

The Ashoka U Changemaker Campus (CMC)

## Scholars Writing Retreat Information Packet

*How to Organize and Host a Writing Retreat  
for your CMC Campus Faculty, Staff and Changemaker Community*



**TAYLOR**  
PHYLLIS M. TAYLOR CENTER  
FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND DESIGN THINKING



## **Instructions: How to Use this Packet**

This packet is intended to provide guidance for writing retreat organizers—change leaders, your change team, social innovation/changemaking center staff, faculty, and students.

Check out the flow diagram and see where you stand.  
Convinced? Read the one-day in a nutshell and start planning.  
Read the whole packet for more insights and links to resources.

We hope that this packet will prove a valuable resource in designing, organizing, and hosting your own Changemaker Campus (CMC) writer's retreat—in person or online.

The information presented here offers guidance with flexible options to suit a variety of needs.

Please try the suggestions, adapt this model as needed. Let us know what worked best for you!

## **Authors and Acknowledgements**

This packet was created by Dr. Laura Murphy and Jenn Miller Scarnato, with editorial assistance from Ashlee Walker.

The idea of sharing our model was suggested by participants in feedback sessions during the inaugural retreat, with the hope that other changemaker campuses, change leaders, and changemaking center staff, faculty, and students would offer writing retreats in other locations and, possibly, virtually

Many lessons were learned in designing, organizing, and facilitating the inaugural Ashoka U CMC writing retreat. One is that we need and desire more writing retreats to encourage knowledge production.

In the spirit of collaboration and mutual support, we have created this packet.

The aim of this packet is to share some best practices and guidelines for organizing and hosting a writing retreat. This is based on our experiences.

We offer a replicable, scalable model for 1 day, on-campus or multi-day, off-campus retreats. We want to share it with other campuses.

## Background to the CMC Writing Retreats

The idea for a “fun faculty writing retreat” was hatched at the change leader retreat at the 2017 Ashoka U Exchange in Miami, FL by Laura Murphy (Tulane University, Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking) and Cheryl Kiser (Babson University, Lewis Institute). Laura and Cheryl pitched the idea of a writer’s retreat to other change leaders and attendees, and they received feedback on demand, potential retreat structure, venues/location, etc. from various people across many campuses.

These conversations resulted in a proposal to the Change Leader Changemaker Campus Network Advisory Committee (NAC) Collaborative Fund. We requested and were awarded \$5,000 to support, organize, and facilitate a multi-day, intensive writing retreat in a beautiful location.

We did not know then where it would be, or what exactly would happen. In preparation, Taylor Center staff organized a few 1-day writing retreats to practice and test the format.

After some explorations, we decided to hold the inaugural CMC writing retreat in conjunction with Middlebury College’s annual June Forum on social innovation at the Bread Loaf Campus in Ripton, VT. This alliance allowed us to share resources and coordination on lodging, food, and local transportation; while reducing costs to participants and bringing the spirit of writing on social innovation to the June Forum attendees.

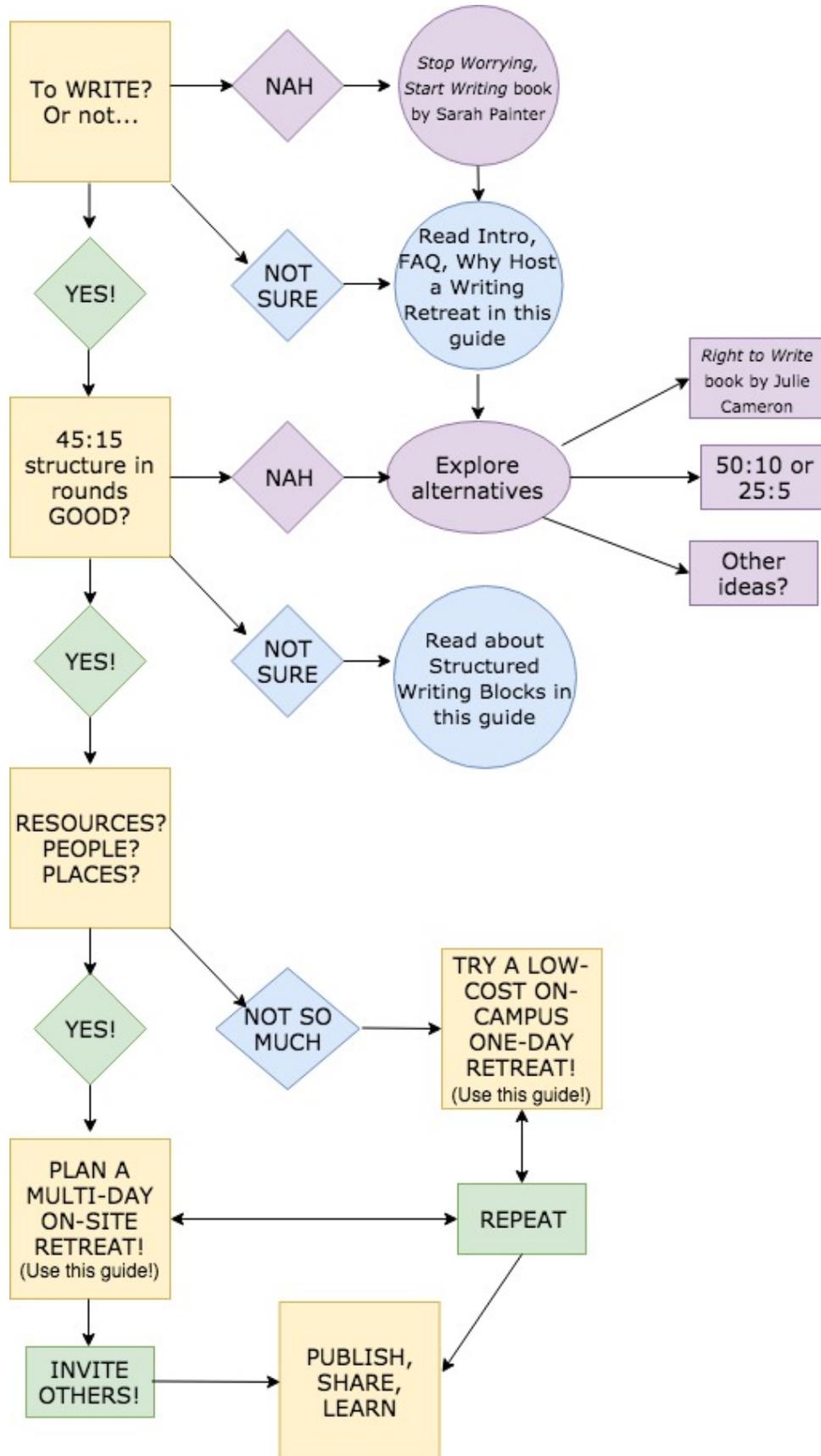
The 4-day writing retreat was held June 11-14 in 2018 for 9 writing scholars from several changemaker campuses. It was a multi-campus project with many contributors, and we are grateful to the participants, hosts, and advisors for helping us to bring the idea to reality.

