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National Writing Project Summer Invitational Institute returns to UWF

Pensacola, Fla. – June 3, 2016 – The National Writing Project Summer Invitational Institute will return to the University of West Florida June 6-23, 2016. UWF was approved as an official NWP site in October 2015, after hosting its inaugural institute for teachers of writing and reading in Summer 2015.

This summer, 11 elementary and nine middle school teachers will participate in a three-week program designed to immerse educators in engaging activities they can share with their own students during the school year. The event will include education professors in the fields of mathematics, science and social studies in an effort to present ideas for writing across multiple disciplines.

After receiving 90 applications from teachers, the interview process was strenuous and competitive, according to Dr. Susan James, NWP fellow and assistant professor of teacher education and educational leadership at UWF. The high level of interest was further evidence of the success of last year's institute.

"Every day I have emails from teachers all over the state, wanting to be involved in this," James said. "We are going to strengthen our disciplinary literacy portion of the institute."

James and Dr. Jennifer Mesa applied for and received a grant for STEM resources for participating teachers. This year, James was asked to lobby Congress for awareness of the NWP and continuation of federal grant money.

"It has allowed me to see a bigger picture of how government and education work in our nation and has provided me with contacts and stakeholders who are working toward the goal of providing a quality education for our K-12 students," she said.

Pam Schwartz, a retired Escambia County School District employee, provided the books and materials for the 25 teachers who attended in the summer of 2015. This year, Schwartz continues to provide an endowment to the Department of Teacher Education and Educational Leadership to help the NWP at UWF thrive.

“Giving for me is an expression of gratitude for all the people who contributed to my success in life. I was inspired to become a teacher to make a difference for our children, our future,” Schwartz said. “Literacy is the basis for students' success. Supporting literacy and teachers is an investment in our community's progress, allowing me to be a participant in improving our quality of life.”

The NWP at UWF would not exist without the generosity of community supporters like Schwartz, James notes, as well as long-time UWF instructor Dr. Maria Warren.

“Pam Schwartz is truly a woman who understands the need for this work and has selflessly given of not just her money, but her time,” James said. “These women share our passion for literacy and have provided materials that are needed. I cannot thank them enough for their assistance.”

In addition, numerous community businesses have partnered with the NWP to provide supplies and meals to teachers involved in the event.

With the 2016 Summer Invitational Institute full to capacity, James and her colleagues are looking at ways to add new grade levels, as well as the possibility of two cohorts. Additionally, they are working with school districts to determine needs and alternative ways of providing access to the NWP.

For more information, or to support the NWP at UWF, please contact Dr. Susan James at sjames1@uwf.edu.

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