Mission and Protocols

Purpose
The IPFW Faculty Writing Circle supports progress in writing to produce scholarly manuscripts for publication; receive and give friendly guidance, direction, analysis, and recommendations; support breaking through "writing block;" give and receive manuscript critiques; review according to priorities requested by the manuscript author (for example, some may want a full review; others may want a review of language or organization). This purpose is intended to support faculty who are required to publish in order to gain promotion and tenure, as well as others who engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Protocols

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is our first "ground rule," in that we honor the proprietary character of personal manuscripts and our review comments, keeping them within the group unless explicit decisions are made by the author to share outside the group. This does not preclude discussing our membership in the circle or the kinds of activities that we do. We simply do not share manuscripts outside of our group, nor our review comments to each other.

Commitment: Individuals who join our circle are expected to make a long-term commitment to participating. For example, a three month commitment would be considered a minimum level of participation. We ask for this level of commitment in order to keep this an active and dynamic community of support. At each IPFW Faculty Writing Circle meeting (monthly and sometimes more often), members are asked to report on progress since the last meeting and next goal(s) to accomplish in the writing or publication process. Members also add other agenda items.

Voluntary Reviews: Individuals may send manuscripts to all members or selected members; members may review or not review as time is available to do so. Reports about reviews are requested at each Faculty Writing Circle meeting; reviewers share only what authors agree that reviewers may share; authors may share anything about the review process.

Public Sharing: We have an IPFW Faculty Writing Circle Library Guide which is a public platform for resources and announcements of meetings. The purpose of this guide is two-fold: to provide a repository of materials that may be of use to the IPFW Faculty Writing Circle, and to serve as a resource on writing for IPFW faculty in general. We also provide reports and presentations on our progress, decisions, and actions. For example, we report meeting dates, member names, and manuscripts reviewed, submitted, and accepted for publication.

Manuscript Review Guidelines
As guidelines, these are not requirements, but instead give a direction for the kinds of markings and suggestions a reviewer might make, and any author can ask for focus on particular elements of a manuscript.
**Assumptions:** We each possess talent, originality, and have something meaningful to write. We each can encourage every writer in our circle to reach a personal writing goal. We can “caress the divine detail” (Nabokov), “write down the bones” (Goldberg), and “feel the writer within” (Goldberg).

**Author’s Role:** Keep in mind that our comments are given with the spirit of our assumptions above, and that some comments will resonate with you and some won’t. Organize comments; look for patterns, recurring reactions, or contradictory ones. Keep an open mind, clear values, and remain the final judge of what to change.

**Reviewer’s Role:** Focus on purpose, audience, and type of writing before framing reactions. Make written notes using key words and give brief comments about the written work. Point out positive aspects of the work and make constructive suggestions.

**Markings and Suggestions:** When reviewing a manuscript, use a system to easily communicate reactions to the manuscript. For example, simple markings can be helpful to signal a part that seems especially well written (examples: a circle or check mark, or other signal of a positive response). Also use simple markings to signal problems (examples: an “x” or “?” to signal lumps to smooth or anything that doesn’t quite “hit the mark” – this could be words, phrases, or sections that seem to need edits). It can be helpful to pose questions, reactions, and suggestions for the writer to consider.

**Considerations:** Basic issues to consider in the review of manuscripts are scholarship, organization, language, accuracy, meaning, and conclusion. The following kinds of questions may help in reviewing a manuscript.

- Does the writing include headings to signal major topics? Do paragraphs and sections signal the organization well?
- Is the language simple, direct, sincere, and respectful of target audience or reader of the intended publication, often a journal, e.g., disciplinary journal or scholarship of teaching and learning or pedagogy reflections.
- Does the writing contain illiteracies or distracting manipulations of language?
- Are there confusions because of unexplained references, assumptions of prior knowledge, or the writer’s idiosyncratic comprehension of meaning and sense?
- Does the conclusion feel right? Does it summarize or provide closure? Does it feel unsettled, incomplete, or erroneous when compared to the whole of the manuscript?

For journals focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning, the following issues tend to be reviewed:

- Importance of the problem;
- Clarity of purpose/goals related to the problem;
- Relevance and comprehensiveness of literature reviewed;
- Implications for particular learning/teaching concepts;
- Research design and systematic observations;
- Relevance of evidence/data;
- Appropriateness and clarity of evidence/data analysis;
- Appropriateness of conclusions and implications; and
- Writing and presentation of evidence/data.

(The URL for the IPFW Faculty Writing Circle Library Guide is [http://guides.library.ipfw.edu/writingcircle](http://guides.library.ipfw.edu/writingcircle))