

San Francisco Writers University

Empowering Writers to Reach Their Goals

The capacity to innovate—the ability to solve problems creatively or bring new possibilities to life—and skills like critical thinking are far more important than academic knowledge.

--Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*, March 13, 2013

The Mission Statement

The San Francisco Writers University will be a community resource for enabling all writers of all ages in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond to meet their literary and publishing goals by reinventing how writers learn to succeed.

More people than ever are writing, and now is the best time ever to be a writer. Whether writers want to write a memoir for their family or become bestselling authors, the SFWU will provide the guidance and access to resources they need for as long as they wish to write and publish their books. The university's programs will also promote the value of literacy in the digital age.

The Classes

The university will offer classes, online and off, about

- all kinds of writing at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels
- communicating online and off
- choosing the best publishing option with the emphasis on self-publishing
- publishing, producing, and selling what students create
- building and working with a community of collaborators
- maximizing creativity
- critical thinking by analyzing the best books in the writer's field
- balancing being a writer with something to say and an entrepreneur with something to sell

Digital technology is the greatest gift to writers since the printing press. The university will offer classes on how to write computer code and to use technology to create, publish, and collaborate in all forms and media, including video games and screenwriting. Classes will vary in length from one session to a semester, to continuing education that, for example, will enable writers to finish and publish a novel.

The university's activities will be based on this perspective of what it takes to become a successful in the digital:

10 Keys to Becoming Successful Writer Faster and More Easily than Ever

Writers can use ten keys to become a successful writer faster and more easily than ever. The keys are unified by passion and three trinities.

1. **Passion**—their love for creating and communicating about their work and devoting their lives to improving them
2. **Purpose**—personal, literary, publishing, and community goals that keep writers inspired to achieve them
3. **Products and services**—pursuing the trinity of content: reading, writing, and sharing; and being a contentpreneur by being entrepreneurial and by producing a steady stream of work in different forms and lengths that writers re-purpose in other media and countries

The trinity of communication: people, platform, and pre-promotion

4. **People**—crowdsourcing success with win-win relationships with engaged, committed, growing communities of people and collaborators writers serve who want to help them, because they know, like, and trust them, the basis for commerce on the Web
5. **Platform**--continuing visibility, online and off, on the writers' subject or kind of book with their communities and other potential buyers
6. **Pre-promotion**--test-marketing their work in as many ways as they can
7. **Promotion**— serving their communities by using their passion and platform to share the value of their work
8. **Professionalism**
 - knowledge about writing, publishing, and their field
 - using the technology they need to succeed
 - being a life-long learner
9. **People, Planet, and Profit**—making the trinity of sustainability, in this order, the criterion for deciding how to achieve their goals
10. **Perseverance**—balance, patience, discipline, faith in themselves, a long-term perspective, and the commitment to do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to achieve their goals

The synergy that integrating these keys will create will continue to grow as long as writers sustain them with content, service, and communication. Writers can adapt the keys to other fields and their personal life.

Why the University Will Succeed

The university will

- be a community resource for everyone who wants to write, including the public and private students at all levels, seniors, and the homeless.
- offer individual and continuing coaching as well as group instruction
- create a community of writers who help each other, online and on campus
- charge only enough for classes to sustain the university and the conference, and to keep instructors, its most important resource, eager to teach. Many passionate, experienced instructors will be drawn from the more than one hundred speakers at the San Francisco Writers Conference each year. They will be encouraged to make their classes as enjoyable and inspiring as they are helpful.
- guarantee students' satisfaction with classes, which will be streamed and recorded so students who can't attend classes will have access to them through the university website, www.sfwritersu.com. When students finish a class, they will receive a beautiful certificate. They will also receive an evaluation form that will give them the chance to suggest ideas for classes and the university. They will receive free classes for ideas the university adopts.
- offer two scholarships to every class
- have members of the publishing community as guest speakers and offer visits to Bay Area publishing resources, such as publishers, booksellers, printers, and distributors
- will host an annual contest and awards dinner for the best writing and instructors. The San Francisco Writers University Press will give students the chance to see their work in print with an annual anthology of their work. The press will also publish, online and off, how-to books drawn from classes that will be sold at the university's bookstore/café that will be open to the public and have events.

The store will have a print-on-demand Espresso Book Machine that prints books that the store doesn't stock in minutes, and that also enables students to print their work.
- with help from major donors, and from writers, students, and the public through Kickstarter, build a campus that will host classes and the annual conference. The campus will be downtown near public transportation. Classes will be scheduled to suit students' schedules. Students will have 24-hour access to the library and the cafeteria, which will have tables for critique groups.

Donations will also help make it possible to create a mobile classroom that travels to schools, libraries, homeless centers, and senior centers to provide free classes. Interns and volunteers will be eager to help with the university in exchange for access to classes.

- be led by a group of self-managing professionals, including a rotating representative from the instructors, the students, and the volunteers. The guide for running the university will be Gary Hamel's groundbreaking book on managing in a digital culture, *What Matters Now: How to Win in a World of Relentless Change, Ferocious Competition, and Unstoppable Innovation*. The university will have also have an advisory board with members of the Bay Area writing and publishing community.
- avoid a hierarchy or a status quo. It will be driven by the need for continuing innovation in what the university offers and how it operates. It will only grow as fast as it can without sacrificing quality or a sense of community in the students, instructors, and volunteers who make it possible.
- be financially self-sustaining. It will partner with businesses, nonprofits, individuals, and community institutions that share its goals, and set up a foundation to help support and expand the university's activities.

Looking Ahead

The university was started in 2008 as a way of keeping the nonprofit San Francisco Writers Conference, now in its eleventh year, going year round. Held President's Day Weekend in February at the Mark Hopkins InterContinental Hotel, the conference sells out every year and attracts more than 500 writers, speakers, and volunteers from abroad and more than thirty states. The university will also attract students from around the country and beyond to the best city in the world. When it becomes possible, the university will build a student dormitory.

The university will enable writers to take advantage of the amazing, continually emerging opportunities for publishing, promoting, and profiting from their work. It is fitting that America's second largest writing and publishing center should be the home to the world's first twenty-first century school for writers.

The San Francisco Writers University is the right idea, at the right time, in the right place. The teachers, volunteers, and aspiring writers are ready. One reason the United States is a great country is that if an idea is good enough, the resources to make it happen emerge. The resources for the university will emerge. The campus will open its doors before the end of the decade.