

2021 Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grant Application

Application Deadline - 5 pm, Monday, February 15th, 2021.

Please direct inquiries about applications to Sarah Wolter (swolter2@gustavus.edu).

Guidelines

Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Grants are available to support faculty members in their professional scholarly and creative work. Course improvement projects will not be considered (expenses for such projects should be covered by departmental budgets or other sources.) All proposals should be aimed toward the production of some tangible result, e.g., the publication of an article, chapter, or book; or an exhibit of works of arts. Private, personal creativity projects will not be considered.

*Grants will be awarded for up to \$1500 in project costs. Grants also include stipends: \$700 for continuing instructors/assistant professors; \$600 for associate professors; \$500 for professors. Faculty may choose to allocate part of all of their stipends to project costs.

*Applications will be accepted for stipends and project costs, as well as for stipends only.

*Joint applications are accepted but the maximum allowable project costs and stipend remain fixed.

*A faculty member cannot receive both the Research, Scholarship, and Creativity grant and the Presidential Faculty/Student Collaboration grant in the same year.

*RSC grants are awarded through a competitive process but a large number are funded each year.

*Monies may also be used as matching funds for outside support awarded to the faculty member.

*Grant recipients need to get IRB approval if their research involves human subjects and IACUC approval for animal research.

*Applicants whose previous grant reports are past due will not be eligible to apply.

*Priority will be given to quality proposals submitted by candidates who have not been funded through a Research, Scholarship, and Creativity grant in the past two years.

*Awards are made in the spring for the following academic year; project expenses must be incurred and reimbursed during that fiscal year (June 1st - May 31st).

For examples of previously funded applications, see <https://gustavus.edu/kendallcenter/grant-opportunities/grant-examples.php>.

Criteria for Selection

To distinguish among proposals that meet all criteria identified in the application, the committee looks for evidence of exceptional merit, compelling project design, and feasibility of project. Priority will be given to quality proposals submitted by candidates who have not been funded through a Research, Scholarship & Creativity grant in the past two years and to applicants who are not requesting funding for extensions or continuations of projects previously funded by a Research, Scholarship & Creativity grant.

I. Personal Data

First Name *

Rebecca

Last Name *

Fremo

Gustavus E-mail *

rtfremo@gustavus.edu

Campus Phone Number *

7392

Rank/Status *

- Full Professor
- Associate Professor
- Assistant Professor
- Continuing Instructor
- Visiting Faculty

Department(s)/Program(s) *

English

Administrative Assistant *

Jennifer Tollefson

II. Information on Previous Grants & Permission to Share Proposal

Have you previously received an RSC grant? *

- Yes
- No

If you replied "yes" to the previous question, briefly describe your previous RSC grant project(s) and outcome(s).

2019: This grant funded a week-long writing workshop in Bemidji, Minnesota at Northwoods Writers Conference to work with poet and essayist Camille Dungy (June, 2019). I worked on early stages of my current project, *Growing Things*. At that time, I was assuming a collection in two parts: Part I, essays that map competing narratives we create about specific places in our lives; and Part II, a collection of poems about how we lay down our roots in places where the "soil" (metaphorically speaking) accepts or rejects us. The grant covered all travel expenses and an individual manuscript consultation with Dungy, who provided written feedback on the first essay chapter for *Growing Things*. Later in the grant year, I used some remaining funds to help pay for a three-day writing retreat, a trip to a cabin in Northern Minnesota to write by myself.

2015: This grant funded a professional critique of my first book-length poetry manuscript, which was ultimately published in December, 2019 (*Moving This Body*). The 2015 critique framed my editing process and enabled me to prepare the manuscript for submission in winter of 2016. The grant paid for The Loft's Manuscript Critique Program with poet Jude Nutter, who read and reviewed what was formerly titled *God-shaped Holes*, providing in depth critique. I used all \$1,960.00 for the service.

2013: The grant funded multiple trips to The Loft Literary Center to work on poems and utilize the Loft's library of resources to help with submissions. (I also used Chair funds available to me in order to attend the Northwoods Writers Conference in Bemidji, Minnesota for one week, providing invaluable support and inspiration for the drafting process). Then, throughout 2014-15 sabbatical year, I reframed the manuscript and drafted the remainder of the poems. I also submitted individual poems for publication in journals. These poems eventually became my 2019 book, *Moving this Body*.

2011: I worked on a chapbook of 26 poems titled *Chasing Northern Lights*. I spent summer of 2011 finishing the poems and researching publication opportunities. I utilized additional funds to make three trips to The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis during AY 2011-2012, which has one of the largest collections of published chapbooks in the state. I finished the chapbook by September of 2011. The chapbook was finally published by Finishing Line Press in December of 2012. Success!

