

# Reflections on the 2008 MWP T-C Leadership Retreat

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When people ask me about the MWP, I tell them, “They’re in the business of challenging teachers.” The core of the 2007 T-C Leadership Retreat was, in fact, a challenge to find new ways to use the power, prestige, and support of the NWP/MWP to benefit our students, our communities, and ourselves. We were challenged to answer our “what if” speculations. That was the year that gave some T-Cs impetus to think in a new direction.

The 2008 T-C Leadership Retreat showcased the scope of imagination and the high level of development of the ideas that sparked T-Cs during the year of incubation. Some ideas are taking existing programs to the next level, or redefining personal growth. Some ideas have yet to be tried. But wherever an idea falls on the continuum, MWP’s programs, proposals, and outreach can run tandem to Towson University’s own growth. T-Cs can be fully recognized as leaders in our schools, as writers of significance, and as driving forces in the community.

## Ideas Have Life Cycles

There were those who brought polished and thoroughly considered material to the conference. Having staked out areas of interest, actual leaders identified themselves and offered proposals in various states of maturity. Mature ideas have champions already, but benefit from fresh infusions of talent and interest. They have support, momentum, adherents, and renewal. There is consistency which allows the more mature programs to have

real impact because they are establishing themselves as resources throughout the year, building momentum and responding to their participants.

## Younger Ideas are Still Looking for “Buyers”

New ideas generally come from the imagination of one or two people who have a passion for their concept.



*Cheryl Foreman '04, getting the group started.*

The one or two people run with it, the conference or event happens, then the idea disappears. Some ideas are just too good to be acted on only once.

Lives change, and demands on time

change, but the day-to-day grunt work remains if the idea is to gain purchase. This is why committees of more than one need to be active. This is why mini-grants exist. This is why there is wisdom at the helm. There’s always a way to get things done. Maybe there need to be semi-annual or quarterly leadership confabulations (or something even less formal) to shop these ideas around in order to gain a constituency, much in the same way our “best practices” could be shown to a receptive and constructively critical audience.

## Time and Resources are Finite, So Go Shopping

Idea generators need feedback, and luckily, there are generators and there are developers and adaptors. Together, they nail together a product, take it for test drives, and refine it into elegance. Because MWP is wide of scope, we can find an area to embrace. The first area involves projects that primarily affect us as teachers; the second impacts our development as writers; and the third engages us with the wider community. There will be many ideas with overlap, and ideas that are waiting to be more clearly defined. There are many roles you are invited to play, and any number of ways to slake your own intellectual thirst.

Look at MWP as an open market of ideas: Some will sell and some won’t, just as in the real world. If you heard a good idea in 2008, sign on with it and help proof it out. If you remember an idea that’s trapped in the way-back machine, revive it. If no one has yet to offer you anything you wanted to buy, come up with your own.



*Cornelia Vanderlain '04 (author), Stephanie Leddy '91, and Kathy Jenkins '82 at the Leadership Retreat.*