

# Towson University's Presidential Leadership Retreat

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*Katie Hearn '06 (far right, first row) and members of her team at the Towson University Staff Leadership Retreat at the Wye Institute.*

When I received an email invitation in December to become a member of the Towson University President's Leadership Institute, I was very surprised. Not only did I not know there was such an Institute, but I had no idea that the president and provost were so aware of the Maryland Writing Project and our work.

I was selected as one of 20 from a pool of 60 nominees to participate in this six month long program. The institute members are first nominated by their dean, chair, or division head and are then finally selected by the President. The final selection is based on having a mix of people from different departments and programs of the university.

Barb and I were thrilled that the MWP made the final cut. Other institute members are from the budget office, the counseling center, grants and contracts, facilities management, technology services, academic affairs, student affairs and athletics. In other words, we are a diverse group.

The goal of the Institute is for staff members from different departments to meet and discuss what they do and how they can work together to make their own area and others more productive and efficient.

Through this interaction, we hope to create ideas and projects that will make Towson a better university. Our first meeting was intense, lovely, and fattening—we all stayed together at the Wye River Conference Center for 3 days of meetings and great and abundant gourmet food, something this T-C really appreciated.

Most of the Towson University vice presidents came to the retreat for an afternoon or a morning to explain what their office does and what the current state of Towson is, as well as what the future holds for the university.

I learned many new things I did not know before. I learned about the history of Towson; it originally was a college for women educators. Tuition in the early 1970s was only \$100 a year! I also learned that we have very high retention and graduation rates, a mark of a successful, progressive institution. Entering Freshman have an average high school GPA of 3.5. We have 16,000 applicants for approximately 3000 first year spots, so finding students is definitely not a problem.

For me the best part about the Institute retreat was I getting to know people I probably never would have known. For

example, I was seated next to the athletics' marketing director and through talking to him, we came up with the idea of having an MWP table at one of the games. We will be able to market our many programs especially the Student Writers' Workshop. This is great for us. I also was able to discuss with the Provost how people get hired and paid and the problems that we have with getting people paid promptly. He was most attentive and concerned and several of the other participants said they, too, had the same problems. Hopefully, we can recommend some changes in the process that may benefit all of us.

The Leadership Institute meets at least one full day every month through June. Primarily, we meet on campus, but in March we will travel to Annapolis to meet with our legislators and see how the funding for a state university happens. This, too, can only be good for the writing project.

Another of the Institute's goals is to formulate ideas and suggestions for the President to consider as he and the other vice presidents plan for the future. We will make a presentation for the President outlining these ideas in June at our final two day retreat at the Wye River Conference Center. We will give you a full report of that meeting in our fall, 2008 newsletter.

Who knows where this experience will lead for the Maryland Writing Project? The way Barbara and I see it—only good things will come from it. With so many talented T-Cs and all of the fabulous and creative programs and ideas that are happening because of you, we have much good work to flaunt and the perfect venue in which to flaunt it.