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Alice D. Kinney
3467 Heath Road, Hastings, MI 49058
E-mail: alicekinney93@gmail.com

Creative writing fellowships: Applying, receiving, and successfully completing

ALICE D. KINNEY, Western Michigan University, 1901 West Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo,
MI 49008, USA

ABSTRACT: In a portfolio-like fashion, this report displays the processes used throughout a six month creative writing fellowship through Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings, Michigan (The Nature in Words Creative Writing Fellowship). Included in the following pages are tips for finding a creative writing fellowship, writing a proposal that stands out in the selection process, examples of the methods used throughout my project, and resources for anyone interested in furthering their creative writing fellowship knowledge. The example pieces include a creative writing fellowship proposal, reviewer comments from the selection process, two articles written for the Hastings Banner, a reading list, and a daily calendar, among other helpful documents. While my project focused on the effects of a social condition called Nature Deficit Disorder, the information included in this report can be used by a wide array of people interested in receiving and successfully completing a creative writing fellowship.

KEY WORDS: children's literature, creative writing, creative writing fellowships, effects of nature on children, fellowship application, field-based learning opportunities, nature deficit disorder

Introduction

So, you've heard about creative writing fellowships; maybe from a classmate, a professor, or a friend, and now, you want in. Well, you may not know it yet, but just by being interested in completing one of these fellowships, you are already well on your way. Creative writing fellowships are one of the best ways to hone your writing skills, and allow yourself to commit uninterrupted time to a writing project of your choice. Whether you decide to focus on poetry, short stories, or a children's book, you're bound for success. When it comes to starting or furthering a career in writing, a fellowship offers a helpful boost that you just may need.

Section I: The Application Process

When applying for a creative writing fellowship, you need to be fierce. The application process is not simple and it is not quick; it actually takes a considerable amount of time and skill. Putting effort into this portion of the fellowship is just as important as handing in your polished products at the end of the project.

There will be moments when you feel as if you are jumping through hoops left and right: collecting signatures, digging up pieces for a portfolio, or formatting the proposal itself, but every one of these details counts. Just by submitting the required materials in a polished fashion you have an edge on the competition. Make sure that you use a consistent formatting style throughout the whole proposal. The fine details of your proposal, such as margins, font, font size, and use of bold-faced characters, should match the fine details of your application, resume, cover letter, and writing samples. Overall, this gives your application package a polished and professional look. Your application package should represent you in a highly-professional way,

but it should also highlight your creativity. Below is an excerpt from my proposal that rides the fine line between professional and creative:

Much like a tree's necessity for a healthy root system and a strong trunk, this six part proposal grows from its own foundation: meaning that the roots are as important as the leaves. The following index describes, in brief, the purpose of each part of the proposal.

Part I: Non-Fiction Research Report: a research report of at least 15 pages presenting factual, current, and useful information. The research necessary for this paper focuses on the psychological effects of nature on children and the cultural criticism regarding humans in nature. This research will provide me with a strong foundation for the proceeding parts of the proposal.

Part II: Brochure for Pierce Cedar Creek Institute: a condensed version of the research report, it is designed for Pierce Cedar Creek Institute to distribute to parents and other visitors. This informational brochure highlights the positive effects nature has on children and adolescents; with special attention given to the benefits of nature for children with ADD, ADHD, and learning disabilities. By using simple and inviting language this brochure will be a trustworthy source of information for a wide variety of visitors.

Part III: Children's Literature: a children's book of 15-30 pages (with illustrations) to focus on the themes of nature, discovery, imagination, creativity, thinking, and exploring. This portion of the proposal builds off of the information obtained during the research phase (Part I). Written for an audience of approximately five to ten year olds, this book creates the opportunity for collaboration with selected student-artist to finalize illustrations.

Part IV: Public Readings: upon the completion of the children's book, I will hold several public readings throughout the surrounding areas: sites currently include Hastings Public Library and Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, more sites to be added as the completion date approaches.

