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The Rewards of Summer: IWCA Summer Institute

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The rewards of summer: IWCA Summer Institute

When the IWCA sponsored the first Summer Institute for Writing Center Directors and Professionals in 2003, the intent was to offer mentoring and networking for both new and seasoned directors. As part of IWCA's commitment to professional development, the institute continues to focus on bringing professionals together, providing opportunities for deeper reflection on writing center work, and offering mentoring as participants shape their own careers through writing and research.

Summer Institute leaders immediately sensed the power the institute had to foster professional development, yet it is through the voices of the participants themselves that we found the most compelling evidence of the scope of the professional development. One year after participation, 2003 participants were asked about their SI experiences, and their answers reveal why the institute is so important, not only to individuals, but to the future of the profession.¹ Three major findings, or themes, emerged as significant. Participants' quotes follow each theme.

Those who attend the Summer Institute feel connected to their colleagues and peers and to disciplinary conversations.

"I have 50 new friends, colleagues, cheerleaders, confidantes that I can call on at any time."

"The leaders and participants demystified the community and culture in writing center circles, but they also taught me about their professional commitments in intellectual debates, pedagogy, and administration."

Those who attend the Summer Institute feel prepared to, interested in and encouraged to join professional and disciplinary

conversations (through regional and national networks, through research and publishing, etc.) and feel more supported as they do so.

"Two articles and a high school collaboration have grown out of the experience, and I think I have contacts with people that I've supported for other conferences and activities. In my neck of the woods, I try to pass on those politics of support and inclusion to my local and regional WC groups and people."

"I'm becoming a more engaged academic writer in the field, and I'm working to get more articles out. The SI and the contacts I made helped me be less afraid of joining the conversations. I used to think I was this stupid, naïve outsider, and now I think I have something of merit and value to offer. Without the SI, I don't know if I would have gotten there."

Those who attend the Summer Institute build confidence in their administrative, decision-making, and negotiation skills.

"The SI helped me feel more prepared for the many trials and challenges that I face in my job. I emerged from that week a much better administrator and negotiator."

"I feel so affirmed that what I've done at my school is right. I feel like I can channel the SI leaders and know I'm doing the smart thing."

Writing center professionals need to engage in both early career and ongoing professional development. This related directly to the job market: there are many professional opportunities

across the country that remain unfilled because those positions demand writing center people who can demonstrate commitment to the discipline and their peers, display knowledge of and engagement in research, publish, and develop a vision of a sustainable future for their own writing centers and for the field.

Just take a look at a few phrases we have lifted from recent job ads for writing center directors:

- Provide a truly collaborative center for the discussion of all sorts of writing
- Conduct seminars for faculty and staff working with writers from a wide variety of university schools and programs
- Develop a writing center and oversee the center's daily operations; select, train, supervise, and evaluate a staff of writing consultants
- Develop assessment, instructional materials, and on-line programs
- Fulfill a research agenda in area of expertise and make scholarly contributions to the field

It is no coincidence that the Summer Institute delves into such topics as developing a technology vision, writing a budget or grant proposal, research and publishing and collaborating with other campus programs. We now know that the learning that happens each summer is useful in seeking and retaining work as well as in developing a professional identity and sense of belonging to a community.

Participants' testimony may be impetus enough to attend the IWCA Summer Institute yourself, but many of us are also in positions to support others attending. We mentor and prepare graduate students and up and coming assistant directors; we may be in posi-

tions of hiring, and we may want to encourage our local and regional colleagues to attend.

Deciding to attend or sponsor someone from your staff is a commitment in both time and funds. But the rewards seem well worth it. Visit the IWCA Summer Institute for Writing Center

Directors and Professionals Web site for more information: <<http://www.writing.ku.edu/SI05/>>.

Anne Ellen Geller, Clark University and Michele Eodice, University of Kansas; Co-Chairs of 2005 IWCA Summer Institute

1. These responses are from Anne Geller's study of 2003 SI participants' experiences. Responses to a series of survey questions were submitted online and were anonymous. 40% of the 2003 SI participants responded. Anne intends to follow the experiences of SI participants for three years.

2005 IWCA Summer Institute

Registration opened for the 2005 IWCA Summer Institute in December. We have received many registrations already, but there are still slots available. Please visit the Web site for more information and to view the programs from the two previous institutes. Former participants continue to communicate to us how valuable their experience was and how much of what they learned and wrote about is now a significant part of their work. The new leaders for this year look forward to meeting you at the 2005 SI in Lawrence, Kansas. Questions can be directed to Anne Geller (angeller@clarku.edu) or Michele Eodice (michele@ku.edu).

Language Skills Specialist and Writing Instructor St. Olaf College

10-month position; annually begins August 15 through June 15 for Language Skills Specialist duties and a renewable 1-year term appointment for academic year 2005-06 for Writing Instructor duties. Hours are typically scheduled between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday-Friday with some weekend and evening hours required. This is a replacement position.

Areas of Responsibility:

Writing Place: administer writing center: supervise student tutors providing peers with help on academic writing. **English language skills program:** administer English language skills program and contribute to the academic success of English language learners. **Professional academic counseling:** work individually with students on English language fluency, verbal skills, college reading, academic writing, study skills, time management, academic advising, and other topics contributing to academic success. **Teaching:** instructor for two writing courses per year, one in each fall and spring semester, faculty rank dependent upon qualifications. Likely courses include Critical Skill in Composition, an introductory composition course for native and non-native speakers, and First Year Writing, a topical seminar required of most first year students that emphasizes critical reading and writing and includes a research component. **Program support:** work collaboratively towards effective

operation of the Academic Support Center office, prepare and present academic support outreach programs, support tutoring program in the social sciences and the humanities, support the Study Skills Center, support student Academic Assistants, and fulfill other duties as requested. **Supervision:** recruit, hire, train, assign work, schedule, and evaluate student Writing Place tutors and student English language skills tutors.

Essential Qualifications:

EDUCATION: Masters or Doctorate level Degree in a humanities or social science discipline and English as a Second Language (ESL) certification.

EXPERIENCE: 3-5 years teaching basic writing and undergraduate composition, with additional experience in teaching writing to English language learners in a higher education setting

Pay rate: Minimum \$26,600 – DOQ (Grade 13); **Start date:** August 15, 2005. **Review of applications begins immediately and continues until position is filled.** Please send letter of interest, resume, and list of three references with contact information. **To apply drop off, mail, e-mail, or fax your application materials to:** Office of Human Resources, St. Olaf College, 1520 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057; Fax: 507.646.3960 E-mail to: resume@stolaf.edu. Questions, call: 507-646-3068.