Scholarly writer’s retreat; connection, collaboration and completion

**AT A GLANCE**

4-H Youth Development recognized a need for 4-H professionals to come together to discuss scholarly requirements, to provide training and to facilitate an opportunity for participants to collaborate.

**The Situation**

Currently University of Idaho Extension faculty must identify and initiate development of a scholarly product (peer reviewed Extension publication such as an Extension bulletin, refereed journal article, refereed curriculum, etc.) in year two of their employment. Significant progress on a scholarly product and a major contribution on an UI Extension Impact Statement must be accomplished by year three. By year five, when consideration for promotion and tenure is given, the scholarly product must be in press or published and at least one Impact Statement must be written per year. Promotion to full professor rank requires at least one scholarly product every five years for county faculty, two products per year for state specialists and three products every five years for area Extension educators.

**Our Response**

The Scholarly Writer’s Retreat was held in the fall of 2016 with seventeen UI Extension faculty attending a three-day session. Invited speakers included UI administration, senior UI Extension faculty and the former editor of the Journal of Youth Development. Information presented included a definition of scholarship, UI Extension requirements, what a journal editor looks for, resources and references, American Psychological Association styles and an overview of suggested professional journals and their requirements.

The Scholarly Writer’s Retreat brought together U of I faculty members who had an emphasis of youth development in their tenure track position descriptions. Additionally, the invitation was extended to all UI Extension faculty, and several members of this group without primary 4-H Youth Development responsibilities also attended. A retreat atmosphere was selected to insure a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, as well as mirror other successful UI Extension events; 4-H faculty seem to relate and function best in informal settings.
An evaluation was conducted at the retreat to determine the occurrence and content of additional retreats and determine the success of the retreat. Additional evaluations were distributed after two months, six months and one year to further examine scholarly successes.

**Program Outcomes**

Participants were asked to list the most helpful ideas they learned at the retreat, they included:

- Make a habit of scheduling writing blocks of time
- Take your successes to national conferences
- Start journal article development with UI Extension Impact Statements
- Build relationships and hold each other accountable
- Stand tall with small words
- Reach across district and departmental lines to build teams

Participants also reported the following information:

- 50 percent had been employed by UI Extension for five years and over, and 17 percent were in their first year of employment. Others were employed between two and four years. 58 percent were at the assistant professor rank, 25 percent at associate professor and 17 percent were full professors.
- 50 percent felt their knowledge of scholarly writing was good or excellent before the retreat and 92 percent felt their knowledge of scholarly writing was good or excellent after the retreat.
- 84 percent indicated their attitude about scholarly writing had improved after attending the retreat. 67 percent also said they were more confident in scholarly writing after the retreat.
- Participants reported the following outcomes from attending the retreat; continued collaboration of five existing writing teams, formulation of seven new writing teams, five UI Extension Impact Statements were started or completed, three professional presentation applications were considered, five professional journal articles were started or completed and ten projects described as “stuck” were moving forward.

The survey completed after two months (12 participants) indicated three of the existing writing teams continued to meet, one additional writing team was formed, six UI Extension Impact Statements were started or completed, four professional presentation applications were considered or completed, five professional journal articles were started or completed, two new or existing curriculum were written or updated and four projects described as “stuck” were moving forward.

The survey conducted after six months (12 participants) indicated that four of the existing writing teams continued to meet, seven writing teams had formed, nine UI Extension Impact Statements were started or completed, 10 professional presentation applications were considered or completed, eight professional journal articles were started or completed, four new or existing curriculum were written or updated and four projects described as “stuck” were moving forward.

After one year the survey (14 participants) indicated that nine writing teams were meeting, eight UI Extension Impact Statements were started or completed, 11 professional presentation applications were considered or completed, nine professional journal articles were started or completed, five new or existing curriculum were written or updated and five projects described as “stuck” were moving forward.

**The Future**

Scholarly Writer’s Retreat 2.0 will be held the fall of 2018, as requested from participants attending the first retreat. The current editor of the Journal of Youth Development is scheduled to attend and present her vision of scholarly work. Other presentations include those requested from the first retreat, new topics and updates from several professional journals.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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