Community

Where can I find information on grants for special projects?

The Division of Sponsored Programs is an excellent resource for all graduate students seeking a variety of funding. You can set up a meeting with one of their graduate assistants to discuss how to find and apply for grants. The Graduate College website and the International Studies Website may also have some resources.

What’s the relationship of the Director of Graduate Studies to the Nonfiction Writing Program?

Alvin Snider (fall 2015) and Bluford Adams (spring 2016) is currently the Director of Graduate Studies in the English Department. Because the Nonfiction Writing Program has its own director, Alvin/Bluford works more directly with MA and PhD students. However, besides the Nonfiction Writing Program’s own guidelines, there are sometimes Graduate School guidelines that must be followed. Certain types of assistance—such as when you apply for funds to attend a conference and give a paper—must go through the Director of Graduate Studies.

What's the AWP Conference?

AWP stands for the Associated Writing Programs, an organization of mostly graduate writing programs as well as individual members numbering in the thousands. It’s the most important professional organization for teacher/writers and was founded in the 1960’s. Every spring (or late winter), the AWP holds a conference in a different region of the country, or in rare instances outside of the country. Shortly after the conference is held, proposals for panels for the following year are solicited. Some believe it’s a good idea for you to try to go to at least one AWP conference during your time here. As a student, you receive a discount. The movers and shakers of contemporary poetry, nonfiction, and fiction attend the AWP each year. There’s also a phenomenal book fair at which editors from various literary magazines and presses are represented. This is the place to hobnob with writers, editors, and fellow grad students. It can seem a bit overwhelming at first, but it’s almost always a good time.

If you are presenting a paper or serving on a panel (at AWP or another conference), you can apply for assistance from the Graduate College and student government (GSS) in addition to the English Department.

The AWP also sponsors three prestigious book competitions each year: one each for poetry, nonfiction, and fiction.
What are the “4C’s” and the “3C’s?”

“CCCC” stands for “Conference on College Composition and Communication,” and “CCC” is its related journal, “College Composition and Communication.” The organization is tied to NCTE (the National Council of Teachers of English), and we’re proud to mention that it traces its ancestry directly to our very own English Department. CCC dedicates itself to the histories, theories, stories, research, and related disciplines of the teaching of writing at the college level. CCC scholars and teachers draw on a broad range of humanistic disciplines (English and literacy studies, linguistics, rhetoric, technology, gender, and diversity studies, philosophy of language, anthropology, and sociology). You can check both out at www.ncte.org.

Like AWP, the organization holds an annual conference each spring (occasionally and unfortunately at the same time as AWP and often during spring break). Like AWP, the conference site changes each year. Like AWP, there’s a discount for students, proposal-writing time is just after the previous year’s conference, and the movers and shakers of writing teaching, writing research, and writing-related fields (not to mention good writers) appear, schmooze, network, and interview at each conference. And like AWP, the book exhibit is worth the trip, especially if you are developing a syllabus for teaching a writing course or thinking about writing-related texts.

We encourage you to propose presentations for CCCC, or think about participating in some of its alternative kinds of sessions: there are many special-interest research forums and special interest groups dedicated to such topics as technology and the new media in writing, writing centers, writing across the curriculum, and the histories of composition studies. CCC sponsors many awards for the writing and teaching about writing and teaching. As we mention above, we’ll be happy to assist you with proposal drafts, prospective funding, or even a dry run of a presentation.

What is the Jakobsen Conference?

The Jakobsen Conference is a local conference exclusively for University of Iowa graduate students. It is entirely run by fellow graduate students in GSS. The conference is held every spring semester and provides a forum for oral, poster, and performance presentations—a local venue in which to present your research and graduate work, with cash prizes for top presentations.

Does the Nonfiction Writing Program hold readings?

Yes, we have a couple of successful student-run series as well as a series of well-known writers, editors, and agents brought in from year to year. Likewise, Prairie Lights has an
excellent reading series. Many of the authors coming through are nonfiction writers, and there are many other readings throughout Iowa City.

**Why is the NWP in the English Department?**

The short answer is: history. When the Writers’ Workshop began in the 1930’s, creative writing—as it was understood by the culture at the time—consisted of Fiction and Poetry. Since then of course, nonfiction as a discipline has come into its own. Were the founders of the Writers’ Workshop designing that program today, they would undoubtedly include nonfiction in the mix.

