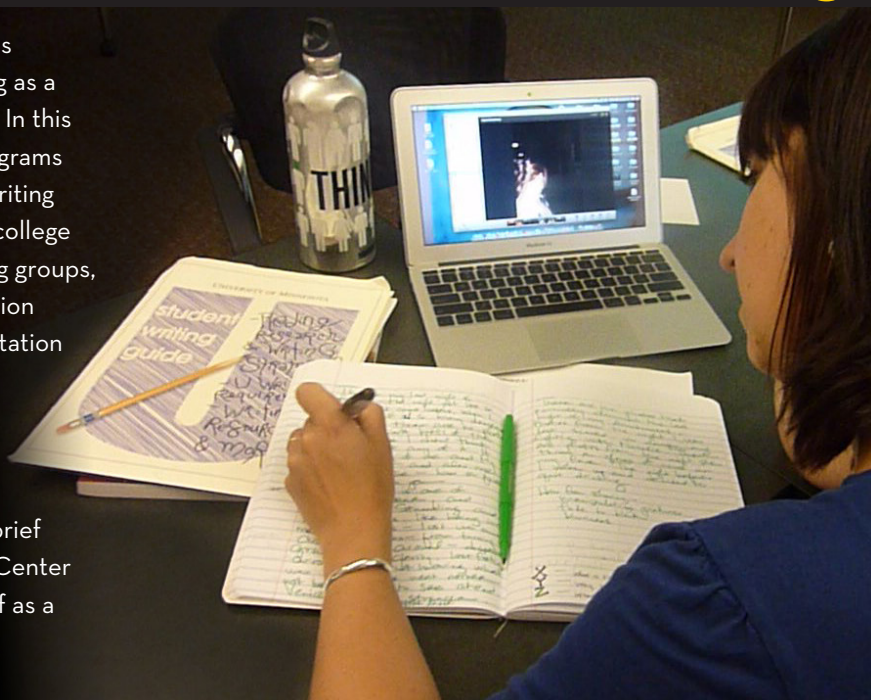




Center for Writing

At its heart, the work of the Center for Writing is about writers, the human beings who use writing as a tool for learning and communicating in all fields. In this year's newsletter, we showcase our summer programs that explicitly nurture writers: our Minnesota Writing Project Summer Institute, which engages preK-college educators in daily writing prompts, active writing groups, and celebratory sharing of writing; our Dissertation Writing Retreat, which provides graduate dissertation writers with community, structure, and support; and our Faculty Writing Hunkers, which bring together faculty from multiple disciplines and ranks to build a supportive campus culture for scholarly research and writing. We hope these brief profiles remind you of your connections to our Center and inspire you to make time to nurture yourself as a writer as well.



Teachers Rediscover Themselves as Writers in the MWP Summer Institute

The best teachers of writing are writers themselves, according to National Writing Project philosophy, and for 25 years the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) and founding director Muriel Thompson have offered educators at all levels and in all disciplines a three-week Summer Institute that reminds them that they are indeed writers.

In addition to sharing best practices, engaging in critical discussions, and conducting research in their time together, Institute participants respond to writing prompts every day and take part in writing groups. The groups allow time for writing, sharing, and providing feedback.

One member of the 2015 Institute extols the value of having one's writing read by another person: "By giving us the opportunity to share among peers, our writer selves emerge, and it is that part of our soul that awakens us to better teaching." Participants find these activities to be transformational for themselves and their students: "I was able to find my long-

silenced writer's voice," declares another participant. "My students will greatly benefit from having a writer as a writing teacher."

Institute participants come back together each spring to share how they've been incorporating writing into their classrooms and to stay connected with their peers. If you or someone you know is interested in applying for the MWP Summer Institute, please go to z.umn.edu/mwpsummer for more information.

Remembering Scott Jacobson and Jesús Estrada-Pérez



Our hearts were heavy this year with the passing of two former C4W writing consultants. Scott Jacobson worked as a graduate consultant while completing his MFA in Creative Nonfiction in 2001–2003 and again as a visiting professional consultant in 2008 as part of his appointment as a full-time instructor in the Department of Writing Studies. Jesús Estrada-Pérez worked as a graduate consultant in 2013–2014 and was a longtime Student Writing Support client as an undergraduate and graduate student. Near to completion of his dissertation, Jesús will be awarded his PhD in American Studies posthumously. Scholarship donations in his honor may be given online at z.umn.edu/jesus; please make your donation to the Chicano & Latino Studies General Fund, check the box for "giving in memory," and enter Jesús's name.



