



## Comments from Postgraduate Writers' Conference Participants

The PWC has become the premier mentorship experience of my writing life.

—Alison Ernst (2016)

What impressed me most about the conference was its spirit of generosity—and its integrity. The entire week was absent of the toxicity I sometimes encounter at writers' gatherings or in the city, the desperate careerism that brings on hot flashes. Here the participants seemed to have their heads screwed on and hearts in the right place, engaged in work that felt honest, urgent, and compelling.

—Sara Lippmann (2016)

I was shy, mesmerized, enthralled, grateful, and finally sad to leave—but happily jump-started. Everyone from staff to instructors to returnees to newcomers like me were open and friendly, engaging and encouraging. The community was real. It was smart. And it was moving—in both senses of the word.

—Meredith Suter-Wadley (2016)

The VCFA PWC was one of the most positive experiences I've ever had, and definitely the most valuable conference I have attended as a writer and professional. The atmosphere was beyond congenial; it was luscious.

—Rebecca Caum (2015)

I come to VCFA to be a better writer, to go deeper, to learn and re-learn the craft and discipline of writing. I love that there is no border between students and teachers. It is a true creative community.

—John Hudson (2015)

I loved the whole week—being surrounded by such high-caliber writers, the range and quality of activities, the beautiful setting. I came away revitalized, with a renewed passion for the work and a refined understanding of writing as a practice. It's an experience that will have a lasting impact.

—Leslie Stainton (2015)

What I loved about the conference was how organic everything felt—not like I was going to separate events but like it was all part of a whole experience. Everything from having breakfast to workshop to talks to readings to socializing felt like one big, week-long conversation. All of it was valuable to me as a writer.

—Susan Fox (2015)

This was a fabulous experience. I got from the Conference exactly what I hoped to get, and needed. The positive, non-competitive atmosphere was especially refreshing and inspiring. And maybe that's the most important word for me to describe my experience: inspiring.

—Reed Wilson (2014)

The week at VCFA is an unequaled immersion in the art and craft of literary writing. The experience doesn't only inspire me, but also gives me sustenance to see, hear, meet so many great writers in such a non-hierarchical setting. I love it.

—Julia MacDonnell (2014)

The overall atmosphere and community really blew away my expectations. Welcoming, supportive, relationship building—you guys rocked this!

—Jeremiah Hakundy (2013)

I was surprised by how quickly I felt at home; after the very first night, I felt like I was rejoining an old community that I hadn't realized I'd left.

—Justin Sikes (2013)

I met so many phenomenal new colleagues, but in a casual environment without all the "buzz." The intimate size of each workshop and the group overall created a community of writers that felt like family.

—Lisa Lopez Snyder (2013)

I really appreciated the professionalism that VCFA brought to the table, while my cohorts brought their A-games, both in terms of writing and critique. I found colleagues who will be my pre-submission readers for life.

—Jon Ricci (2013)

My workshop members were truly interested in improving my work and totally open to my making suggestions that might improve theirs. Our level of discourse was way above that which I have encountered in other conferences. As a writer, I often find myself in the role of teacher when I attend conferences. Here I got as good as I gave.

—Dahlma Llanos-Figueroa (2013)

What a wonderful experience. It really felt like a conference of peers. Everyone seemed to have shaken off the ego and concentrated on the writing and sense of community.

—Nathan Long (2013)

Imagine being in an impossibly quaint village where everyone you encounter is pre-qualified to in some way improve, encourage, warmly challenge and/or inspire your writing. Add to this scenario a reverse Babel where the languages of genres mix freely and, particularly in the craft talks, shake something new out of each other. Imagine, further, a place where there's a party every night populated only by people you can't wait to talk to.

—Dave Barnette (2013)

Having attended many conferences over the years, this continues to be my favorite. An inspiring, stimulating, emboldening week.

—JJ Penna (2013)

PWC was a breath of fresh air that is now at my back as I return to my manuscript.

—Kevin O’Keefe (2013)

Of the many workshops I've attended in almost two decades, the VCFA conference beats all the others put together. The entire experience was off-the-chart amazing.

—Bren McClain (2012)

The interdisciplinary nature of the Conference, with poets and fiction writers and nonfiction writers all rubbing shoulders, made PWC stand out. The common concerns were those of writers with no walls between us. I learned a lot, both in and out of the classroom.

—Sean Elder (2012)

Once again, the atmosphere was charmed. I thought last year had to be as good as it gets, and guess what? It got better. There is something magical going on up there. You have created this safe and nurturing environment that also manages to be challenging and rigorous even as we're having the time of our lives. I think you have perfected the writers' conference as we know it.

—Lisa Hartz (2012)

I had a great experience. It was—honestly—the best workshop I've been in. We've all been writing—no one was there to restart their writing after a layoff after grad school, but to sharpen our eyes, have some new company on the journey, and above all KEEP GOING.

— John Walker (2011)

Best week of my writing life thus far, and I've had many good ones.

—Ann Carson DeWitt (2011)

I had a wildly exciting group—multi-generational, multi-faceted, multi-experiential. And the atmosphere and sense of community at VCFA is simply mind-blowing! The sense of safety, too, for people to open themselves up and be comfortable in their vulnerability speaks volumes about the core values VCFA fosters.

—Ingrid Silverstein (2011)

I arrived at the Conference excited, but apprehensive. I left relaxed, positive, energized. I also left feeling a part of something bigger—the VCFA writing community.

—Lauren Lee Norton (2011)

I had an amazing experience. Simply put, the conference changed my writing life.

—Bernard Lumpkin (2010)

I can summarize my experience in a word: magical. The conference was everything I'd hoped for and more. I felt completely supported and welcomed by the conference staff, the faculty, and my fellow participants. We worked as equals—there were many highly accomplished faculty and students, but thankfully, no “stars.” There was none of the competitiveness or elitism that one finds in many MFA programs, conferences, and similar gatherings. The conference gave me the sense of “we’re all in this together as writers” that I’ve long sought but never found. It’s an experience that has already had a profound effect on my writing and my view of myself as a writer. —Marcia Trahan (2009)