**What’s the IWP?**

The IWP is the International Writing Program, whose Director is Chris Merrill, a poet and nonfiction writer who also holds an appointment within the English Department. Each fall, the IWP invites a varied group of writers from around the world to be in residency here, for several months in most cases. These writers are well-known in their own countries and in many cases internationally. Throughout the fall, the IWP hosts readings and lectures by these eminent writers, and their presence is one of the great pleasures of living in Iowa City. You’re encouraged to attend their readings and lectures. In most cases, they’re quite available to meet informally.

**How can we connect with the International Writing Program and with the Writers’ Workshop?**

You can go to readings sponsored by the IWP and Writers’ Workshop for starters. You can go to lectures and other events sponsored by the IWP and Workshop. You can take seminars offered by the Writers’ Workshop. You can host a party and invite members of the IWP and Workshop communities.

**What kind of professional development or publishing advice is provided by the NWP?**

First, there are plenty of websites that deal with such things. Two of the best resources are the AWP website and Poets and Writers magazine. As members of AWP, all Nonfiction Writing Program students receive copies of the The Writers Chronicle, which has great articles on writing, teaching, and publishing. You should also consider subscribing to Poets and Writers.

As for the program, we occasionally bring in editors and agents to meet students and also organize panels of faculty to answer questions on these matters. (The Writers’ Workshop also brings agents every year, and you are invited to participate in their visits, which usually consist of a presentation and appointments with individual students.)
Still, it should be noted that professional development is as much a matter of initiative as it is a matter of guidance. One of the first things one learns as a writer is that you have to create your own opportunities. Opportunities abound if you seek them out. You might volunteer to screen submissions for *The Iowa Review* or intern at the radio station. You can help run one of the many student-led reading series on campus. You can volunteer for the Iowa Youth Writing Project. If you're an RA, you'll receive experience that you'll most likely be able to use later in publishing, business, or whatever direction your career takes.

And, if you do hold a teaching assistantship, remember that we're hiring you to be part of our program. You're playing two roles: first as a student and secondly as a colleague assisting us in the development of our undergraduate program.

*How do I get a letter of recommendation from someone in the program?*

You ask. It’s not guaranteed. Recommendations should be sincere and therefore aren't simply doled just out for the asking. Usually, a recommender will be someone with whom you've taken classes and who you know supports and respects your work.

*What is the Nonfiction Writing Program Advisory Committee?*

The Advisory Committee, as its name suggests, advises the Program Director in decisions that affect the program. Most important decisions are made in consultation with the committee, which consists of John D'Agata, Patricia Foster, Jeff Porter, Bonnie Sunstein, and one student representative. The Advisory Committee meets regularly, as often as once a week, so if there’s anything you’d like brought up for discussion, speak with the representative and he/she will try to get it on the agenda.

*What is the Nonfiction Writing Program listserv?*

The listserv ([NWPLOCAL@LIST.UIOWA.EDU](mailto:NWPLOCAL@LIST.UIOWA.EDU)) is a way to reach others associated with the program via email. Please contact John D'Agata or Cherie Hansen-Rieskamp to post an announcement. *This message goes to all students and faculty in the program.*

The program also has a moderated listserv for announcements that may affect those outside the program's faculty and students, such as calls for submissions, readings, and other newsworthy announcements. You can reach this list by sending e-mail to [NWP@LIST.UIOWA.EDU](mailto:NWP@LIST.UIOWA.EDU). All e-mails to this list go through Cherie for approval; if she deems it more appropriate for the local list; she may forward it there instead. It's important to remember that the program list goes out to friends and alumni of the program around the country and beyond. So your request to use it ought to be of appropriate importance (ie, not a ride to the airport or a sitter for your dog).
For **personal requests, please use** [NWP-GRAD@LIST.UIOWA.EDU](mailto:NWP-GRAD@LIST.UIOWA.EDU). This list is appropriate to use to ask for a ride to the airport or a sitter for your dog, etc.

All students are added to the three lists upon joining the program.

*Is there a network of Nonfiction Writing Program alums? How can we keep in touch with them and each other after leaving?*

Yes, we also have a NWP alumni listserv: [NWPALUMNI@LIST.IOWA.EDU](mailto:NWPALUMNI@LIST.IOWA.EDU). You can ask Cherie to add you to this listserv upon your graduation.