

# Finish Line in Sight

## The Marathon Model of Events

### The Writing Marathon: A simple concept

Provide space for writers to gather and work plus optional light programming to create an environment to help people focus on writing

Easily scalable event model for all sorts of writing and creative activities

### Doctoral Writing: Our patron need

Why graduate students?

- Their **point of greatest challenge** is at the dissertation/thesis stage.
- Dissertation/theses depend on **long hours** of analysis and writing, where it can be **hard to maintain focus**.
- There are **few discipline-neutral campus venues** for supporting graduate student success.

### Planning

1. **Schedule space.**
2. Choose at least **two programs or resources to highlight** at the event. These can be library programs and resources or ones from other departments/organizations.
3. Order **coffee/tea** and/or other refreshments. These are a big plus, but not required.
4. Create an **outreach strategy**. Sending e-invitations to lists works best. You can also post on social media, put up posters, etc.

### Collaborators

Collaborators can provide **resources** or help with **outreach**. Our key groups:

- Graduate Student Association
- Graduate School
- Writing Center
- Student Wellness
- Departmental graduate coordinators
- Special program coordinators for funded graduate research

### Our Event:

#### Dissertation and Thesis Writing Retreat

**Room 1: Quiet writing room with tables, power strips and coffee**

**Room 2: Workshop Series**

Presented by the library

- Planning and time management
- MS Word tips for formatting dissertations
- Citation management (Mendeley and Zotero)

Presented by collaborators

- Writing to your audience
- Stress management; controlling imposter syndrome

**Room 3: Consultation space for drop in student meetings**

Writing consultations with Writing Center staff and research consultations with librarians

### Our outcomes

- 43 attendees day 1; 27 attendees day 2
- Overall approval rating 2.8 (on a 1-3 scale)
- Feedback encouraged us to hold it again and suggested ways to motivate participants in the future
- *MS Word for Dissertations* was the most popular session



### Remember...

- Don't make things too complicated, especially for your first event. **The simpler, the better.**
- Begin outreach **well ahead of time**. At least a month out is ideal.
- **Follow up** with a satisfaction survey to help with planning future events.

### Other, non-academic marathon-type events

- "Shut up and Write"— mostly quiet time, with a brief accountability session
- "Stitch and B\*\*\*\*"— a BYOYarn gathering for crafters
- "Global Game Jam"— a 48-hour marathon during which programmers, artists, etc. collaborate to make playable video games based around a central theme