This packet shares lessons and recommendations from these CMC writing retreats. We hope to encourage other campuses and change-teams to organize, support, and participate in them.

If you already know what to do –please ignore this and get to your writing desk!

If you are looking for guidance and advice on helping a group make progress on their writing, please keep reading!

Thinking about hosting a writing retreat? Jump into this diagram for help to get started!



Resources on writing to inspire you:

[Stop Worrying, Start Writing by Sarah Painter](#)

[Right to Write by Julie Cameron](#)

[Writing down the Bones by Natalie Goldberg](#)

[Bird by Bird by Anne Lamott](#)

# Table of Contents

## Part 1: Introduction

Instructions: How to use this packet	2
Authors and Acknowledgements	2
Background to the CMC Writing Retreats	3
Flow Diagram/Decision Tree	4
A One-day Silent Retreat in a Nutshell	6
Frequently Asked Questions	7

## Part 2: How to Host and Run a Writing Retreat

Why Host a Writing Retreat?	11
Who's involved? Recruiting, Inviting and Preparing Participants	12
Who can Host a Retreat?	
Who to Invite	
How to Invite Them	
Preparing Writers to Get the Most out of the Retreat	
Designing the Retreat Experience	15
The Facilitator	
Structured Writing Rounds and Blocks	
Multi-Day Retreat Structure and Schedule	
Logistics	16
Neutral Space/Location	
Food and Beverages	
Finances and Budget	
Creative Partnerships	
Feedback, Evaluating Success and Learning	18
What does Success Look like—for you?	
Feedback and Follow-Up	
Post-Retreat Reflection	

## Annexes and Resources 20

- Sample communications
  - Multi-Day Retreat Call for Participants
  - One-Day Retreat Initial Call and Reminder
  - Sample Application Form
- “Writers’ Guidelines” from the Inaugural CMC Writers Retreat
- The Pomodoro Method
- Writing Support Books and Online Resources
- List of Retreat Centers

# A One-Day Silent Writing Retreat in a Nutshell

You can organize a low-budget writing retreat for 3-30 participants, on your own campus. Here's how:

## Do Some Advance Planning

- Allow at least a few weeks
- Identify and reserve a suitable, neutral **space**: clean, quiet, large tables, comfortable chairs, electricity, wi-fi, good lighting.
- Confirm capacity for writers who need to spread out for the day.
- **When**: Identify a suitable day, discuss and clarify your reasons.
- **Recruit Writers**: Announce the date, explain 45 min:15 min rounds, invite applications.
- **Budget**: How much \$ do you have for snacks, and food? Communicate what you can offer
- ... or more for your first time
- Neutral = **Not** a regular meeting room, office, classroom—no place full of reminders of other work
- Make sure the room has plenty of space: small seminar for 3-8; large class/auditorium for 9-30
- A Friday or other day with no classes? A Saturday? During fall break? Before/after term?
- Use email, newsletters, social media, fliers;
- Ask for positive confirmation. See samples.
- No \$? Ask people to brown-bag it. Or, charge a small fee.

## The Week Before

- Send a **reminder** to participants.
- **Confirm** the room, chairs, facilities
- Prompt participants to plan the day
- Ask: food allergies or special needs?
- Reissue the call if you have space
- Helps prepare for effective use of time

## Day before the event

- **Arrange** for coffee, snacks, lunch, name cards
- Final **reminder** to participants
- Within your budget. People can brown-bag if needed, or offer a really simple lunch.
- Where to go, and when to get there
- What to bring: i.e. headphones, chargers, sweater.

## Day of the event

- Get there **early** to set up
- Sign-in sheet & name cards
- Use white board or flip chart to share the agreed schedule, e.g. for a "9-5" retreat:
- Start on time and follow 45:15
- Feedback & Thanks
- Thanks to participants
- Coffee!
- For follow-up, networking
- Schedule:
  - 9 AM welcome & introductions
  - 9:15-10 writing block 1
  - 10:15-11 writing block 2
  - 11:15-12 writing block 3
  - 12-1 lunch
  - 1-1:45 writing block 4
  - 2-2:45 writing block 5
  - 3-3:45 writing block 6
  - 4-4:45 reflection and feedback
  - 4:45-5 wrap up, clean up
- A visible wall clock helps; bring one! Use a physical timer (most cell phones have one!)
- Give participants a chance to share what worked and what needs improvement
- Follow up and plan future retreats

## Frequently Asked Questions

We encourage you to start hosting short retreats to encourage writing on or off campus, as resources and time allow. Here are some short answers to questions that might be on your mind:

### General:

Q: What do we mean by a “silent writing retreat”?