Part V: Journaling: a daily journal is kept as a place to store ideas, practice the different types of language I wish to use, and expand upon concepts found in the readings, research, and my surroundings. Diligence to this task helps me to strengthen my writer-identity. Journal entries are typed and sent to my faculty-mentor once a week to ensure progress and development.

Part VI: Readings: a set of weekly readings further my thought and help to cultivate ideas in regards to the other parts of the proposal; they also serve as an inspiration for journaling and creativity. During these readings, various genres would be explored: some self-chosen and some selected by mentor to provide a balance of content.

Section II: The Selection Process

While little is concrete in the selection process, several assumptions can be made. But before we discuss exactly how to wow your selection committee, it is important that you have background knowledge on the organization that is offering the fellowship. Study up on their events, courses, mission statements, and programs in order to have a clear idea of the people who will be working with your application package. The following are anecdotal suggestions that I believe can enhance your outcome from the selection process. First, consider being different and a little adventurous in your proposal. The committee will be studying many proposals during the selection process, and a lot of those will be repetitive, so when a new idea pops up, it is not only refreshing but eye catching. You can stick to what you know (i.e. poetry, nature literature, short stories) but your proposal should also branch out and explore a new area of writing. This shows that you are not just looking to repetitively preform the type of writing that you like most, but instead you are willing to try something new. Second, at least one of your products should correlate to the mission statement of the organization offering the creative writing fellowship. This is because, as an organization, they are working continuously toward their mission statement, and if you can help them move in that direction, your proposal will have their interest. Third, the work you do during the proposed fellowship should be able to carry into your professional career—even after the fellowship has ended. Now, this may seem like a strange idea because after you complete your writing, and the stipends have issued, the fellowship is over. But if you can demonstrate to the selection committee that your proposal is meaningful and will continue to be improved and researched after the fellowship is over, you are showing the organization that you are passionate about your work. This is something that does not occur often enough. Above all else, your proposal needs to be an accurate representation of who you are—

don't alter that just to appease a committee. Spend time deciding what it is that you want to learn about and what you enjoy doing, and if it happens to line up with the goals of the organization, then that could signal the perfect match.

After you receive a decision—whether it is what you wanted to hear or not, reply with a thank you and ask to receive any comments from the selection committee that pertain to your proposal. This can give you an idea of your strengths and weaknesses as an applicant. Below are the comments I received from the committee at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute:

Reviewer Comments

“I like the fact that she's proposing such distinct forms of writing-- a research paper, a children's book, a brochure, and journaling, as well as readings of her work. In this single project she's exploring the importance of nature on individuals and issues of form, content, and audience.”

“Her topic aligns well with Science Strong and the goal of better serving the Barry County community and attracting new (and potentially younger) members.”

“Alice had good reviews from several local sources, and she has done good work for the public library.”

Section III: Completing the Fellowship

When you set out to complete something as cumbersome as a creative writing fellowship, you go through stages of enthusiasm with your work. You should know, now, before you make another move towards beginning this process that there will be days that you wake up and hate the project. There will be days that you want to start anew, maybe veer away from your original proposal, and maybe even press the delete button to the entire project: but don't do that. Part of the purpose of a creative writing fellowship is to improve your writing ability and stamina, and that is not always fun.

In order to stay interested in your project, you should challenge yourself to take on new genres in your writing and reading. This can be done in several ways. First, create a proposal that allows you to not only hone your skills to near perfection in your well-liked areas but to try new areas of writing too. This gives you an escape route on the days you simply cannot write another sentence for that short story. In other words, it is wise to give yourself options. Second, bring different kinds of text into your daily reading—consider informational texts, fiction pieces, poetry, theoretical pieces, articles, and even film. I enjoyed the days that I simply watched a movie in bed, because I was able to draw new ideas and inspiration from the plot and characters. If it relates to your project, it is not a waste of time. Third, challenge yourself during regular journaling to try new types of writing. I used my journal as a place to take notes from dense theoretical reading, to make lists of improvements for my writing, and to experiment with new concepts and styles. The best thing about a journal is that it is yours and no one else's—all the more reason to have fun with it. Lastly, ask the organization for opportunities to do additional writing. During my time at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, I was asked to write two short articles for a local news source called the Hastings Banner. Luckily, these two articles aligned nicely with my area of research (Nature Deficit Disorder). Without a second thought, I said yes, even though it was not a part of my original proposal. Writing these articles was rewarding because I was able to experiment with a different type of writing, and they also served as strong pieces in my project as a whole. Below are the two articles that I was able to write during the Nature in Words Creative Writing Fellowship:

