

# Record Turnout for the Winter Writing Retreat

70 grad students kicked off 2020 with a week of focused work

---

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

•  
•  
•



**GRADUATE STUDENTS ENJOYING LUNCH FROM THE BIG BEAN DURING THE RETREAT**  
This January, a record turnout of 70 graduate students gathered for the Graduate School's annual Winter Writing Retreat.

Previously known as the Live Free or Die Writing Boot Camp, the Writing Retreat is a week-long pre-semester program that provides graduate students with space, resources, community, and fuel to get work done. This work could be any number of things—a thesis, dissertation, application, proposal, resume, or other piece of writing. This year, the retreat offered several rooms so that students could choose to work in silence or have a chat with their neighbor. The bottom line is that students come to work in a focused and supportive community.

## We have only had this program for five years, and it is already a key part of the graduate calendar

“We have only had this program for five years, and it is already a key part of the graduate calendar,” said Cari Moorhead, dean of the Graduate School. “Graduate School can be a challenge for all sorts of good (and not so good reasons), and knowing you are not alone as you go through the twists and turns is so important.”

Now in its sixth year, the Writing Retreat has seen exceptional growth since it first began. In 2015, it had 11 total attendees, an average of 7 students per day, and in 2018, there were 45 total attendees with an average of 27 per day. This year, the attendance grew to 70 students, with an average of 50 per day.

For Jovana Milosavljevic-Ardeljan, a Ph.D. student and graduate assistant organizing the event, the growth of this retreat has come from careful research and an attentive ear to the graduate community.

“When I took over the organization of the retreat, I immediately started collecting data on why people participated, how they learned about it, what they worked on during the retreat, and how the retreat could serve them better. So, the growth and evolution of the retreat really came from what the participants were saying and asking for,” she said.

A key feature of the Writing Retreat is community support. Students could seek feedback from faculty, including Dr. Jessica Bolker from the biological sciences department, who specializes in science writing and communication, and Professor David Howland, a former UNH writing professor who now works at Rutgers University. Additional offerings include info sessions with the [Connors Writing Center](#), a [Zotero Workshop with the Dimond Library](#), a graduate student-only yoga class with [Campus Recreation](#), and a guided meditation led by [Health & Wellness](#).

To fuel the writing, the Graduate School provided catered lunches from the Big Bean Café in Durham. In addition, Dr. Bolker generously served 21 batches of homemade cookies over the course of the week, including biscotti, shortbread, gingerbread, and more.



*Graduate students working in the quiet room*

## Here's what graduate students are saying about this retreat:

- “This program was amazing. I wish every day of my graduate school experience was like this: working in a quiet room with dozens of other graduate students from across the university gave me that ‘we’re all in this together’ resolve, and also a sense of accountability that made me more productive. Getting to meet other grad students from different departments and learn about their disciplines during breaks for tea was also socially very beneficial (which, let’s be honest, makes the work go better!), and I look forward to running into those new colleagues and friendly faces around campus in the future.” –Steve Wissow, [MS Computer Science](#)
- “I found last year's writing retreat incredibly instrumental in getting my thesis done. I worked with Dr. Bolker to craft my introduction and methods and made so much progress that I felt like I could tackle the rest of the thesis! I was thrilled to come back this year, even though I'd already graduated, to work on turning my thesis into a manuscript for publication. Committing to coming for the whole week and dedicating all that time to writing forced me to focus.” –Sabina Perkins, [MS Integrative and Organismal Biology](#)
- “This is my third winter writing retreat, and every year I have found it more and more helpful! [...] A dedicated week and the space set aside just for writing is such a luxury—five full days to sink into writing helps me build better writing habits to continue through the semester. Also, the smell of constantly brewing coffee does wonders. The support of Dr. Bolker, Dr. Howland, and the Writing Center as writing mentors and reviewers is a boon to workshoping projects, and having lunch provided takes away one more worry I'd usually have to grapple

with hurriedly in the morning. The writing retreat is an amazing opportunity and I cannot thank the Graduate School and everyone behind it enough for making it a reality.” –Nick Anderson, [MS Natural Resources and the Environment](#)

- “As far as I remember, I've been to almost all the writing retreats, including their precursors. The value of the retreat for me is productivity, writing block help, networking opportunities, and faculty support. At the retreats, my concentration level is at least twice better than usual. The sense of community helps me to stay productive and motivated. Over the years, I have learned a lot from other graduate students in different fields, and getting to exchange ideas that I might not have had access to otherwise has been very valuable. This year, since I've graduated, I got help for my job applications and interviews, in addition to a publication.” –Jin Lee, [PhD English](#)



*Grad students who attended the full week received UNH Graduate School swag*

## Looking for Writing Support from the Graduate School?

Students who want to continue their writing momentum are encouraged to register for the Spring 2020 Dissertation/Thesis Writing Retreat, a semester-long writing group that meets monthly in the Connors Writing Center and Thompson Hall. [Registration](#) for the Dissertation/Thesis Writing Retreat is open now.

- WRITTEN BY:  
[Lily Greenberg '21G](#) | Grad School



UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.  
The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).  
Email us: [unhtoday.editor@unh.edu](mailto:unhtoday.editor@unh.edu).

[MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION](#)   [CONTACT US](#)

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on YouTube

Follow us on Instagram

Find us on LinkIn

UNH Today RSS feeds

UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234  
Copyright © 2022 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)  
[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)