2002: I worked on a scholarly book project called *Toward a Rhetoric of Reading*. I also reworked one of my case study chapters, which became the second sample chapter to accompany the book prospectus. This chapter was later published as "Reading What Students Have Written: A Case Study from the Basic Writing Classroom" in *Reader: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy*. Finally, I conducted a literature review to prepare the prospectus. After years of revise/ resubmit letters, I ultimately decided not to pursue the book project. Instead, I reworked and published the final two chapters as articles. "You Are a Reader, and That's What I Need": Expectations of Proximity, Authority, and Enjoyment at a Liberal Arts College," was the lead article in *READER: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy* in spring of 2012. A second article, "Assumptions, Theories, and Best Guesses: Rethinking the Teacher as Audience," published in *Minnesota English Journal* in spring of 2013.

2003: I revised existing chapters and framed new material for the book manuscript described above. In addition, I revised a book chapter titled "Redefining Our Rhetorical Situation: JWPAs in the Small College Context," which was later published in *Untenured Faculty as Writing Program Administrators: Institutional Practices and Politics* (eds. Alice Horning and Deborah Dew). The book chapter was published in 2007, delayed due to editorial changes at Parlour Press.

Is your current proposed RSC project an extension or continuation of a project previously funded by an RSC grant? If so, please explain.

This project continues work on *Growing Things*, initially funded by a 2019 RSC Grant, and benefits from a summer, 2020 literature review supported by a Presidential Fellowship project ("When Tiny Screens Teach Big Lessons: Adolescent Males, Autism, And Emotional Education"). *Growing Things* is evolving into a full-length collection of essays. In 2019, I used the grant to pay for a trip to Northwoods Writers Conference, where author Camille Dungy read and reviewed an early essay, which I believed would help introduce a mixed genre collection of poems and essays. Her feedback suggested that this first essay really mapped a way forward for a book-length memoir. I left the Northwoods Conference with a plan to continue the project, now with a tighter focus. Today I have a working draft of approximately 75 pages.

Here is the current project description: *Growing Things* explores the belief that all of us can and must take responsibility for the things we grow. The book is a series of essays about raising my three sons, all of whom were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The collection is divided in thirds, offering a range of settings that shift from cultivated to more wild spaces, questioning the ways those spaces are defined. *Growing Things* takes readers through my backyard garden, a small college's arboretum and prairie restoration project, and ultimately through the wilderness areas of Northern Minnesota. In moving through a "spectrum" of wild spaces, intended to mirror the "spectrum" of disorders associated with autism, I hope to learn what I can and cannot take responsibility for as a mother and as a cultivator. Some wild spaces are simply beyond my control. This helps me to understand my sons and their seemingly "wild" ASD impulses, as well as the damage caused when their schools, doctors and parents try to tame or weed out those impulses.

If successful, my proposal can be used as an example to assist future faculty applications. This decision will not in any way influence the evaluation of my application. Click "Yes" to give permission. *

Yes

No

III. Project Information

Please compose your answers offline and copy/paste into the appropriate text boxes. While answers inputted into this form should be available if you close the form and return in the same browser, we cannot guarantee that this function will work.

A. Purpose: What are the intellectual, conceptual, or artistic issues you will address in the course of the grant period? How does your work fit into the larger field of study? *

My current project, *Growing Things*, seeks to explore autism itself as a form of wildness, and wild places as a way to help me understand autism and its role in my family. That is the project's purpose, and it is both deeply personal and also meets the needs of a growing group of readers: parents and caregivers of a new generation of young adults with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). Most writers continue to write about and through their own obsessions, until those obsessions either no longer shape their lives or no longer cause frustration. My current obsessions—not surprisingly—stem from my efforts to raise three sons with varying forms of ASD. In particular, the challenges of their teen years led me to question the ways that our public schools, medical authorities, and local communities try to tame and control their ASD-related behaviors. The more frustrating my life as a parent has become, the more I've turned to increasingly wild places to calm and center myself. At first, I was only able to do this with gardening in my own backyard. As the children got older, I gravitated towards increasingly wild places, further away from home.