The secret to healthy and happy kids is in your own backyard!

Alice Kinney

Western Michigan University, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute

Growing up in Hastings, I have come to know the local outdoor adventure areas like the back of my hand. Since moving to Kalamazoo and becoming a student of English and Spanish Education at Western Michigan University, my interest in the relationship between nature and

education only deepened. After completing my third year at WMU, I received the *Nature in Words Creative Writing Fellowship* through Pierce Cedar Creek Institute of Hastings. This unique fellowship has given me the opportunity to spend a summer exploring the topic of children in nature. I have delved into nature literature and research, spent lots of time reflecting and observing, and have focused on producing several distinct pieces of writing; these include a research essay, an informative brochure, and a children's book. Without a doubt, this summer has proved to be one of the best learning experiences I have had yet; my favorite part has been the close relationship I've formed with my natural surroundings—something that not enough people have the time and resources to do. In recent decades, this lack of human to nature contact has been under investigation. While it's not always easy to spend time outdoors each day, this article can serve as a guide to your family's relationship with nature.

As many Michiganders know, July is filled with hot summer days that can often make you want to stay inside away from the heat and humidity, but you should think twice before you close the doors and turn on the T.V.—especially if you have children in your household. The summer months in Michigan offer children and teens a much needed time to relax and catch up with friends and family; but that's not all that summer is good for—these months provide endless opportunities to head outside and become more acquainted with nature.

In recent years, the relationship between nature and children has been a popular research topic. Many studies have led to a similar conclusion: nature helps to form a healthy and happy lifestyle for your child. A 2005 national best-selling book by Richard Louv titled *Last Child in the Woods* explored the effects that nature can have on children: such as improving mental and physical health, stimulating creativity and imagination, and lowering the likelihood of stress and depression. His book also discusses a social condition called Nature Deficit Disorder, which he describes as “the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses.” So how do we prevent our children from facing Nature Deficit Disorder? The answer is simple: spend more time outside and teach your children how to appreciate their natural surroundings. Exploring nature can be fun and beneficial to the mind, body and spirit. Below are some ideas to get you and your family outside this summer:

- Attend a Family Science Night at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. Join us August 6th from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM to explore nature and the sciences
- Have a picnic in a city park, like Bob King Park, Fish Hatchery Park, or Tiden Park
- Challenge your family to identify bird calls on a birding hike at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, Otis Bird Sanctuary, Yankee Springs Recreational Trails, or along the Paul Henry Trail
- Learn about history at Charlton Park Historic Village and Recreation Area or the Gilmore Car Museum
- Take the family dog for a walk on local, dog-friendly trails such as Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, or head to the Hastings Dog Park
- Learn about agriculture by visiting a local farm: MOO-ville offers family activities throughout the summer and Prairieville Farm hosts old-fashion farm days in September
- Take advantage of Hastings' unique placement on the Thornapple River. Spend an afternoon floating down it on tubes or canoes, or walk beside it on the scenic Thornapple River Walk
- Challenge your teen to use that smartphone to capture nature scenes from any of the areas associated with the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, or give them a nature journal where they can practice nature inspired writing
- Follow the happenings of the summer-long program called *No Child Left Indoors* that aims to give local families the chance to get outside all over the Hastings area

The Importance of Field-Based Learning

Alice Kinney

Western Michigan University, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute

Whether you've been a chaperone, a teacher, or a caring parent waving goodbye as your youngster loads the bus, we all know about field trips: they give our children a chance to get out of the class room and learn important concepts through hands-on activities. But why do field trips become so rare after elementary school? Well, they shouldn't! People of all ages can benefit from field-based learning opportunities—in many different subject areas.

