Guide to Building a Successful Writing Group

*"Writing is an extreme privilege but it's also a gift.
It's a gift to yourself and it's a gift of giving a story to someone."*
~ Amy Tan

Writing groups offer participants the opportunity to forge partnerships with other writers. These partnerships may yield support, encouragement, critique, and resources that prove invaluable during the writing process. Writing groups can also be an essential component of the support network that is vital to surviving graduate school.

A few key points should be considered when developing a writing group:

Purpose: The purpose of the group should be clear to all members:

- Will the group meet to share their writing and provide feedback?
- Will it meet to provide a safe space for members to write independently?
- Will it focus on academic writing? Specific genres of academic writing (e.g., thesis, dissertation, articles for publication)?

Structure: The structure of the group should be designed to fit the needs of the group members. Some examples include small groups that meet in person, online chat rooms/groups, and hybrids that allow one or members to join in remotely (via programs like Skype or Google Hangout).

Size: Determine how many members the group will accept. A group of three to five members may make it easier to arrange meetings, to assure that the work of all members can be reviewed, and to maintain organization.

Organization: Whether meeting in person or online, group meeting times and locations should be comfortable for all members and provide a supportive environment.

Format and Method: The format for discussion and review needs to be clear to all group members. Below is a list of important questions to consider:

- Will each member sign up to present his/her work?
- Will the presenting writer email copies to group members or provide hard copies?
- How far in advance of the meeting will the writer provide group members with his/her piece?
- What method will be used to review writing (i.e., Pointing and Centering, digital and/or handwritten feedback, etc.)?
- What are the members' expectations of the review process?