

● Ideas to Inspire a Community of Learning ●

inspire

Summer 2016



Another Spring semester has come to a successful conclusion. The energy on campus is relaxed, a sign that Baylor is shifting into summer mode. I am delighted to see students embrace additional opportunities for growth: internships, jobs, travel, education, missionary work, and, yes, recreation. Rest and renewal are important for faculty too. The aim of this edition of *Inspire* is to encourage you to utilize the

slower pace of summer to invest in yourself professionally and personally. Take out-of-town trips for writing, which foster development and relaxation. Construct your syllabus in May rather than August, allowing distance between class sessions to inspire innovation and enthusiasm for teaching. Take in an academic conference as well as a vacation. Make time serve you. And enjoy the restorative spirit of summer.

J. Knox Wright

ACADEMY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING



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Writing in Community

With finals ending and summer approaching, our minds begin to turn to writing projects. To facilitate effective writing sessions, consider forming a writing group to help you accomplish your summer goals.

There is no right way to create a writing group, and writing groups can serve different purposes. For some, a writing community provides an external structure to help maintain focus and writing discipline. For others, a writing group can provide meaningful editorial feedback. After spending almost a year and a half participating in a successful writing group with four members, I have gained some insights that might help inspire your own writing community.

The Writing Process

Consider dedicating one day a week to meet as a group and write: While this is not the only time I write during the week, the accountability of this set schedule keeps me disciplined in continuing my projects. My group tends to meet weekly, for one 6-7 hour day, in a participant's home, with a lunch break in the middle.

Set (small) goals: While overarching goals are essential, so is breaking down goals into smaller chunks. At the beginning of every writing session, determine your intended goals for the day with the group. Near the end, share whether you reached the goal or what obstacles you encountered.

Create structure for your time

together: To make the most of your dedicated writing time, set up rules for both writing and conversation. Our group has found the *50-10 rule* to be helpful: a 50-minute writing session, with no talking, followed by a 10-minute break to stretch and discuss our writing or anything else going on in our lives.

Share a meal: On a rotating basis, provide lunch for the writing

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group. This does not have to be fancy (we have enjoyed many cans of tomato soup), but it frees the other members to focus on writing, and provides a welcome social break in the middle of the day.

The Editorial Process

Start editing early: My writing group has discovered that sharing our work at early stages, rather than an (almost) finished product, can be helpful. Writing group members can identify redundancies, make connections that the writer may not initially see, and spot areas that need more development or restructuring. Allowing outside readers to engage with your text at this stage can save valuable editing

hours. Moreover, the interest and energy your writing group invests in your project may rekindle your own energy for that project.

Create a separate meeting time to provide feedback: Plan to have the author submit her work to the group at least four days in advance. Limit this time to one project only. For a chapter length editing project, a long lunch or coffee should provide sufficient time.

When editing, recognize both strengths and weaknesses of the project: Generate questions about the argument, articulate what you find interesting, and state what you'd like to see developed. Along with the dedicated time to discuss edits, provide written feedback.

Do not be afraid to ask your editors questions: If someone suggests that you need to strengthen a point, ask for specific suggestions. Share your own concerns. By simply talking through your project with others familiar with your work, you may be able to work through areas where you feel stuck.

Approaching the writing process as a communal endeavor may initially feel unfamiliar. However, over time, as participants come to recognize the skills and gifts of the group (as writers and editors), the investment in each others' projects grows deeper, feedback becomes more engaged, and the shared celebration at the end of a successful writing endeavor is all the greater.

Jenny Howell
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Summer Faculty Institute:

A Unique Opportunity for Professional and Personal Development

Summer may be the most exciting and unsettling period of the academic calendar. While summer promises rest from the hustle of the academic year, the time between May and August can also be a strange blend of freedom and obligation. Courses require updating, thesis and dissertation proposals need attention, publication deadlines loom. Balancing these demands can make the much-heralded “summer vacation” feel like a lot of work. Though an academic’s job does not disappear with the undergraduates, the summer schedule can present opportunities for personal refreshment and professional growth.

One such outlet for development, available to Baylor faculty, is the Summer Faculty Institute (SFI). The SFI is a five-week workshop facilitated by the Academy for Teaching and Learning (ATL) and led by distinguished Baylor professors who seek to contribute to the personal and professional development of full-time faculty. Participants gather daily from late May through early July, engaging around topics of teaching, research, and service. In the words of Dr. Thomas

“The SFI is an opportunity for faculty from across the university to get to know each other as people and see that we all desire to excel as teachers and as scholars. I think it’s a great model for meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration.”

-Dr. Anne-Marie Schultz



2010 SFI Participants

Hanks, Professor of English and long-time leader of the SFI, the purpose is to help each “faculty member develop him or herself professionally at all the things that a faculty member here does, which is teaching, research, publication, being a colleague, and doing service to the institution, the profession, and, more importantly, to the community.”

Not only does the SFI address the practical concerns of faculty members in and outside of the classroom, but it provides an opportunity to interact with people outside of each individual’s department. The exercises, discussions, and presentations that take place throughout the month are interdisciplinary by design. The experience is intended to create a community of scholars who learn and work in a collaborative forum in line with Baylor’s academic vision and Christian mission. This interdisciplinary approach to faculty development is a key element in the success of the SFI, and of its participants, making the program a unique opportunity for professional and personal development.

The Summer Faculty Institute occurs each year in June, and all full-time faculty may apply. Applications for Summer 2017 are due September 1, 2016. For more information about SFI and other professional development opportunities offered by the Academy for Teaching and Learning please visit our website, www.baylor.edu/atl.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Summer Edition

Big XII Teaching and Learning Conference

June 2-3, Kansas State University,

Manhattan, Kansas

The two-day 2016 Big XII Teaching and Learning Conference will focus on the theme of Transformational Teaching and Learning. Held in the Leadership Studies Building on the K-State campus, this event brings together faculty, graduate students, instructional designers, educational technology leaders, and other higher education professionals interested in exploring the world of teaching and learning. For more information visit <https://www.k-state.edu/tlc/big12/>.

2016 ASCD Conference on Teaching Excellence

July 8-10, Hilton New Orleans Riverside,

New Orleans, Louisiana

“Join your colleagues in exciting New Orleans for two and a half days of career-empowering knowledge, practices, networking, and practical teaching solutions. The ASCD Conference on Teaching Excellence is designed with your specific needs in mind—providing strategies you can use immediately across all grade levels and subjects.” Visit www.ascd.org/conference-on-teaching-excellence.aspx for more information.

Lilly Conference on Designing Effective Teaching

August 1-3, 2016,

Asheville, North Carolina

Part of the overall Lilly Conference Series, Lilly-Asheville provides an opportunity to improve your teaching over the summer. The theme, Evidence-Based Teaching and Learning, will bring together an interdisciplinary group of educators from across the United States. This conference includes a variety of session formats including “100-minute workshops, 50-minute sessions, 20-minute discussions, traditional plenary addresses, 30-minute round table discussions, and poster sessions.” To find out more, visit <http://www.lillyconferences-nc.com/>

OUR MISSION:

To support and inspire a flourishing community of learning.