But this kind of attention towards the outdoors, and towards the environment, certainly, isn't really the same as what we might find on the discussion boards of organizations like Autism Speaks, or local Facebook groups where parents desperately seek advice, trying to link autism and its bewildering spectrum of symptoms and behaviors to the natural world—or lack of access to that natural world. (I reviewed much of this conversation in summer of 2020, thanks to a Presidential Faculty-Student Collaboration Fellowship, which we used to review the literature on adolescents with ASD, communication, and social media use). My book is not about whether or not to feed children with ASD gluten, or to unplug their devices or send them to wilderness camp. It's simply about how the natural world might help us understand our children's inexplicably "wild" habits and behaviors in new ways. Environmentalists write urgently about farming practices, chemicals, and climate change. They consider global implications: Climate refugees. Water shortages. Contamination. I write about the natural world in a decidedly local way. As a transplanted southerner, I am fascinated by the Minnesota growing season and the incremental changes I see in my own rural Minnesota backyard: those I observe in my plants, and the ones I see in my children. I don't pretend our approaches are equal in scope or importance—my book is not about climate change—but the environmentalists and I share a belief: people can and must take responsibility for whatever they grow.

That belief came into full focus in the years since my last sabbatical, while I've developed courses that focus on place and landscape, taking students out of the "regular" classroom to interact with the people and places that surround us. Just since my last sabbatical in 2014-15, for instance, I've developed courses such as ENG 310: Writing and Nonprofits, which has included community partners like the Center for Rural Policy Development; FTS-100: Think Global, Write Local, and its spring partner IDS-144: Digging In, a place-based course focused on Seven Mile Creek Park's ecosystem, team-taught with (now retired) Biologist Cindy Johnson; and a re-imagined ENG 256: Writing Creative Nonfiction, which now invites students to read and write place-based eco-critical personal narratives. All of these courses draw from my study of both place-based contemporary poetry and creative nonfiction. I'm most influenced currently by contemporary women writers who interrogate relationships between place and climate change, place and disease, and place and cultural shifts, including Alison Hawthorne Deming (collections of essays include the 1996 collection *Temporary Homelands* and *Writing the Sacred into the Real*, 2001); Minnesota writer and Gustavus alum Kaethe Schwehn's memoir *Tailings* (2014), Minnesota writer Karen Babine's gorgeous collection of essays *Water and What We Know* (2015). Certainly, as a poet I'm influenced by Alison Hawthorne Deming's *Rope and Stairway to Heaven*, published in 2009 and 2016, respectively; and Julie Gard's place-based prose poems titled *Home Studies* (2015). Finally, Camille Dungy, with whom I've studied twice, is the author of the critically acclaimed collection of essays *Guidebook to Relative Strangers: Journeys into Race, Motherhood, and History* (Norton 2017); editor of *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (2009), and author of several collections of poetry, including *Smith Blue* (2011) and *Suck on the Marrow* (2010). My work might fit into conversations like these.

B. Feasibility: What qualifications do you bring to this project? What have you done/will you do to prepare for this project? What is the time period for your proposed work (summer, summer and academic year, academic year only)? Please explain how the work's scope is appropriate for the planned time frame. *

I completed a Ph.D. in English at the Ohio State University (2000), and I've been at Gustavus for twenty years. I'm trained as an academic in Rhetoric and Composition, but I've been writing poems and creative nonfiction, and teaching creative writing, since 2006. I've published a chapbook of poems, *Chasing Northern Lights* (2012), and a full-length collection, *Moving This Body* (2019). My poems appear in journals including the Sunlight Press, Mankato Magazine, *Water~Stone Review*, and *Lake Region Review*. My creative nonfiction, largely in the form of personal essays, has been published in a variety of journals, including *Compose*, *Mud Season Review*, and *Full-Grown People*. My essay "Bring Out Your Dead" was nominated by *Mud Season Review* for "Best of the Net" in 2016. I teach Creative Nonfiction regularly in my department, and I entered the rotation for ENG 112: Introduction to Creative Writing, in fall of 2019. Teaching writing at the college level helps me as a writer as we all engage new techniques; my classroom is a terrific laboratory. I've taught courses at the 100, 200, and 300 levels (undergraduate), as well as a few graduate seminars at Minnesota State, Mankato.

Preparation, in addition to what's described above, includes completing two workshops at Northwoods Writers Conference focused on place-based writing and/ or writing about the environment (poetry and prose); I've also already drafted 75 pages of this manuscript, including the introduction to the book and most of the essays for Part I, "Preparing the Soil." These essays share the story of moving to Minnesota and planting my first garden, and look at my family and genealogical history through scenes culled from two pregnancies and ASD diagnoses. Finally, I completed a literature review focused largely on first person narratives written by parents of teens and children with ASD in summer of 2020, and reviewed additional literature about teenagers on the autism spectrum, communication, and social media use (see Presidential project with Dareya Pozdnyakov in 2020: "When Tiny Screens Teach Big Lessons: When Tiny Screens Teach Big Lessons: Adolescent Males, Autism, And Emotional Education").