A: Participants write individually and quietly on their own projects throughout the day, but are working alongside one another in a common, neutral space, with intention to support each other according to these “writers’ guidelines” by S. Minard.

Q: What is the “45: 15” (or 50:10) structure?

Write for 45 minutes, then take a break for 15 minutes to stretch and refresh your focus. Repeat for 6-8 rounds/day with a longer break for lunch. Use a loud timer and keep everyone on the same clock. This builds on the Pomodoro Method.

Q: Why do we need help with time management for writing projects?

A: The brain works better if it can focus, and setting a timer helps reduce distractions. Please refer to Pomodoro Method for more information. Intending to write and setting out a project helps organize time.

Q: Why should we get together in a group to write?

A: To support each other’s commitment to writing, to energize each other with the commitment to produce and share knowledge, to promote networking and the exchange of ideas, and protect time for writing. Letting others know of our writing plans generates respect for our time and puts it on the work calendar.

### For Potential Participants:

Q: Can’t I just do this in the office or at home by myself?

A: You can certainly use the 45:15 time management technique (or 25:5; see Pomodoro Method) yourself, anywhere. It is helpful to have a neutral space away from home, your regular desk, and all common distractions. A group offers accountability, belonging to a community of writers, and numerous other benefits.

Q: What do I need to do as a writer, to get the most out of it?

A: Plan a project that you can make progress on in the time allotted for the retreat, whether it is one day or multiple days off-site. Organize your work so you can complete specific papers or sections. Sit down and write, then take breaks.

Q: What kind of writing is going on?

A: So far, mostly prose, technical, and scholarly writing for scholars, faculty, educators, policy-makers, and practitioners in social change. Writing about Changemaking in higher education is often grounded in the social sciences (sociology, economics, psychology, anthropology) as well as education, business, organizational theory, etc. Natural/hard scientists involved in CMC teaching, practice, and students engaged in research a welcome to get support for writing up their projects. This is probably not creative writing—but that might be needed and/or appropriate for some projects and writers. When sponsored by a changemaker campus team and CMC

network, the intent will probably be to support writing about changemaking and social innovation. Please refer to the section “Who’s Involved?” for more information.

Q: Does it have to be “writing” (i.e., words on paper/digital devices)?

A: Writing retreats aim to support this essential activity by faculty, scholars, and practitioners seeking to publish for academic audiences. Other knowledge and creative projects can be accommodated to the extent that writing is involved, such as scripts or proposals, and the 45:15 format can support you.

### **For the Organizers:**

Q: Do we need a lot of money and a beautiful rural mountain campus?

A: No, you can do a ½-day or full day-long retreat in any quiet, neutral seminar space on your campus, with minimal funds for essentials (coffee, snacks). See section “One-Day in A Nutshell and Finances and Budget” for further information.

Q: I’m the lead organizer: What do I need to do to get the most out of a retreat for everyone?

A: Deliberate and communicate clearly your purpose, the proposed 45:15 rounds structure, and writers’ guidelines in advance. Send out “Save the date”, and other reminders, to participants. Understand the 45:15 time management plan so everyone knows what to expect—and adhere to your plan. You can adapt the number of rounds and start/end time to your own needs in terms of length of time, available rooms, term and class schedules etc. See section “Sample Communications”.

Q: How much time should I allow for advance planning?

A: Allow sufficient notice so your intended participants can set aside time to participate meaningfully. For example, for a 1-day, on-campus retreat, you might allow a few weeks or 1-2 months. For an off-site, multi-day retreat, you might need to allow a year, as you would for other conferences (esp. if it involves travel). See section “Designing the Retreat Experience and Logistics” for more details.

Q: How much time do we need to allow for the retreat itself? What is the minimum number of days for an effective retreat?

A: One day is good for a campus retreat (9AM-5PM), and you can have success with ½ day (i.e., 8 AM-12 PM or 1-5 PM). If travel is involved, 3-5 days of writing is appropriate to allow time to settle in for a significant deep dive. Beyond 5 days, energy and focus lags. Also, consider the organizer’s needs for preparation and follow-up and budget. See section “Designing the Retreat Experience and Finances and Budget” for more details.

Q: Whom should we invite?

A: Anyone who wants to write and will appreciate the structure; focus on changemaking themes if that is possible. See section “Who’s Involved?” for more information

Q: What kind of topics and projects are writers working on? Do we need a common theme or discipline?

A: We have a focus on social innovation, but the structure itself does not require a theme. You can decide, and it might depend on your needs and funding. Refer to section “Background to the CMC Writing Retreats” for more details.

**For Campus Change Leaders:**

Q: Why should our campus change team get behind this?

A: Your campus faculty will appreciate the support for their core work of research and scholarship. It can help build your program and awareness of the field. Practitioners and staff can also find their voice and share experiences. See “Why Host a Writing Retreat?” for more information.

Q: What’s the value for the field of changemaking in higher education?

A: The larger field supported by Ashoka U needs scholarly rigor and dialogue on what we are learning; the network needs more writing, publication, and dissemination of our research and scholarship on changemaking. See “Background to the CMC Writing Retreats” for further details.

Q: What resources are required?

A: You can do this on a tight budget if you are creative in finding space, getting the word out, and supplying some basic amenities (coffee!). See “Finances and Budget” for more details.

