Syracuse University Draft Dash Writing Challenge
Using Whimsy and Structure to Build Writing and Research Community

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The Office of Research Development launched the Draft Dash, a two-week faculty writing challenge held during the 3rd and 4th weeks of Spring semester 2026. Participants could join a 9:30 am daily Zoom or write asynchronously on their own schedule. Faculty earned daily raffle entries for writing-related prizes, with those completing all 10 sessions qualifying for a grand prize of a $500 research account contribution. We celebrated community and prize winners with a cupcake party of 25 attendees.

2026 Draft Dash Budget	
Item	**Cost**
Door hangers	$100
Daily prizes	$100
First prizes ($250 x 2)	$500
Grand prize ($500 x 1)	$500
Cupcakes, coffee	$200
Total	**$1,400**

82
Faculty registrants

10
Schools and colleges

68%
Average participation rate

33%
Perfect attendance rate

VALUE

According to a 2026 NCFDD study, 61.2% of faculty respondents said **writing and accountability groups** would be the most valuable faculty development support. Our participants said the most valuable aspect of the Draft Dash was …

"Setting a specific time to write, with no distractions."

"It taught me something new about the way I write…I can build in little writing bursts."

"A sense of community and non-hierarchical vibe. It did not matter what rank, role, or project you were there for."

"I am much better at holding myself accountable to others than I am to myself."

"The idea of a writing streak is motivating."

USEFULNESS

According to the same 2026 NCFDD study, 71% of faculty respondents said **professional support for writing and publishing productivity** was highly needed. Our participants said the Draft Dash met their needs by …

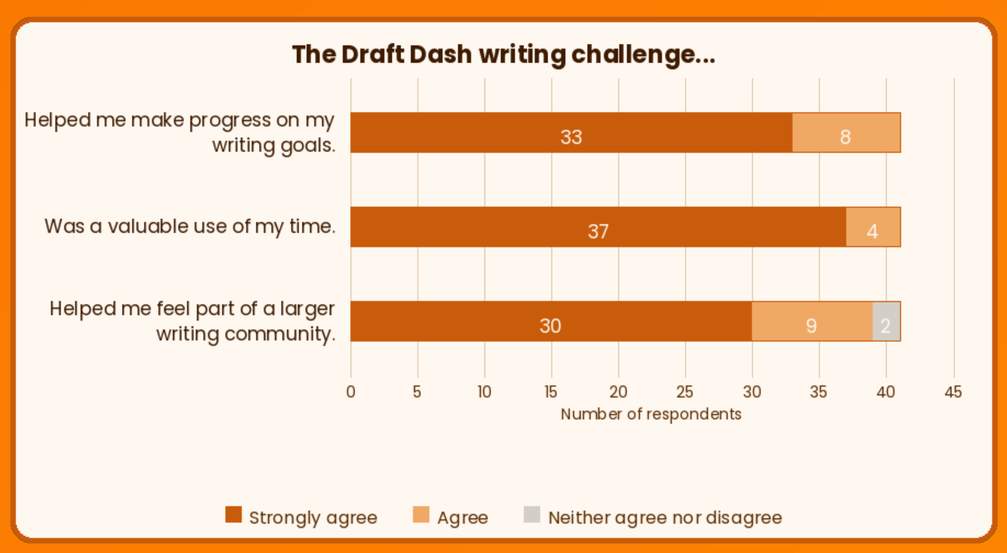
"I became more confident that consistent writing at the same time every day not only brings progress but a feeling of accomplishment…"

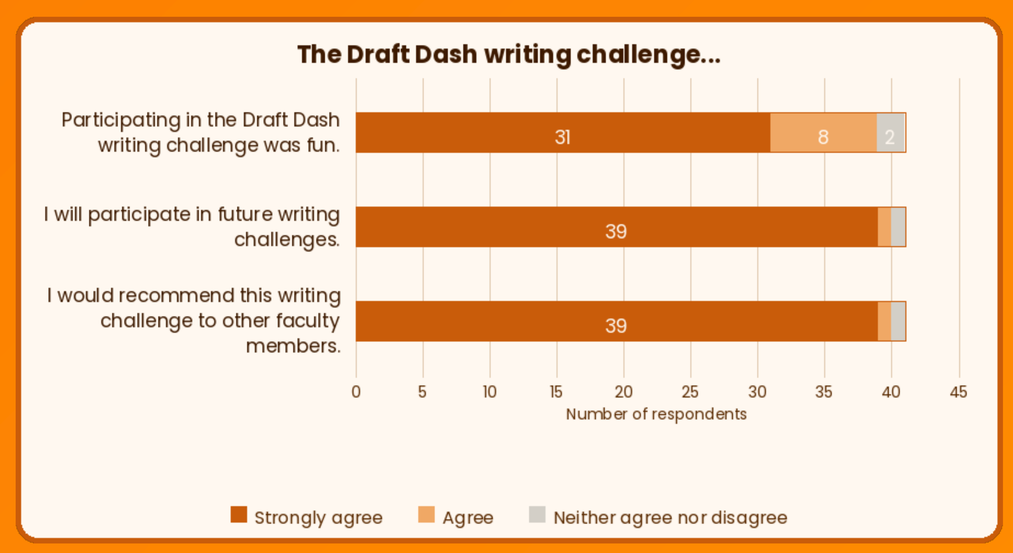
It was incredibly useful as the number of people who stuck with it every or most days attests. It was also just so well executed in every aspect from the timing & number of emails to the whimsicality of the daily prizes."

"Having time on the calendar each day and community to write with really made a difference—I submitted an article and started the Wenner-Gren application during the 10 days."

"It helped me stick to a schedule and get started when I felt stuck."

"Amazing how much can get done in 30 minutes. Some days that was all I could spare and it was still helpful."





Nice things faculty said …

"I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed having a writing community for these past two weeks. I really appreciate your putting this together and making it fun, welcoming, and productive."

"It was truly an uplifting and productive experience."

"Thanks for holding the draft dash—paragraph by paragraph, we eke it out!"

Thank you so much for creating a supportive writing environment. I benefited from the daily reminders and the positive pressure of showing up for my community (and for the chance to win a prize!).

"I loved the Draft Dash!"

"Just gratitude!"