Time Frame and Methodology

The methodology for my book thus far has involved first generating journal entries in and about the actual wild spaces described: for Part I, the gardens of my yard; for Part II, the prairie restoration project at the Linnaeus Arboretum; and for Part III the wild spaces of Northern Minnesota. After capturing those first person, immediate responses to the places, I then move to narrative writing, creating the scenes that constitute the memoir itself. Again, I've found that these stages are best undertaken near the places that I write about. Final stages involve research and integrating research into the narratives. Much of the 75 pages I've already written will be used for Parts I and II of the book: In Part I, I offer parallel narratives: the story of moving to Minnesota and planting my first garden, and scenes culled from my first two pregnancies and ASD diagnoses. Essays in Part II focus on the ways that my sons have struggled in school and social settings. This section is rooted in a series of journal observations composed onsite at the Gustavus Arboretum in Saint Peter, Minnesota, a place that seems wild, but is carefully planned. The bulk of my sabbatical year itself will focus on integrating research throughout Parts I and II. That work happens at home, where I need a good internet connection and (fingers crossed that kids go back to school!) an empty house during the school day.

But the final third of the book, Part III, requires travel in order to generate two new essays. This will be the work funded by an RSC Grant. To write the essays in Part III, I need to gather material for the essays that look specifically at my relationship with the Lake Superior shoreline, state parks, and National Forest areas of Northern Minnesota. My RSC Grant will help me fund three brief, four-day trips to the North Shore area, one in each of the three seasons that I haven't yet journaled about (fall, spring, and winter). This will generate enough journal material to propel me to the narrative writing stage for Part III. I need to get started on two essays set among the state parks and national wilderness areas of the North Shore of Lake Superior. These final essays seek to re-imagine wild places as a source of peace and regeneration. But I've only recently begun to work on this section by rereading old journal entries, all written on family trips to Lutsen, Minnesota—usually under duress, and always in the summer. I now need focused time to "gather data"—to do descriptive, first-person journal writing about the state parks and forests near Lake Superior, with special attention to these places during fall, winter, and spring. I need to do this work alone, without interruption from family. That's why I propose to use this RSC Grant to help fund three four-day solo trips to Northern Minnesota during my sabbatical year (2021-22).

C. Project Design: Please describe your project design and activities, including location, staff, schedule and itineraries, and desired outcomes. *

I am proposing three four- day writing retreats on the North Shore of Minnesota. This is an approach I've used before: these "solo" writing retreats helped me complete my first book of poems and helped me hone materials for the first two essays in *Growing Things*. I simply need to stay in heated cabins or motel rooms that provide electricity, a stove or microwave, a table, and a bed. That's it—I don't even need WiFi.

I propose do take these trips in late September, late January, and late April. I will determine dates of travel according to rates for lodging and weather conditions. (The places where I propose to stay, either Superior Ridge Motel, Schroeder, or Trailside Cabins, Grand Marais, are typically not "booked up" in the off season.)

My typical practice is to hole up in such spaces alone, spend significant hours of time with journal in hand, outdoors, taking notes, and returning for 3-4 hour writing sessions (typically two writing sessions per day). Thus over three days, I hike and journal daily for 3-4 hours; write and revise daily for approximately 6 hours. I do so on my own time schedule.

Desired Outcomes

- Write daily journal entries to chronicle visits to the North Shore in each of three seasons (fall, winter, and spring) so that I leave each visit with enough material to describe places in detail and contrast across seasons.
- Take multiple photographs at locations that are most important (i.e. Mount Oberg Overlook, Artist's Pincushion Trail, Devils Track Lake, Superior National Forest trails)
- Visit as many Visitors' Centers/ Interpretive Centers as possible (COVID may be a factor), and/ or study DNR web pages to gather necessary information about local plant life, geology and geography for these sites.
- Create research plans for Chapters Five and Six by identifying questions central to the project: how "wild" is wilderness, for me? What's a tolerable level of wilderness to enter? Why am I attracted to places where I get lost multiple times? What's the psychology of that? (ETC.)

D. How will restrictions due to Covid-19 potentially affect your project? [This is not a criteria for selection of the RSC.]

Writing memoir, for me, involves the methodology I've already described: onsite journaling, lots of work with scrapbooks, photographs, and family history; occasional interviews with medical caregivers or teachers; plenty of quiet and space to integrate source material and to generate narratives. This work requires silence, and solitude is tough to come by at our house.