Q: Is this just for regular faculty?

A: No, our field spans practice and research, and a writing retreat can support staff, administrators, and social entrepreneurs in sharing their experiences, as well as faculty in writing up their research. See “Who’s Involved?” for more information.



*Participants at the inaugural CMC writing retreat,  
enjoying an evening conversation*

## Part 2: How to Host and Run a Writing Retreat

### Why Host a Writing Retreat?

We need time away from the everyday to write, reflect, and allow ideas to surface and seed our community. While conferences allow us to network and learn the latest information and workshops help us build relationships while learning and practicing new skills, a writing retreat offers time away from the demands and distractions of everyday life to reflect and focus on writing projects. A writing retreat is different from a conference or workshop in that participants are expected to only focus on writing!

Many retreats and conferences support teaching and practice, but do not offer space for writing. Conferences and journals are ready for our manuscripts, and writing retreats give us the time and space to write them.

- Focused writing retreats support production of scholarly efforts within and across disciplines.
- They allow space and support for disciplinary efforts that will be recognized by tenure and promotion committees.
- They can contribute to the trans-disciplinary field of social innovation in higher education.
- Writing retreats enable participants to conduct their scholarly work individually while in community with others, with the aim of “advancing the field of social innovation within higher education”.

Specific outputs from a writing retreat include individual writing/scholarly projects, as well as emergent efforts such as: joint intellectual projects, a networked community of practice, and recommendations for NAC/Changemaker campuses to support faculty engagement and research/scholarship.

Whatever the specific goals and outcomes, we find that writing solo, while together, is an energizing experience that helps to bond and support a community of writers.

We encourage you to be creative in using your resources and to carve out time and support that you need from supervisors and colleagues.

Get started and try something small with a few friends and colleagues, then reach out to a wider audience.

## Who's involved? Organizing, Recruiting, Inviting, and Preparing Participants

### Who can Host a Retreat?

Anyone can take the lead to organize some form of a retreat, even low-budget gatherings during the term—to support the writers in your community in their writing, including yourself. These might be faculty, administrators, doctoral students, or entrepreneurs-in-residence.

With this packet, we particularly encourage Changemaker campus **change leaders** and change teams to organize, sponsor (financially or in-kind), and participate in retreats to support your faculty, scholars, students, and other campus partners to write on social innovation themes to enrich our work.

Doctoral students: Find a space on campus, procure a coffee pot, and invite fellow graduate students to come together and practice 45:15 to get your proposals and dissertation chapters written.

Faculty: Find different classrooms on campuses to change your scenery, pool lunch money or dip into professional development funds for coffee and pizza; commit to showing up for each other to get your journal articles drafted, and that R&R completed, and support your scholarly networking. See Tulane Provost Faculty Writing Retreats as a model; offer on other days or in breaks to suit.

Staff: Carve out one day per month from your busy 9-5 calendar, identify an accessible space away from your offices, and commit to paper your experiences in running changemaker programs.

### Who to Invite

Writing retreats can bring together scholars from many disciplines to work on individual projects in community with one another, therefore, participants can be a diverse group. You might want to intentionally aim for diversity—by discipline, stage in career, writing project topics, race/ethnicity and gender, amongst other participant aspects—to enrich the writing environment by bringing together people who can offer different perspectives and experiences.

### How to Invite Them

Invitations or calls for participants to come and write should go out early, along with frequent reminders. It is often difficult for scholars and practitioners alike to schedule time away from family and other work activities, which limits many potential participants' availability.

We recommend drafting a call for participants early in the planning stages so that potential participants can reserve the retreat dates, and then the call can be updated with more details as they become available. The call for participants should be circulated widely within networks of scholars and practitioners.

Example: For the CMC June retreat, we began by sharing the call with the Change Leader Google list-serve, circulating it to the leaders of 50+ Ashoka U campuses. Then, we asked the individuals who received the call at those campuses to share it with their broader networks. The call was initially sent about 10 months prior to the retreat and re-sent 8 months and 7 months prior to the retreat. Within six months leading to the retreat, calls were sent more frequently.

We recommend creating a call or announcement that can be easily forwarded via email (information should be typed in the body of the email, not just included as an attachment; as sometimes, attachments do not come through with forwards).

Include the following information at minimum:

- Retreat date(s), location, cost (if any), description (purpose, schedule, format),
- Organizer's contact information, and
- Participant eligibility criteria (if applicable, including the maximum number of participants).

In our CMC June retreat, we also included information about financial support available to participants, and a timeline with deadlines for financial support, registration, continued communication, etc. Please see our “Sample Communications” section below.

We also included an application form to get a sense of our participants and projects. Our registration form included the following questions for potential participants:

1. Describe your methods, data, and research question—it’s okay if you don’t have the details worked out, just give us a sense of where you are headed and what you’re trying to do. Use plain, jargon-free language.
2. How will you and your project contribute to retreat goals and the experience for other participants?
3. How does your project relate to or support the larger goal of Changemaker campus networking?
4. Speak to feasibility: What have you already done? What outputs do you expect to generate by July 2018?
5. Do you require financial aid? Please tell us why. Let us know about any other funding sources available to you.

This process allowed us to gather such information as the participant's role, university affiliation, and contact information, in addition to a description of the participant's proposed writing project(s). Feel free to use or adapt that form.

### **Preparing Writers to get the most out of the retreat**

At minimum, participants should commit to a specific writing project and outcomes in order to make the most of the retreat experience.

Once participants have registered for the retreat, organizers can provide more detailed information about the retreat schedule and structure, guidance on writing projects, and other information that will help participants prepare to get the most out of their retreat experience.

