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 one to two weeks. Please provide a frequently used e-mail address for this purpose and make sure to include the Director's e-mail address in your e-mail contacts. This will prevent the program's e-mails from being sidelined in your spam folder.

We ask that you fill out the application forms yourself rather than leave them to your parents (with the obvious exception of those parts that require parental information or a signature). This may seem like a curious request, but it is based on many years of reading applications and reflects our interest in enrolling students who are personally and genuinely interested in participating in the workshop. In addition, while we're happy to speak with families about the program, we expect applicants to communicate with us directly when it comes to questions and concerns, and when submitting application materials.

If possible, please convert the downloaded application forms into editable documents, thereby allowing them to be typed (be sure to retain the original format). We also ask that you type the personal narrative described on page two of the application. Feel free to attach your narrative to the application form if sending us hard copies.

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 photographed copies, as these are 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 early in 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, playful 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 each case, our aim is to engage your imagination, encourage you to take some risks with words and ideas, and expand your awareness of the writer's creative process.

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. Over the years, students who've attended other summer writing programs have told us that the quantity, quality, and variety of the work they produced here went well beyond what they were able to accomplish in the past.

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 Campus 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 Hutchinson
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/