My original sabbatical plan—the dream in my head when I first applied for the leave—involved applying for the Loft Mentor Series, an Emerging Writers Grant, and a Prairie Lakes Artist's Grant. These regular offerings are no longer available. Likewise, while there are dozens of residencies—all highly competitive—available for creative writers each year, most places have either canceled altogether, or they have shifted attention to addressing the needs of arts organizations directly and / or supporting artists of color. I really have no choice but to create my own "writing residencies" or retreats by going alone. COVID-19 will not affect my RSC project, because I'll stay by myself in cabins or single rooms that are cabin-like in remote areas of Minnesota. Certainly illness (me or my family) could affect work, but that's why my dates are TBD, and I propose multiple short stays, rather than one longer one.

IV. Budget

Download the RSC budget form here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nSVRzWgV_q4sVXuMU0sVPYumer61BEOU/view?usp=sharing. Then upload the completed RSC budget form by clicking "Add File" below. *



Provide a rationale/justification for your budget. *

I propose one retreat in late September, one in late April, and one in late January or early February, with specific dates TBD, based on rates for lodging and weather patterns. I will use these trips as writing retreats—safe, solo, uninterrupted, and simple. Before COVID, I assumed I'd apply for a dozen residencies for my sabbatical year, so that I could at least count on one longer (2 week) period of uninterrupted work away from home. But... COVID. Many residency and fellowship programs have been canceled for next year. The ones that weren't canceled are now accommodating the folks that won residencies and fellowships for 2020, and bumping everybody else at least a year or two in the future. This RSC Grant proposal outlines my version of "Plan B."

The following are likely resorts or cabins where I will stay, and the costs are fairly consistent, with rates slightly higher during the fall near MEA break or leaf-peeping peaks:

Superior Ridge Resort Motel (I stayed here in November, 2020 and would happily use it all three times) : Currently listed at \$95 per night pre-tax. Trailside Cabins and Motel (but not open in winter) (I've also stayed here with family—no frills but you could easily live here for months with a can opener.): Currently range of rates \$80-\$100 per night, depending on the cabin.

Project Budget:

- Lodging per trip: \$400 with tax
- Meals and groceries per trip: 4 days at \$30 per day per trip; \$120 per trip X 3= \$360
- Mileage Reimbursement per trip: \$370 per trip (330 miles one way at .56 cents per mile per trip)

Total Cost Per Trip: \$920.00

Project Total: \$2760.00 (Requesting maximum RSC budget to help)

Please note that I had an error message when trying to download the correct budget form; I've uploaded an old version of the form with prior rates for mileage.

V. Additional Information

Have you applied for funding from another source to support this project but do not yet know the outcome of that application? *

Yes

No

If you replied "yes" to the previous question, please 1) indicate the funding source(s) and amount requested, 2) explain how the RSC grant funds will be used in addition to the other funding if received, and 3) explain how the RSC grant project would be impacted if external funding is not received.

I applied for Good Hart Residency (Two weeks away in Northern Michigan near Lake Michigan, which includes a community service component). The residency would cover lodging and food and provide a \$500 stipend, which would be used solely to offset car rental or fuel/ travel costs to get to Michigan. In other words, it doesn't affect funding for RSC, and I would use the two week residency to work on Part II of the book, not Part III.

Have you received funding from another source to support this project? *

- Yes
- No

If you replied "yes" to the previous question, please 1) indicate the funding source(s) and amount requested, and 2) explain how the RSC grant funds will be used in addition to the other funding received.

If you apply for and receive funding for both the Research, Scholarship, and Creativity grant and the Presidential Faculty-Student Collaboration grant, which will you accept? Grant guidelines specify recipients can only accept funding for one of the grants in a year.

- Research, Scholarship, and Creativity grant
- Presidential grant

If there are any additional materials that you think would be helpful to the committee in deciding upon your application, please upload them here.

 Excerpt from Gro...

If there are any additional materials that you think would be helpful to the committee in deciding upon your application (e.g. links to Google Drive files), please include URLs here.

VI. Area of Focus

One approved RSC grant will also be selected for the Area of Focus award. This designation carries with it an additional \$500. An RSC grant can connect to the Area of Focus in many ways, depending on the individual proposals. The Area of Focus for the 2021-2022 grant period is "Innovation and Technology."

Would you like your proposal to be considered for the Area of Focus award? *

- Yes, consider my application for this designation.
- No, do not consider my application.

If you answered "yes" above, please provide a short description of how your project engages this year's area of focus, "Innovation and Technology."

Applicant's E-Signature

Signature *

Rebecca T. Fremo

This form was created inside of Gustavus Adolphus College.

Google Forms