One option is to provide an orientation packet or short reading list to all participants to help them understand the purpose of the retreat, and to have some common ground for conversation during the retreat.



*Participants of the inaugural CMC Writing Retreat*



*Bread Loaf Campus exterior*

## Designing the Retreat Experience

### The Facilitator

In order to keep the retreat on schedule and facilitate conversations amongst participants throughout their time together, a facilitator is recommended. This person can be a participant in the retreat, or someone who is not participating. One option is to have a different retreat participant play the role of facilitator each day.

The facilitator should be responsible for inviting participants and coordinating retreat attendance, orchestrating the arrival, welcome, and introductions of retreat participants, setting a timer for structured writing blocks and keeping other activities (meals, breaks, social events) on schedule, and collecting information and feedback during the retreat.

### Structured Writing Rounds and Blocks

Allot several hour-long rounds of silent writing throughout the day (two or three in the morning, and two or three in the evening). For the June retreat, we scheduled a total of 6 hours of dedicated writing time per day, allowing plenty of leisure and networking time. (For a one-day retreat, you can aim for 8 hours).

Each one-hour round of silent writing is further structured and facilitated to provide writers a supported atmosphere of mutual accountability.

We used a 45:15 structure. This refers to a round of 45 minutes of silent writing, followed by a 15-minute break. 50:10 and 25:5 structures are additional options. This plan was adapted from the Pomodoro method of time management.

Choose the writing structure that works best for your group, keeping in mind the size of your retreat space. We found that the large Bread Loaf Campus space—as for other larger spaces—45:15 is recommended so that participants can roam the grounds during breaks.

A facilitator—or at minimum a timekeeper—is needed to lead the rounds and enforce the silent writing structure in the common, shared work area.

The structured writing blocks should be communicated to participants in advance, so they know what to expect and why to come.

For the CMC retreat in Vermont, the 45:15 rounds were encouraged, but not mandatory. Participants could opt out and find their own quiet areas to write during the dedicated writing blocks. They were asked to spend the time writing, as scheduled.

## Multi-Day Retreat Structure and Schedule

This section refers to designing short-term intensive writing retreats of 3-5 days. As a first step, determine the total duration of the writing retreat—3, 4, or 5 days, and any half days that might be included.

We recommend allotting a half-day on the first day for participants to arrive, get to know the retreat space, settle in, and meet one another. We also recommend including some time towards the end of the retreat (on the last night or day) for participants to get together outside of writing, and to offer feedback on the retreat experience.

Dedicated, supported time for silent, intensive writing, mixed with restful breaks, group conversations, and connection with nature were at the center of the CMC retreat design. The goal was to ensure that retreat participants could meet their own writing goals and find time to rejuvenate in nature and connect with each other.

The rest of the retreat schedule can be divided between four types of activities: meals/snacks/refreshments, structured writing blocks, free time, and social activities. Full days should be planned (8AM or 9AM to 8PM or 9PM) with all four activities included in each day. For the inaugural retreat, we began each day with breakfast at 8, did three rounds of structured writing blocks in the morning, had a break for lunch, did three more rounds of structured writing blocks, followed by free time for participants to rest or walk outdoors, and ended the day with a social activity like conversation over drinks.



*Getting some air. Image courtesy of Bread Loaf Campus*

## Logistics

### Neutral Space/Location

For 1day retreats on-campus—look for neutral spaces away from regular staff offices, meeting rooms and classrooms—these are all reminders of our regular work. Example: seminar rooms and auditoriums in other buildings that your audience don't normally use; or a community space or co-working space off-campus that is easily accessible.

A writing retreat can be held anywhere around the world; but finding an affordable retreat space in an easily accessible location can be a challenge. We recommend researching space/location options as a first step in planning.

Part of the idea of a retreat is to “get away from it all,” so retreat locations are often in rural, natural areas with ample outdoor space, a quiet, relaxing atmosphere, and a rustic feel. For longer retreats, the ideal space will also have satisfactory overnight accommodations with private rooms for retreat participants; several meeting rooms for writing and social activities; WiFi and other technology needs (sufficient number of outlets, projectors, if needed, etc.); a kitchen (with staff) or restaurant/catering options; and reasonable access to a major airport. A one-day retreat can be held in a simple meeting room or large hall—any silent, private location with ample lighting and WiFi.

Retreat centers vary considerably in size – some are very small allowing for rental of the entire space (which is good for community-building), while others are quite large with multiple events happening simultaneously (which provides more facilities and support, but also potential distractions). Potential spaces will also vary widely in amenities, so it is important to inquire into exactly what is offered.



*Ideal Retreat Space, neutral for all participants: The seminar/library room at Bread Loaf Campus, Ripton, VT*

### Food & Beverages

Food and beverages help sustain a writer, keep people together and focused, and offer networking opportunities.

Coffee! Start the day early with coffee and tea and breakfast offerings that your budget can support.

Snacks that stimulate the brain and curb the appetite should be made available in a central location. Water and coffee and tea should always be on hand.

For multi-day retreats, consider convivial alcoholic beverages for evening social activities.

Overnight retreat participants will need three full meals a day, along with snacks and beverages available throughout the day during their time at the retreat. Thus, meal planning is an essential logistical step in organizing a writing retreat. Many retreat centers have built-in options for food, such as staff who are able to prepare meals, a kitchen space available for use, or an on-site restaurant.

### **Finances and Budget**

Retreat budgets will vary depending on the length and number of participants, but they will have many common budget items that will likely require a similar percentage of the total budget. The cost of accommodations and meals (room and board) is generally the biggest expense in organizing a retreat and will determine the cost (if any) to participants. For us, 64% of the total budget went to accommodations and meals for participants. We did not charge a fee to participants, since they were already responsible for their own travel costs. However, some retreats do have a cost to participants associated with them, which can help to cover the high cost of accommodations and meals. Some retreat locations might charge an additional fee for use of meeting rooms during the day, so those costs should also be considered.