Each summer, Pierce Cedar Creek Institute of Hastings hosts about twenty college students who do research on a broad array of projects. This year, the Undergraduate Research Grants for the Environment topics include insect entomology, the Eastern Massasauga Rattle Snake, Snake Fungal Disease, invasive species control, and grassland bird populations to name a few. There are also several student projects that focus on the arts: GRCC sophomore Hana Christoffersen received the Gordon Art Fellowship to conduct a 12 week project through which she is creating linoleum block prints of wood peckers species native to Michigan. Christoffersen says that "This summer has been an incredible experience. The worthwhile collaboration with my mentor, the opportunity to actively work outside every day, observing woodpeckers soaring and drumming in the trees above me, sharing in the driven, intelligent research community, and facing and overcoming design challenges daily are my favorite parts." In addition to relating nature to art, two students from the West Michigan area are incorporating nature into writing through the Nature in Words Fellowship. These researchers, artists, and writers found field-based learning opportunities as college students, but people of all ages can become involved. Sandy Breitenbach, a Plainwell High School science teacher has participated in five different research projects from multiple organizations throughout her adult life. Breitenbach believes that "Doing research has increased my knowledge about many different concepts in science and has increased my understanding of how science is conducted. It is the one of the best ways I have found to be a life-long learner. And, best of all, it is just plain fun!"

Of course, younger learners can become involved in field-based learning opportunities as well. Often times, sixth through twelfth grade students can make connections and acquire opportunities through their school system, local nature centers, volunteer programs, and college research departments. This summer, a group of ten high school students from Hastings and the surrounding area have been spending two days each week at Pierce Cedar Creek. They fall under the instruction of Marty Buehler, a Hasting High School science teacher and Sara Syswerda, the Education and Field Station Director at the institute, among others. The Summer Science Exploration Program has given the high schoolers a chance to interact with college students, work hands-on in a real world environment, and sample what a future in environmental sciences may be like. Buehler finds that giving students the chance to work in the field, hands-on, helps them remember what they learn. Having the chance to apply your knowledge in a real-world situation is an irreplaceable experience.

While it may seem like finding a field-based learning opportunity is a rarity in southwest Michigan, it is by no means impossible! Here is a list of some of the first steps to becoming involved:

- 1.) Decide what you are interested in going into
- 2.) Do some research by using your connections
- 3.) Reach out to the people, places, and organizations that could offer you a research position, a volunteer connection, or any other type of field-based learning opportunity
- 4.) Seal the deal, get involved, and spread the word of field-based learning!

As you can see, these articles took a lot of research to successfully complete which ended up being very beneficial. I strongly encourage you to incorporate some form of research into your

project. Research is one of the most valuable ways to spend time, especially when you are being paid to complete it. Even if your proposal is focused on the more artistic, creative side of writing, you can still include research. For example, if you proposed to write poetry about life as a minority in the United States, it would serve as an interesting and current topic. But if you also included a research essay about the relationship between minorities and law enforcement and how it can impact the lives of inner-city youth, your proposal would be packing a punch. In most cases, there are underlying themes in the proposed writing that can be connected to fascinating research topics. Your research doesn't have to be the guiding piece of your proposal, but rather the glue that holds it all together.

Section IV: Recording and Reporting

When you think of a creative writing fellowship, you probably think of writing. But there is also a lot of organization and record keeping that is necessary to successfully complete the fellowship because it is important to keep track of all the work you complete during the fellowship. This can include calendars, grant money, sources and reading, among other areas.

