

# Strategies for Enhancing Writing Accountability Groups within a Junior Faculty Research Mentoring Program

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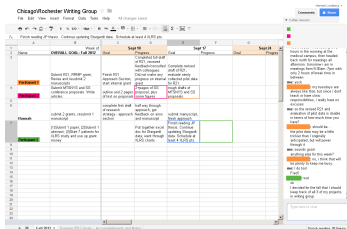
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## Introduction

- Peer-mentored writing accountability groups (WAGs) were implemented in the Rush Research Mentoring Program in 2010 to help junior faculty increase writing productivity and establish sustainable publication habits.
- Small groups meet weekly to provide mutual support and accountability for writing projects, and share techniques for overcoming barriers.
- WAG supplements were developed by junior faculty participants in response to the following needs:
  - (1) difficulty accommodating all interested participants
  - (2) tools to provide structure around the writing process
  - (3) new challenges for “advanced” participants.

## Online WAG

- **Need:** Address difficulty accommodating all interested participants
- **Solution:** An online WAG was established for faculty who could not attend in-person sessions. Sessions included an online, facilitated chat, followed by timed writing. Online WAGs to date have included 5 participants representing 4 institutions.

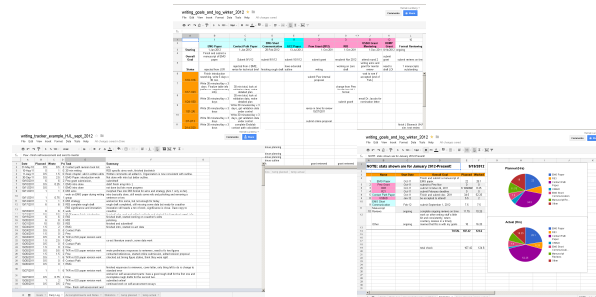


- **Challenges:** Staying on task, longer group discussion with typing/pausing, inconsistent participation in group writing after chat

## WAG Toolbox

- **Need:** Tools to provide structure around the writing process
- **Solution:** WAG participants developed several tools to aid in the organization of their writing, better identify barriers to writing, and increase the efficiency of their writing. The tools included: manuscript outline templates, completion plans, and writing task-tracking and daily log spreadsheets (Figure 1). New WAG participants are given the toolbox.

Daily Writing Log/Task Tracker

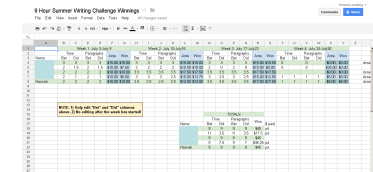


## Discussion

- Establishing productive writing habits is vital for a successful research career. By utilizing cloud-based applications and social networking tools, we have increased WAG reach and effectiveness.
- The WAG junior faculty participants developed and implemented the enhancements. Encouraging such “bottom-up” mentoring and program development offers a way to increase junior faculty engagement and research success at low cost.
- Digital native young faculty may be particularly responsive and receptive to such interventions.

## 9-Hour Writing Challenge

- **Need:** New challenges for “advanced” participants.
- **Solution:** “9-hour writing challenge” based on challenges used to incentivize behavior in fitness and writing: write 9 paragraphs in 9 hours over 4 weeks. Each paragraph took 30 minutes to compose and 30 minutes to revise. Participants were required to schedule paragraphs before each session and made a monetary wager to write each paragraph during the specified time.
- **Results:** Six members participated in two challenges. 84% (SD 27%) of “bets” were won in the first group and 76% (SD 17%) won in the second group. Participants completed a rough draft of a manuscript over the first session and continued to a final draft over the second session.



- **Challenges and Lessons Learned:** Preparing for writing ahead of time was the key to meeting our goals; daily writing outside of the “challenge” specified times was necessary. It was easy to underestimate needed time for specific writing tasks. Celebrating accomplishments was important to maintain group energy!