To assist low-income participants in attending the retreat, we chose to offer financial assistance to participants in need of it, which amounted to nearly 25% of the total budget. The remaining funds (approximately 10% of the total budget) were spent on administrative costs and supplies. We recommend setting aside a portion of the budget as contingency funds for unforeseen costs that may arise. We reserved 8% of our total budget for contingency funds, which ended up being used toward financial support for participants and administrative costs for follow-up, reporting, and planning.

### **Creative Partnerships**

Planning, hosting, and facilitating a retreat can be costly and time-consuming, so we recommend forming mutually-beneficial partnerships to share resources and tasks. A writing retreat can be a wonderful complement to an existing conference, forum, seminar, or other type of retreat. If a complementary event is already being planned, it is worthwhile to explore how a writing retreat might become a part of it—as an overlapping activity, a track option, or a pre-event or post-event activity. All these options will help reduce costs for participants, who only have to travel to one location for the retreat and other event.

The inaugural CMC writing retreat was held in association with Middlebury College's annual June Forum, as a writing track. This allowed retreat participants to have dedicated time for writing projects, while also connecting with June Forum attendees and participating in June Forum events (keynote speeches, workshops, etc.) in the evenings. This is an example of a writing retreat as an overlapping activity or track option.

Another option is to have the writing retreat a few days before or after another event, so that retreat participants have the option of extending their time at the event location in order to focus on writing projects, while not missing out on the other event. This is an example of a pre-event or post-event retreat.

## **Feedback, Evaluating Success and Learning**

### **What does Success Look Like for You?**

When planning a retreat, you will likely have certain goals or outcomes for the retreat in mind—these are indicators of what a successful retreat would look like. Some examples of observable indicators of success include: number of participants; diversity of participants; diversity of writing projects; number of projects completed; pages written; and/or other indicators of project progress. Process-wise, consider feedback from participants on what and how the retreat worked for their goals. What are you seeking?

Whatever your indicators of success, track them during the retreat through observation, note-taking, and other data collection so you can evaluate the retreat's success, make improvements for the next time, and inform fund-raising and partnerships.

### **Feedback and Follow-up**

We recommend having a feedback session with all participants toward the end of the retreat in order to capture their questions, suggestions, and thoughts on what worked during the retreat, what could be improved, and what might be considered for next time. We held a facilitated evaluation conversation on the last night of our retreat, using a feedback capture grid to document participants' comments.

Individual feedback forms are also an option, and they can be filled out at the end of the retreat; or sent to participants a few weeks after the retreat ends, so they have additional time to process and reflect on their experience.

We also recommend following up with all participants once the retreat has ended, in order to maintain connections and hold each other mutually accountable for continuing to advance their projects. Participants can also be directly connected to one another on an email chain in order to share resources, ideas, and other information that may have come up during the retreat or may be of interest to one another based on individual interests and projects.

### **Post-Retreat Reflection**

Once the retreat has ended, and information on the retreat's indicators of success have been gathered, we recommend taking the time to review the data collected and reflect on the retreat's success. Make note of what seemed to work really well, what was unclear or unhelpful, what might be improved upon for the next time, and any ideas to enhance the experience that might have come up during the retreat.

The post-retreat reflection can be a conversation amongst retreat organizers, individual reflective writing, or an external review of retreat data. Insights gained through these reflection activities can be documented as a PowerPoint presentation, narrative report, or other visual for use in future retreat planning efforts.

## Annexes and Resources

### Sample Communications

*Sample Call for Participants—the 4-day CMC June Retreat circulated via the change –leaders list-serve:*

***First Call for Applications***  
**Announcing the Inaugural Changemaker Campus  
Summer Scholars Writing Retreat**

Dates: June 11-14, 2018

Where: The Middlebury College Bread Loaf Campus, Vermont

Cost: \$400 for room and full board (*plus your travel costs*)

Deadline to apply: December 10, 2017

We invite social innovation scholars to join us for four restorative days of dialogue and writing during the Ashoka U Changemaker Campus Network's first intensive **writing retreat** in beautiful rural Vermont. Work alone and with others for several hours a day, and in the evenings, enjoy salon-style conversation to share intellectual trajectories, fertilize and nurture new ideas, and build a community of scholarly practice. The retreat begins Monday June 11 (10am) and continues through to the afternoon of Thursday June 14, 2018.

We are interested in supporting all types of scholarly, reflective, and creative writing projects including research articles, book manuscripts, essays of reflections on your years of campus social innovation programs and other projects. Our goal is to support your individual scholarship while also advancing the field of social innovation in higher education. The network will be strengthened by your writing projects that investigate, document, and build research-related communities of practice.

**Eligibility:**

Approximately 25 Changemaker writers will be accepted to participate. Eligible applicants include faculty of any rank and appointment, aspiring faculty including post-docs, ABD, and senior administrators and staff involved in changemaking. Applicants from all disciplines are welcome.

**The Application Process:**

Complete the application form below and send as a WORD or PDF attachment to [lmurphy2@tulane.edu](mailto:lmurphy2@tulane.edu).

*Sample Call for Participants for 1-Day Retreats:*

Note: These retreats served the Taylor community at Tulane and were hosted by the Taylor Center in neutral spaces (i.e. the Hillel Center, “The Shop” coworking space, DT space). We offered coffee, light snacks, and a simple lunch.