The best way to keep track of all the items that you have read and will read is by creating a detailed reading list that you can update throughout the project. I have included an excerpt from each section of my reading list. As you will notice, I used multi-genre sources, such as movies, to supplement my work. I found this to not only be enjoyable but also helpful in looking at my project from a different perspective. It is a good idea to relate your project to as many outside genres as possible, for example, poetry, research essays, studies, movies, documentaries, fiction, non-fiction, current events and art to name a few. Doing so can not only serve as creative

inspiration but it can also help you to become more informed about the topic with which you are working. Below is a sample from my reading list:

Author	Title	Genre	Relation to Proposal
Nature Literature			
Bate, Jonathan	<i>The Song of the Earth</i>	Nature Theory	Essay
Coelho, Paulo	<i>The Alchemist</i>	Humans in Nature	Essay
Heise, Ursula	<i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocrit.</i>	Nature Theory and Criticism	Essay
Keats, John	<i>Ode to a Nightingale, To Autumn</i>	Poetry	Book
Krakauer, John	<i>Into the Wild</i>	Humans in Nature	Essay
Louv, Richard	<i>Last Child in the Woods</i>	Humans in Nature	Essay
McAllister, M	<i>The Value of Field Research as an Undergrad. Experience: Case Stud.</i>	Field-Based Learning	Articles
Children's Literature			
Ashman, L	<i>Worldwide Monster Guide</i>	Rhyming	Book
Kirk, D	<i>Miss Spider's Tea Party</i>	Rhyming	Book
Lobel, A	<i>Frog and Toad Together</i>	Adventure	Book
Sendak, M	<i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>	Adventure	Book
Seuss, D	<i>Oh The Places You'll Go</i>	Rhyming	Book
Seuss, D	<i>The Lorax</i>	Rhyming	Book
Steig, W	<i>Rotten Island</i>	Nature	Book
Stewart, S	<i>The Money Tree</i>	Nature	Book
Movies			
Boyle, D	127 Hours	Human Relation to Nature	Essay
Curran, J	Tracks	Adventure Biography	Essay
Lee, A	Life of Pi	Human Relation to Nature	Essay
Lord, P	Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Children's Literature	Book

Another area of record keeping is citations. As tedious as it is, citing all informational and creative sources should be high on your list of priorities. Whether it was a book that inspired some of your best work, an article centered around a convincing study, or a poem that you quoted in an essay; it is vital that you record it all. I would even suggest that you update this list consistently throughout the project as it will save you from deciphering old notes, broken links, and piles of articles in a rush at the end of the fellowship. Below is a complete list of sources that I used in the research and exploration phase of my project, you can expect to have about this many sources for any proposal that contains a research portion.

Literature Cited:

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In order to keep all of your daily goals and activities in order, take the time to create a calendar.

It is where you can put the reading you need to do each day, deadlines, meetings, and a variety of other notes and reminders. But do not plan out each and every day. This is a mistake I made from the very beginning: I sat down with the idea that I was going to map out my eleven week stay at

Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, which I did; and stick to it, which I did not. Here is a look at my first ten days:

05/12/2015

Move In
Finalize Calendar

05/13/2015

Reading: Bate, J *The Song of the Earth*
Journaling & Notes
Movie: *Tracks*

05/14/2015

Reading: Bate, J *The Song of the Earth*
Weekly Meeting: GIS and Data Work
Journaling & Notes

05/15/2015

Reading: Bate, J *The Song of the Earth*
2nd grade classes visit for nature program
Journaling & Notes
Citation

05/16/2015 – 05/17/2015

Reading: Heise, U *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism*
Journaling & Notes
Journal Submission

05/18/2015

Reading: Heise, U *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism*
Journaling & Notes
Key Concepts

05/19/2015

Reading: Heise, U *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism*
Journaling & Notes
Citation

05/20/2015

Reading: Heise, U *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism*
Journaling & Notes
Outline Complete

05/21/2015

Reading: Heise, U *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism*
10th – 12th grade classes visit for biology field trip
Weekly Meeting: Research Presentations
Journaling & Notes

And here are the last:

07/27/2015

Reading: Louv, R *Last Child in the Woods*
Movie: *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*
Journaling & Notes

