Dear Applicant:

We appreciate your interest in the Young Writers Workshop and look forward to receiving your application. Once your application is complete, including your teacher’s recommendation, we will inform you of our decision within two weeks. Please provide a frequently used e-mail address for this purpose.

We would encourage you to fill out the application form yourself rather than leave it to your parents. This may seem like a curious request, but it is based on many years of reading applications and reflects our interest in enrolling those students who are genuinely interested in participating in the workshop. We also ask that you type the personal narrative described on page two of the application. Feel free to attach your printed pages to the application form.

When giving the recommendation form to your teacher, be sure to emphasize the importance of returning it as soon as possible. Providing your teacher with a stamped and addressed envelope can help the recommendation get to us in a timely manner. You’re also welcome to have the teacher give you the recommendation in a sealed and signed envelope and then return it with your application. In recent years, both students and their teachers have sent us their materials as e-mail attachments. My e-mail address is on the various forms. Please don’t send your materials in the form of photographs, as these are often difficult to print in a legible form.

If you are applying for the Dorothy West Scholarship for students of color (see the PDF for further information), the deadline for completed applications is April 1. This deadline applies only to the Dorothy West Scholarship. All other applications, including requests for standard financial aid, are reviewed (January into May) once they become complete. Early application is recommended. The program typically begins to fill up during the month of May.

As you may know, Bard College at Simon’s Rock is a college for younger scholars. Students enter Simon’s Rock after tenth or eleventh grade to begin an accredited program of studies leading to both the A.A. and B.A. degrees. In 1983 we established the Young Writers Workshop, modeling it after the three-week workshop required of all entering students at Bard College, our affiliated institution. It has served as a model for summer writing workshops (The National Writing and Thinking Network) at other colleges around the country.

The Young Writers Workshop is not a traditional creative writing workshop. That is, we are not directly concerned with teaching the “dos and don’ts” of writing particular genres. Instead, Bard writing workshops provide students the opportunity to explore various genres and styles of writing while focusing on the connections between language, thinking, and creativity. In addition, we believe that the best way to grow as a writer is by writing rather than by listening to teachers give lectures, no matter how inspirational. What this means is that we spend a good part of each day doing various kinds of informal writing activities together (the prompts may range from creative and exploratory responses to various readings, to observations of nature and works of art, to innovative kinds of
fiction and poetry play). In doing these activities, our goal is to help you engage your imagination and strengthen your writing and thinking skills.

In fact, we see the workshop as an opportunity for you to work on yourself as a writer as much as on your writing. We believe this will be of more use to you in the long run than simply learning how to write a technically correct and polished piece of prose or poetry. Out of the daily informal writing activities that we do, however, you will also have the opportunity to develop more polished pieces, from poems and stories to personal essays and creative nonfiction. By the end of the three weeks, you will have created a rich portfolio of works in progress. In fact, students who have attended other summer writing programs and then come to Simon's Rock often tell us that they feel much more productive here in terms of generating new and worthwhile writing.

Although we will ask you to do a lot of writing, reading, creating, and thinking in the three weeks, the atmosphere is relaxed and playful. We try to create the feeling of working together in a supportive writing and learning community, a welcome change for many students compared to their normal classroom experience. There is also ample "down time" outside of the workshop to get to know others in the program and to participate in various activities organized by our Student Life staff.

Please don't hesitate to call or e-mail me if you have any questions about the workshop or about how to apply.

Sincerely,

Jamie D. Wilkinson
Director, Young Writers Workshop
Phone: (413) 528-7231(work); (413) 274-6957(home)
e-mail: jamieh@simons-rock.edu

P.S. If you would like to speak with former students about their experience in the workshop, please send me an e-mail and I will provide you with contact information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

SIMON'S ROCK WEBSITE: www.simons-rock.edu/young-writers

NATIONAL WRITING AND THINKING NETWORK WEBSITE:
http://writingandthinking.org/workshops/