#1 Initial communication via our newsletter:

**Campus Silent Writing Retreat**

We are offering a free, structured, and supportive silent writing retreat on January 8 & 9 from 9 AM-5 PM, at Hillel on Tulane’s Uptown campus.

This is open to Taylor affiliates with a writing project. Participants should commit to a specific writing project and outcomes to make the most of this opportunity. You can come for one or both days.

Note: The structured format is modeled on the Provost’s regular Saturday faculty writing workshops, 45-minute writing + 15-minute break blocks throughout the day. Breakfast and lunch will be provided for our registered writing scholars.

For more information email Dr. Laura Murphy at [lmurphy2@tulane.edu](mailto:lmurphy2@tulane.edu)

#2: Reminder:

“Dear Taylor community, Happy New Year! As announced in the last December *Change Digest*, we are offering a special, supportive silent writing retreat next week to support your scholarly writing projects (on social innovation themes). This will be at the Hillel Center. Let me know by tomorrow 2 pm if you are planning to join us for one or both days. The writing projects that some of us are working on are listed in the table below...

## Sample Application Form

### Changemaker Writing Retreat 2018 Application Form

Name:

Role:

Changemaker Institution:

Email address:

#### Criteria for selection:

The review committee will select participants based on their potential to contribute to the Change Leader network and social innovation in higher education more broadly; not based on academic/scholarly merits in your field, which is beyond our scope, but aiming for distribution and representation across disciplines and geographies. Our multi-disciplinary review committee includes: Cheryl Kiser (Babson), Laura Murphy (Tulane), Joanne Benham-Rennick (Waterloo), and others TBD.

#### Retreat Format and Additional Details:

The facilitators will offer both structured and unstructured formats to support your writing:

- 1) Structured sessions will be facilitated within a shared common work area and will include five rounds of 45-minute focused writing sessions interspersed with 15-minute reflective or guided pauses.
- 2) Unstructured sessions will allow you to freely find a location, on your own, on the lovely Bread Loaf Campus for your independent writing.

- Breakfast and lunches are unstructured.
- Snacks and coffee are available throughout the day.
- Mornings: Choose the structured or unstructured stream to focus on your writing.
- Afternoons: Stay in the flow of your writing or take a break to join others for recreation and leisure. You are also welcome to join one of the sessions at the concurrent Middlebury Forum on Social Innovation\*.
- Evening meal: Come together with the writing community to reflect on the day, share intellectual trajectories and salon-style conversation over our evening meal.
- Evenings: You are also welcome join in with the Middlebury June Faculty Forum speaker events and enjoy the Forum wine bar.
- *Our minimum requirements are: Do your own work, show up for the evening meal, and be collegial!*

\*The [Middlebury June Forum on Social Innovation is happening](#) concurrently at Bread Loaf. This helps us keep costs as low as possible and offers additional workshop, speaker, and engagement opportunities.

#### Costs and Financial Support:

We have capacity to handle about 25 writers total. We expect many can pay their way fully. Thanks to Ashoka U Network funding\*, we can support up to 12 writers with up to \$400/person to cover costs of a single-occupancy retreat room and full board (3 meals) plus snacks, for three nights at the Bread Loaf Campus.

Additional costs to you will be your flight or ground transportation to Vermont, and any additional days of lodging before and after the retreat. We will facilitate shuttles/car-pooling from Boston or Burlington airport to reduce local transport costs.

We will consider requests for financial support beyond the \$400 on a case-by-case basis. We expect applicants to seek out matching resources from their campus or other sources. Preference will be given to applicants from more resource-scarce institutions.

**Timeline:**

- September 2017: First call for Changemaker campuses to circulate the announcement. Prospective participants should be exploring other funding.
- Mid-October 2017: Second call with more details and logistics updates, FAQs
- Mid-November 2017: Final call to apply, updated FAQ
- December 10, 2017: Applications and financial aid requests are due, review process begins
- By January 31, 2017: Participant selection and financial aid decisions communicated
- Spring 2018: Participants make travel plans; get writing projects organized, explore other funding
- June 11-14 2018: Attend the retreat. Write!
- June –July 2018: Follow up, virtual extension writing retreat, plus our reporting to NAC

**For more information:**

Contact organizers, Laura Murphy ([lmurphy2@tulane.edu](mailto:lmurphy2@tulane.edu)) and/or Cheryl Kiser, Babson ([ckiser@babson.edu](mailto:ckiser@babson.edu))

*\*This is an Ashoka U Changemaker Campus Network Advisory Committee (NAC) Collaborative Fund #1-sponsored activity.*

***Please circulate to Changemaker colleagues on your campus.***

-----

**Writers' Guidelines** drafted at the Vermont Retreat by Sara Minard and other writers:

*(Please copy and adapt for your retreats.)*

WRITING RETREAT GUIDELINES  
Ashoka U Writing Retreat for Scholars and Practitioners

These are the guiding principles that supported the first-ever writing retreat of Ashoka U Changemaker Campus Scholars that took place alongside the Middlebury Forum at Bread Loaf on June 12-14, 2018.

1. Anyone with a clear writing project is welcome as long as they are committed to using the time to write. Academic and non-academic writing is welcome and the publication in any format is encouraged.
2. Opportunities to share what you are writing and get feedback are available on a “challenge-by-choice” basis.
3. There is complete freedom to work on your own writing project at the speed and manner which suits you best, although participating in the group writing circle at least some of the time is strongly encouraged.
4. All discussions and feedback are conducted in the spirit of constructive creativity where honest feedback is a sign of respect and critical insights are received with gratitude.
5. People from all disciplines are welcome and we encourage people from different stages of their writing career with the intention to support everyone equally in their respective projects.
6. There is no collective agenda per se, but cross-fertilization across disciplines through the lens of social innovation is one hopeful outcome of our informal discussions.

