

CONTEMPLATION, PLACE, PRODUCTIVITY, COMMUNITY



Description: A blend of community building, contemplative centering, and scholarly productivity, Writing Renewal Retreats are opportunities for faculty to get away and check in with their scholarly passions and pursuits. Faculty who seek renewal as writers and for specific writing projects engage in a three-day writing retreat with a community of faculty writers at Mountain Valley Retreat Center at the base of Massanutten Mountain near Harrisonburg, VA.. Stimulate creativity and reconnect with scholarship passions as one reflects, dialogues, and engages in writing. Enjoy contemplative practices such as nature walks, quiet centering/mindfulness meditation, music, and more. Faculty renew a sense of inspiration and hope as they move toward completion of a writing project. Overnight stay encouraged, yet optional.

Scholarship Area Outcomes: Faculty will make progress toward:

- Enhancing scholarly productivity

Revised Summer 15 Program Outcomes: Faculty will make progress toward:

- Developing metacognitive awareness of writing process and habits
- Engaging a writing project.
- Examining your writing productivity
- Appreciating contemplative practices for increasing focus, awareness, and well-being
- Renewing enthusiasm for scholarly and creative writing
- Renewing oneself as a writer

Data reported were collated from four iterations of the Writing Renewal Retreat, including a June 2014 retreat (response rate 9/11 participants), an October 2014 retreat (response rate 14/17 participants), a June 2015 retreat (response rate 10/15 participants), and an October 2015 retreat (response rate 18/24). The quantitative data for each retreat supports the claim that this style of retreat has been successful in the area of scholarly productivity (an average rating of 4.83 across the four retreats, and one retreat rated a 4.93 in this category), but also in supporting the renewal of the individual writer. The quantitative data indicates that a majority of the participants found a renewed enthusiasm for writing at the conclusion of the retreat (average 4.8 out of 5), and all participants stated that attending the retreat has given them an appreciation for use of contemplative practice to increase focus and awareness, while fostering an overall sense of well-being (4.75 out of 5). The overall experience was rated an average of 4.78 out of 5 across the four retreats

Gold Dust Themes and Comments:
**Self-renewal, Self-care, Community and Connection,
and Metacognition**

"I think productivity is a funny way to frame this retreat because it was about so much more than just producing pages, but more so producing writers, and producing healing, and producing much needed self-care so that I am productive throughout the year. Yes, I got writing accomplished, and I am closer to an ending than ever before, but I am also carving out time to write this every day – starting with a contemplative practice and then writing. The retreat is more holistic than the word productivity allows."

"I had missed the program title word "renewal" and hadn't given that much thought beyond my participation in contemplative practices. However, the renewal produced from this experience gave me the spirit and motivation to pursue my scholarly work."

"I didn't feel intimidated by a computer screen and started writing my first draft. Through meditation, collaboration, and discussions I learned how to be productive without feeling distracted."

"Through the use of meditation and collegial bonding, a new feeling of accomplishments developed. Not only did I make connections among colleagues from different disciplines, I learned successful strategies of being a productive scholar."

"I learned so much about myself as a writer here. I also learned a real appreciation for meditation practices."

"I feel like JMU really does care about its faculty when I attend this retreat."

"I also learned a lot about creative ways to write and how mindfulness helps."

Special thanks to co-researchers: Jennifer Byrne, Cathryn Molloy, and Jared Featherstone—all from James Madison University James Madison University