07/28/2015

Reading: Louv, R *Last Child in the Woods*, catch up from past readings
Journaling & Notes

07/29/2015

Readings: *Catch up from past readings*
Movie: Catch up on any past movies
Journaling & Notes

07/30/2015

Readings: *Catch up from past readings*
Land Management Workday
Weekly Meeting: Stream Ecology
Journaling & Notes

07/31/2015

Last day at PCCI
Continue revision through August

08/04/2015

Weekly Meeting: Report Writing

09/24/2015

Final PowerPoint Presentation Due

09/26/2015

Project Report Presentations

10/01/2015

All Rough Drafts Due

10/19/2015

Faculty Reviews of Report Due

10/31/2015

All Final Drafts with Revisions Due

It isn't hard to see the difference between these two chunks from my calendar: the first ten days are highly-structured, while the last are deadlines and cushion time. This is why you should not map out every detail of every day: you simply will not be able to stick to it, and it can become a source of frustration. Instead, consider making weekly goals, or write out a 'to do' list every morning. Both of these options will serve as more effective forms of planning.

Record keeping can seem to 'go against the grain' when it comes to creative writing fellowships. This is because keeping track of each and every detail and planning out your writing process weeks, maybe months, ahead of time can take away from the creative aspects of writing. But in the end, you will be glad to have a detailed record of your progress and accomplishments. This

can be useful in several situations. I used it to apply to receive college credit (through experience) at Western Michigan University. You could also consider adding it to a portfolio for future use and reference.

Section V: Additional Tips

You should be proud of what you have done, and there is no reason not to flaunt it. I recommend that you use the resources around you to publicize your achievements. This can be done during and after your fellowship experience. When I received my creative writing fellowship, I spoke with the chair of the English Department at Western Michigan University about my opportunity. He offered to put me in touch with the Marketing and Communications office of the College of Arts and Science. I gladly said yes and ended up having an interview and an article in their monthly newsletter. Whether or not you are a college student, there are always people around you who can help promote what you are doing. Take time to talk to local newspapers, libraries, colleges, and organizations who may be interested in the work that you are completing. Below is the article I received after discussing my fellowship opportunity with my academic college:

Student Given Creative Writing Fellowship

DJ DeLong

Creative writing and history major

College of Arts and Sciences, Marketing and Communications student employee

Western Michigan University students have multiple opportunities to gain experience and value during their academic careers. While WMU offers numerous internships, fellowships and grants, students can also expand to find these opportunities off-campus, like Spanish major and English minor, Alice Kinney. Kinney has been granted the opportunity to participate in the Nature in Words Fellowship at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings, Mich. The goal of the fellowship is to develop the writer's creativity by deepening her appreciation of nature and the sciences and is rewarded based on the quality of the submitted proposal. The fellowship will allow Kinney to expand and explore writing. Kinney grew up in Hastings and Pierce Cedar Creek had always been a part of her childhood. However, it was not until last December that she discovered this unique opportunity. She spent her free time thinking of creative proposal ideas.

Kinney said, "I couldn't resist applying. The idea of reading, writing and playing in the woods was pretty tempting."

Kinney will spend 11 weeks living in-residence with her faculty-mentor, Alisha Siebers, researching, collaborating and enjoying her natural surroundings. As her faculty-mentor, Siebers offer advice, recommend new areas of focus and guiding the revision process. She will coach Kinney through her writing project and to talk through options. When asked about the fellowship, Siebers said, "We have the potential to educate a wide audience." The project has the kind of interdisciplinary components the institute values. The brochure Kinney is designing is about the effects of nature on children that will help the institute expand the demographics of their visitors. Kinney's final research on the representation of nature in children's books will also benefit many education majors at WMU and other institutions.

Kinney spent several weeks working on her proposal and application. Although she had the help from Siebers, Kinney strived to go through the process of proposal writing as independently as she could. This process involved collecting signatures, prioritizing, selecting sample works, and creating calendars, tentative books list and budgets. Kinney said, "When I handed in my hefty proposal, I felt very accomplished."