## The Pomodoro Method

Website:

<https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>

Book:

<https://francescocirillo.com/products/the-pomodoro-technique>

Blog:

<https://francescocirillo.com/blogs/blog/tagged/pomodoro-technique>

For Writers:

<https://writetodone.com/how-the-pomodoro-technique-can-help-you-draft-your-book-in-just-3-weeks-while-still-having-a-life/>

## Writing Support Books and Resources

*The Right to Write: An Invitation and Initiation into the Writing Life* by Julia Camera

*Stop Worrying, Start Writing: How to Overcome Fear, Self-Doubt, and Procrastination* by Sarah Painter

*Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within* by Natalie Goldberg

*Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* by Anne Lamott

*Unstuck: A Supportive and Practical Guide to Working through Writer's Block* by Jane Anne Staw

[Wide Open Writing](#)

## Curated List of Retreat Centers Suitable for Academic Writing Retreats

- Whispering Pines, Rhode Island
  - <http://www.wpinescc.com/>
  - Address: 401 Victory Highway, West Greenwich, RI 02817
  - Email: [wpines@etal.uri.edu](mailto:wpines@etal.uri.edu)
  - Phone: 401-874-8100
- StonyPoint Retreat Center, New York
  - <http://stonypointcenter.org/>
  - Address: 17 Cricketown Rd. Stony Point, NY 10980
  - Email: [info@stonypointcenter.org](mailto:info@stonypointcenter.org)
  - Phone: 845-786-5674
- Highlander Center, Tennessee
  - <http://highlandercenter.org/>
  - Address: 1959 Highlander Way New Market, TN 37820
  - Phone: (865) 933-3443
- Bread Loaf Campus, Vermont
  - <http://www.middlebury.edu/offices/business/scheduling/blidiagrams>
  - See description at [http://www.middlebury.edu/bread-loaf-conferences/bl\\_writers/travelandtransportation](http://www.middlebury.edu/bread-loaf-conferences/bl_writers/travelandtransportation)
  - Email: [sched@middlebury.edu](mailto:sched@middlebury.edu)
  - Phone: 802-443-2885
- Synergia Ranch Center for Innovation and Retreat, New Mexico
  - <http://synergioranch.com/about-us/>
  - Phone: Marie Harding at 505-471-2573
- Mabel Dodge Luhan House, New Mexico
  - <http://mabeldodgeluhan.com/accommodations/conference-center/>
  - Email: [mabel@mabeldodgeluhan.com](mailto:mabel@mabeldodgeluhan.com)
  - Phone: (800) 846-2235 or (575) 751-9686
- Hands in 4 Youth (HI4Y) Retreat Center, New Jersey
  - <http://www.hi4yretreats.org/our-history-1/>
  - Address: 256 Macopin Rd West Milford, NJ 07480
  - Phone: 973-838-0942
- Audubon Center of the North Woods, Minnesota
  - <http://audubon-center.org/audubon-center-of-the-north-woods/conference-retreat-center/>
  - Address: 5416 Audubon Drive Sandstone, MN 55072
  - Phone: 320-245-ACNW
  - Email: [info@audubon-center.org](mailto:info@audubon-center.org)
- Northern Virginia 4-H Educational Center, Virginia
  - <https://www.nova4h.com/facilities/lodging/>
  - Address: 600 4H Center Drive, Front Royal, VA 22630
  - Email: [reservations@nova4h.com](mailto:reservations@nova4h.com)

- Phone: (540) 635-7171
- Procter Center, Ohio
  - <http://proctercenter.org/#>
  - Address: 11235 St. Rt. 38 SE London, OH 43140
  - Email: [info@proctercenter.org](mailto:info@proctercenter.org)
  - Phone: [740-206-2036](tel:740-206-2036)
- NovusWay, North Carolina
  - <http://www.novusway.com/>
  - Address: 28 Spruce Drive Arden, NC 28704
  - Phone: 828-209-6328
- Taconic, New York
  - <http://www.taconicretreat.org/pricing.html>
  - Address: 64 White Drive, Milan, NY 12571
  - Email: [info@taconicretreat.org](mailto:info@taconicretreat.org)
  - Phone: 845-758-8764
- Loyola U Chicago Retreat and Ecology Campus, Illinois
  - <http://www.luc.edu/retreatcampus/packages/nonloyola/>
  - Address: 2710 S. Country Club Rd. Woodstock, IL 60098
  - Email: [lurec@luc.edu](mailto:lurec@luc.edu)
  - Phone: 815-338-1032
- Spirit in the Desert, Arizona
  - <http://spiritinthedesert.org/>
  - Address: 7415 E. Elbow Bend Rd, Carefree, AZ, 85377
  - Phone: 480-488-5218
- Benedictine Women Retreat and Guest House, Wisconsin
  - <http://benedictinewomen.org/visit/facilities-overview/#RGH>
  - Address: 4200 County Rd M, Middleton, WI 53562
  - Email: [info@benedictinewomen.org](mailto:info@benedictinewomen.org)
  - Phone: 608-836-1631 x100
- Sophia Retreat Center, Colorado
  - <http://sophiaretreatcenter.com/>
  - Address: 19581 Road 31, Dolores, CO 81323
  - Email: [info@sophiaretreatcenter.com](mailto:info@sophiaretreatcenter.com)
  - Phone: 970-882-4920
- Pilgrim Center Oak Mound Lodge, Wisconsin
  - <https://www.ucci.org/pilgrim-center/facilities/oak-mound-lodge/>
  - Address: W1010 Spring Grove Rd Ripon, WI 54971
  - Phone: 920-745-4746