

*“Why I Do What I Do”:*  
Some writing exercises and prompts  
Faculty Writing Retreat June 2013

**Pre-writing exercises:**

- What kinds of writing do you do as part of your work? Are there some kinds you like better than others? Why?
- Where do you write best? What medium do you use?
- What kinds of writing do you like to *read*? (Favorite genres, authors?) What do you like about them?
- What kind of writing do you enjoy doing? What makes it enjoyable?
- What gets in the way of your writing?
- What practices or activities help your writing?

**Writing Prompts:**

- We all take on various jobs in our professional lives; research, teaching, advising, and service are the typical ways of identifying these jobs, although these are by no means our only roles. Which role(s) are you most passionate about, or most absorbed in? Has this changed over time, or remained steady? Why do you think this is so?
- Tell the story of a journey that brought you to where you are right now, professionally.
- Describe a time when you were fully absorbed in your work, a time when, perhaps, you felt most fully yourself as you were doing it. (Set the scene, and give some details. Where were you, and who else was there? What was happening? How did it feel? Or, if this kind of absorption happens habitually, give a more general description of it, and how it happens.) How is this experience related to your professional life?
- How would you describe your relationship to your research? Is there a particular image or metaphor that comes to mind? An anecdote that illuminates this relationship?
- Imagine that you are being interviewed about what you do by a colleague from another department (or find a colleague to interview you). What would this person be most interested in hearing you talk about? What could you say that would show him or her most vividly the absorbing, fascinating, rewarding nature of your work?
- Describe how your vocation, however you choose to define that, has been “fed” by an avocation of yours (e.g., dog training, skiing, sculpture, gardening). Or vice versa. (This prompt also could also work with a former vocation, or with parallel vocations, as well!)
- How would you explain to someone from outside your department (outside Le Moyne/ outside academia) why your work *matters*? What kind of difference does it make (or do you fervently hope it makes) in your field? In the lives of your students? colleagues? In the workings of Le Moyne? In the culture at large?