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Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, Assistant Professor of Composition Studies, travels to England

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Christina Ortmeier-Hooper

Christina Ortmeier-Hooper, Assistant Professor of Composition Studies - College of Liberal Arts

Professor Ortmeier-Hooper traveled to England in July to present her research at the 2009 Writing Development Conference at the University of London.



Professor Ortmeier-Hooper while in London

With the assistance of a travel grant from the Center for International Education at UNH, I was able to attend and present my research at the 2009 Writing Development Conference at the University of London. As a junior faculty member at UNH, the Writing Development Conference represented my first international conference invitation. The conference, sponsored by literacy researchers at the Institute of Education, focused on how students, from early childhood to adulthood, develop proficiency as writers in a range of contexts, contents, and genres. The meeting brought together international literacy and composition scholars from over 12 different countries. Researchers examined a wide range of topics. Sessions included presentations on writing assessment, linguistic development, hypertext, and ecological theories of literacy development. In addition, there were sessions on critical literacy practices and the academic experiences of multilingual writers. Keynote addresses were given by prominent U.S. and U.K. scholars, including Anne Haas Dyson and Gunther Kress. This international forum provided an opportunity to bring together leading writing scholars to synthesize and communicate international trends, research findings, and bring new lenses of analysis to our work as writing researchers. The conference was unique in its integration of writing research across a range of educational sites and writer age groups. As a result, the discussions that ensued considered how writing practices and skills developed throughout a student's educational experience.

My conference presentation on the expansion of second language writing and the writing experiences of immigrant adolescents was well received. Participants asked thought-provoking questions, which contextualized my work within a larger international context. They also shared their own experiences with immigrant writers in other countries and considered how issues of identity in second language writing situations might complicate the teaching of writing in those settings.

The conference served as an important site for continued conversations and possible collaborations. Given the culturally and linguistically diverse nature of the student population in the United Kingdom and other European nations, the setting proved to be an invigorating backdrop to my work on immigrant writers. My interactions throughout the conference provided me with an opportunity to build new relationships with researchers pursuing similar topics and research questions in other diversely populated cities around the world. In particular, I hope to build upon current work in second language writing with fellow attendee, Dr. Maria Jerskey, whose interests in community college settings has lead her to raise similar research questions to my own work. The conference culminated in the publication debut of the Writing Development Handbook (July, 2009) by Sage Publishing which included my chapter, The expansion of second language writing, co-written with Paul and Aya Matsuda. A reception was held by Sage for all contributors to the volume, and I met face-to-face with the editors with whom I had worked throughout the volume's development.

On my final day in England, I was also able to visit UNH's Cambridge Summer Program at Cambridge University's Gonville and Caius College. While there, I met with fellow UNH faculty members and toured the program's facilities. I witnessed some of the wonderful experiences that UNH undergraduate and graduate students can have as participants in this exceptional program.

In closing, I am very grateful to the Center for International Education which helped to make my travels to this conference possible. The conference and journey to the United Kingdom was an invigorating experience which will certainly fuel my future research projects and enhance my undergraduate and graduate writing classes at UNH.



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