



# Center for Writing

In much the same way that the process of writing involves both reflecting on one’s past experiences and discovering new ideas, the Center for Writing’s recent milestones encourage us to look back at our rich history and to look forward to exciting new developments. This past year marked the 25th anniversary of the Minnesota Writing Project, the Center’s outreach program to K–college educators and their students across the state, and our 44th year since the opening of the original General College Reading and Writing Skills Center in 1972. Both Student Writing Support (SWS) and Writing Across the Curriculum set new records with numbers of students and instructors reached. And, this June, we saw the joyous retirement of our Co-Director Debra Hartley, who was the last director of the General College Writing Center and a graceful architect of the mergers that helped create the new Center for Writing in 2007. In this year’s newsletter, we welcome you to join us in looking back as we share stories from this milestone year and looking forward as we show off the newly designed SWS–Appleby space and meet our newest Co-Director, Jasmine Kar Tang, herself an alum of the Center.



SWS–Appleby consulting spaces



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## MWP Celebrates 25th Anniversary as Local Host for NWP/NCTE Conference

As the Minnesota Writing Project (MWP) reached its twenty-fifth year as a professional home for literacy educators in our state, MWP founding director Muriel Thompson took on the role of local host for the National Writing Project Annual Meeting at the National Council of Teachers of English Convention in Minneapolis in November. Since this was the first time this national conference was held in Minnesota, Muriel and local MWP teachers welcomed their colleagues from nearly 200 National Writing Project sites, hosted a writing marathon through downtown Minneapolis, and presented their work in multiple conference sessions, including one with colleagues from the Trondheim Writing Project in Norway:

“Teachers Learning Together in Norway and the United States: Building Local and International Networks to Sustain and Energize Teachers.”



MWP teachers (left to right) Dana Amdahl, Kirsten Jamsen, Ann Thompson, Muriel Thompson, and Cherise Storlie-Kristoffersen

With an eye to both MWP’s legacy and its future, MWP also used the anniversary year to collaborate with Ann Thompson, an MWP alum and videographer, and her son, Charlie McCarron, to capture and document the voices of many MWP teacher-leaders in videos showing the power of our Summer Institute and celebrating our site’s history. You can watch these videos on the MWP home (<http://mwp.umn.edu>) and “About Us” ([writing.umn.edu/mwp/about/index](http://writing.umn.edu/mwp/about/index)) webpages.

## Dr. Debra Hartley Retires from the U

After a long and successful career in higher education, including nineteen years teaching in and leading writing centers at the University of Minnesota, Dr. Debra Hartley retired in June 2016. As Debra notes, “My career kept me in academia; I began as an academic librarian, added on the position of writing instructor, then writing consultant, followed by writing center director. My career reached its apex as Co-Director of the Center for Writing.” While directing the General College Writing Center, Debra was a key architect in the merger of three campus writing centers to become the new Center for Writing in 2007.



Debra with her parents, Joyce and Ray Hartley

Debra rose to this challenge with her characteristic optimism, hard work, grace, and curiosity—deepening the Center’s commitment to supporting the growth of student writers and writing consultants, while taking on new roles as the Center’s webmaster and MWP technology liaison. A few months into retirement, Debra writes, “Now that I am retired I have more time to devote to my family and to pursue long-held interests such as genealogy. I won’t miss some of the administrative tasks, but will miss my smart, energetic, fun, and generous colleagues who inspired me every day to always do the best I could.”

## SWS–Appleby Gets a Makeover and a New Leader



Jasmine with her dog, Zoe

In June, Dr. Jasmine Kar Tang began as the Center’s new Co-Director, taking over the responsibilities of leading SWS–Appleby and SWS.online, joining the MWP leadership team, and serving as the Center’s webmaster. Many Center alums remember Jasmine from her

work as a SWS writing consultant during 2009–12 and 2013–14 and as a Writing-Enriched Curriculum Research Assistant during 2010–12. As Jasmine describes it, her first semester as a writing consultant changed her career path: “Working in SWS restored my faith in higher education. As a downtrodden graduate student, I was getting cynical about academia. It was in working here as a writing consultant that I figured out that the writing consultation as a site of teaching was the place where I could be the best educator I could be.” While completing her PhD in American Studies, Jasmine worked at the writing centers at St. Catherine University and Metropolitan State University, after which she took on a post-doctoral associate position as the Writing Initiative Coordinator in the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education.

As Jasmine notes, “I came into this work thinking about social and racial justice issues. There is a need for increased attention to these issues in writing center studies, and I realized I could contribute.” Her contributions are already influencing the field, as evidenced in her recent co-authored publication in *Writing Center Journal*: “Body + Power + Justice: Movement-Based Workshops for Critical Tutor Education.”

Along with this change in leadership came the opportunity to give the SWS–Appleby spaces in 5 and 9 Appleby Hall a makeover. Cleaning out old files, discarding old furniture, and meeting with consultants in the Disability Resource Center motivated a new open floor plan, a much-needed carpet cleaning, and a colorful new paint job. We hope you’ll stop by the next time you are on campus and see the refreshed space!



SWS–Appleby consultant staff room



Waiting area for writers visiting SWS–Appleby

We know that the Center for Writing’s current and future success is built upon the more than four decades of dedicated work by our student and professional staff. That special group of staff alums grew this year with the graduations, retirements, and departures of Jennifer Andersen, Jordan Anderson, Rosalind Bloodworth, Dev Cornell, Ken Gonzales, Debra Hartley, Becca Houske, Kerry Langin, Robb Larson, Erika Meitzner, Brigitte Mussack, Tad Patterson, Sam Reid, Erin Stutelberg, Mary Taylor, Andrea Willgohs, Rachel Wolff, and Amy Wulff.

We hope you’ll consider us in your year-end giving and stay in touch by joining and posting on our “University of Minnesota Writing Center Employees, Alumni, and Friends” Facebook page and by answering (or updating your entry in) our 11 Questions for Alumni survey at [z.umn.edu/11q](http://z.umn.edu/11q). You can read the many interesting and inspiring responses from others at [writing.umn.edu/alums](http://writing.umn.edu/alums).

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