The six parts of Kinney's proposal included research, creating a brochure, writing and illustrating a children's book, keeping a journal, completing weekly reading material, and committing to give public readings of her book following the fellowship. When asked about the amount of work she plans to take on, Kinney said, "I didn't want my proposal to seem stagnant. Each part is very distinct, but in a way they all flow together." By having so much variation throughout her time at the institute, she will be able to stay focused and intrigued in her work since it will always be changing.

The fellowship serves as a challenging, new experience for Kinney to improve her writing skills. She will also get the chance to discover new interests and talents. The opportunity is a great growing experience for both Kinney and Siebers. It also opens up a lot of possibility in future education for Pierce Cedar Creek Institute and WMU. At the end of the fellowship, Kinney will have a signature project that she can use to help her navigate finding a job and that showcases her multiple talents.

Both Kinney and Siebers encourage students to pursue this opportunity or others like it. Siebers said, "It never hurts to try!" She also recommends reading the grant proposal requirements carefully and learning all you can about the granting institution so that you can tailor your proposal to what they require. Kinney advises students to take a break from what's wearing them out and when they're able to apply to this fellowship or any other similar opportunity, do it, adding, "It's worth the time and I'm pretty sure you'll love it!"

Another word of advice, if you wish to sell any of the products from your creative writing fellowship, you should first get permission from anyone or any organization that was involved in

the making of your product. This includes: mentors, editors, illustrators, and the organization that provided you with the fellowship. If you get permission from all of the involved parties and you wish to sell a writing product, I recommend that you create a simple order form to help keep the process of ordering, receiving payment, and providing the product as organized as possible.

Below is a book order form that I created and used for my children's book entitled *Shells in Strange Places*:

Shells in Strange Places – Children's Book Order Form
*Contact *your name* at *e-mail address* or *phone number**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Number of copies: _____ \$10.00 per book

Inscription request:

Delivery Method:

- Shipped
- Delivery
- Pick-Up

Payment Method:

- Cash
- Check
- Pay Pal

Before submitting your application package it is important to spend some time looking over your resume, cover letter, and curriculum vitae. I highly recommend not only proofreading, but also fact checking, all of the above listed items. This would include, getting in touch with your references to let them know you are submitting an important application about which they may be contacted. It would also be a good idea to revisit your volunteer and field experience section to make sure that all the information is recent and relevant. Lastly, as unconnected as it may sound, never underestimate the influence of your social media accounts on a fellowship position. This means that before submitting your application package, you should update and clean out your social media accounts. Take time to ‘untag’ yourself in unprofessional photos, or even ask your friends or followers to remove them completely. It also includes getting rid of any inappropriate statuses, information, or links that would be visible to the public eye. At first, this didn’t even cross my mind, but after a mid-summer talk with the Education and Field Station Director at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, I learned that this sort of thing matters: especially during the application process. The bottom line is that if selected for a creative writing fellowship, you become an extension of the organization that selected you, and that means that you need to represent them and yourself in a positive light.

Acknowledgements

As with any opportunity to expand my writing abilities, there are people to thank, and places to acknowledge. Upon completion of a creative writing fellowship it is a good idea to take time to say thank you to those who have helped you reach this accomplishment. Whether it is in-person, through e-mail, or in a hand-written thank you note, don’t forget this important detail!

I would like to express my deepest gratitude toward Pierce Cedar Creek Institute in Hastings, Michigan. Not only did the Institute fund my exploration in writing, but the employees were supportive and kind throughout my entire process, and I gathered endless inspiration from the hundreds of acres of scenic property. It is important to thank my faculty-mentor, Dr. Alisha M. Siebers of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She kept me motivated throughout the six months in which my fellowship took place. Without her expert eye and good-heartedness my project wouldn't have been nearly as enjoyable. I would like to encourage all of my readers to take the time to visit their local nature centers; it is, more often than not, well worth the effort.