Creating Interdisciplinary Community for Dissertation Writers

For many PhD students, writing the dissertation looms as an overwhelming and isolating experience. Recognizing the importance of this stage in the development of graduate writers, both in the completion of their degrees and in shaping them as future faculty members, C4W co-director Katie Levin developed the Dissertation Writing Retreat in 2009.

In this concentrated three-week experience, fifteen dissertation writers gather in the Center, writing in solidarity with each other through daily writing warm-ups, structured writing time, and a day-ending “parking downhill” writing exercise. In addition, participants have the opportunity to meet regularly with the two Student Writing Support graduate consultants who co-lead the retreat with Katie. As participants note, this kind of individualized support from an encouraging, non-evaluative reader is powerful: “Not only did



these meetings draw out actual revisions to my writing, they also gave me a space in which to talk through ideas and get feedback on things that were still in process without feeling embarrassed or unprepared. I walked away from every meeting having a clearer picture of what I was working on as well as solid steps to take next, which helped to keep me on track.”

In the words of one participant, the interdisciplinary nature of the retreat “gives one a bit of breathing room from the particularities and/or occasional limitations one can experience by being only around people in one’s own department.” As another retreat participant notes, working with peers from other departments “helped me to think more globally about my own work.” For a sampling of the retreat’s disciplinary diversity, see our list of defended dissertations completed by participants (z.umn.edu/defended).

Giving Scholarly Writing a Jumpstart in Faculty Writing Hunkers

To counter the notion that teaching and research are competing demands in faculty members’ time, Mitch Ogden, then leader of C4W’s Teaching with Writing program, piloted the first “Summer Hunker: Faculty Writing Jumpstart” in June 2009. This grassroots experiment (in which participants were rewarded with coffee, snacks, and optional writing consultations), Mitch asked faculty and staff to “hunker down” and write with their peers for a week in a quiet, distraction-free space, and to reflect on the experience during writing warm-ups and lunch discussions.

For many participants, the experience has changed how they see themselves and their students as writers: “After the first Hunker, I began to believe in the possibilities of being able to write a book, and the sabbatical I am taking this semester can be traced directly back to that first Hunker. It was also useful for me



to know the many different ways that my colleagues used writing in teaching as well as scholarship.” Another Hunker-er noted, “the Hunker nurtures the writer in me, an integral part of my professional self that is too often ignored or left to muddle through with little or no guidance. The ideology behind the Hunker—to prioritize our writing in a safe and supportive environment, with peer and professional resources—is thus truly liberating for me.”

C4W’s Assistant Director of Writing Across the Curriculum Dan Emery now leads the annual week-long Summer Hunkers, late summer and winter break Hunker Reunions, and a new U of MN Google Community for Hunker participants. If you are looking for inspiration for your own scholarly writing, please see the Hunker Resources page (z.umn.edu/hunker).

Our C4W alumni family grew again this year with the graduations and departures of many valued staff members: Stephanie Ales, Lorna Ball, Emily Bruce, Anil Chandiramani, Justin Haring, Maren Henderson, Josh Isaacson, Damian Johansson, EunGi Kim, Carah Kucharski, Han Li, Carra Martinez, Kristen Nichols-Besel, Joe Schiltz, Matt Sheeley, Shaina Thompson, Alec Von Arx, Steve Wandler, Katie Werdick, and Mary Jo Wiatrak. Thank you, both recent and longtime alums and friends, for your continued support of the Center for Writing, which helps us support writers all year long. **Please consider us in your year-end giving and share with us what you’ve been up to by joining and posting on our “University of Minnesota Writing Center Employees, Alumni, and Friends” Facebook page and by answering our 11 Questions for Alumni survey (z.umn.edu/11q). Read the many interesting and inspiring responses from others at z.umn.edu/alums.**

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