

DISQUISITION BOOTCAMP

SUMMER 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Center for Writers offers Disquisition Bootcamps to support graduate students, both masters and doctoral students, who are working on degree-completion texts (papers, theses, dissertations). By setting aside full days of writing work, bootcamps provide opportunity for students to make significant progress on these high-stakes documents. The Summer 2023 bootcamp was modeled after previous bootcamps (typically offered 2-3 times a year), with a few meaningful revisions. The scope of participants was expanded in two ways: 1) we allowed for a larger number of participants and 2) we accepted early-stage disquisitions. Applications were simplified, lowering the threshold to entry and easing the labor of participant selection. Consultant and staff support was organized differently: graduate consultants were stationed in offices to work with students as needed and hosts checked-in with participants as they worked. Staff support included undergraduate students. Also, an experienced graduate consultant was given the lead for planning and implementation. The Summer 2023 Disquisition Bootcamp served thirty participants who, according to self-reporting, made very significant progress on their disquisitions.

OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Graduate Consultant Stations.** This group of participants was unusually focused. Having help available at permanent stations helped to maintain this focus because participants could choose when to get the support they needed. Visible and approachable hosts were important to making this work.
- **Space continuity and variety.** Providing a space with different types of writing zones conducive to different writing personalities was explicitly and frequently noted as a vital resource by participants. The space was well organized to include a sense of shared space and shared work while also providing zones for individual and small-group work.
- **Undergraduate staff.** Undergraduate staff were valuable to participants because they helped maintain a friendly atmosphere, directed people on how to use the space, and connect writers to the help they needed. For CFW staff, it was a good cross-training exercise.
- **Morning focus time.** Participants stated that mornings were best for uninterrupted focus. After day 1, workshops were switched to the afternoon, which was better for students who needed a break.
- **Check-in (S.M.A.R.T. Goals) and Reflection Forms.** The forms were extremely effective, serving multiple purposes. They provided useful, non-intrusive ways to track attendance and progress. The forms guided students in self-directed planning and learning. And they informed bootcamp organizers about ways to adapt plans to meet the needs of participants.
- **Cost.** For planning purposes, \$100-\$125 per participant is a fair range to cover essentials. Real cost of resources (personnel and food) was approximately \$125 per student for the full three days of bootcamp. The same total resources would have supported the 40 participants being planned for (vs. the 30 who attended), which would have reduced the per-person cost to \$100.

The full report includes a description of the planning and implementation, summative narratives with agenda for each day, a breakdown of resources used (personnel, space, food, and promotion), participant records (goals and reflections), and an appendix with full records and digital assets.

