

2005 Last Frontier Theatre Conference Evaluations Report

Each year, participants in the Last Frontier Theatre Conference are given the opportunity to fill out feedback forms on their experience in Valdez. Their responses are used in the planning of subsequent Conferences. A blank copy of the response sheet given to every registrant is attached.

There are three sections to the feedback form. First is the numerical breakdowns of evaluation ratings of both the 2004 and 2005 Last Frontier Theatre Conferences. They show improvement in this year's event, and contain analysis on how the Conference can be improved for 2006. This section contains a majority of the analysis of the data, and plans for next year.

Second and third are text from the participant's responses. The first section is from all Conference participants; the second section is from the writers participating in the Play Lab. These comments are broken down first by question, then more specifically by the topic of the response.

Please note that any missing percentages are a result of people responding "not applicable" on their evaluations.

Information Received Prior to the Conference

Our goal is to maintain excellent communication and relations with anyone who is planning on attending the Conference. Ideally, every person planning on participating in the Conference will have access to any information they need to properly prepare themselves for the Conference. To that end, all correspondence and publications of the Conference have the personal e-mail and phone number of the Conference Coordinator.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

46% excellent
32% good
14% satisfactory
8% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

62% excellent
25% good
9% satisfactory
2% unsatisfactory

We are pleased that there was a 16 percentile increase in “excellent” ratings. Another key point is that the number of unsatisfactory ratings has almost disappeared completely.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

We feel that there is no reason for every single participant to not be adequately informed before coming to Valdez for the Conference. Our goal is to have 100% of the ratings be in the “excellent” and “good” range. We feel that this is achievable through improved text on Conference publications, advertisements, and the college website, as well as continuing our policy of maintaining one-on-one correspondence with every participant prior to the Conference via telephone and email.



Ronald Rand in his one-man show, “Churman.”

Play Lab

The top priority of the Conference is to support the development of new work and early- to mid-career playwrights. Every year, the success of the Conference flows from the success of the Play Lab. When there are good plays being presented by strong writers, the positive effects are felt in every other aspect of the event. Therefore, the continued improvement in the quality of the Play Lab is our top priority.

It is complicated to compare this year's numbers with last year's, as in previous years we had separate sections of the Play Lab for short plays and full-length plays. For 2005, in response to feedback on 2004's Conference, we changed the structure of the lab by re-unifying into a single Play Lab.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

Long Play lab:

14% excellent
30% good
30% satisfactory
25.5% unsatisfactory

Short Play Lab:

56.5% excellent
33% good
10.5% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

71% excellent
27% good
2% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

Improvement in the happiness with the Play Labs this year is dramatic, and definitely something that can be attributed to listening to the advice of our participants. While we had a unified Play Lab this year, resulting in one set of evaluation ratings rather than two, our ratings from this year surpass all of the numbers from 2004. We are pleased that 98% of the attendees rated the play labs as excellent to good, and that 0% found the labs to be unsatisfactory.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

Through the slight modifications of the approach panelists take when responding, more efficient logistics in atmosphere and scheduling, and improvements on the selection process we feel that we can make the Play Lab experience an even better one. While it would be hard to improve on our numbers, the comments sections revealed some areas we can work on, including:

- Improved scheduling to make sure that all plays have the opportunity for a full public response section.
- Include full-length plays in the Play Lab again.
- Make sure that all panelists are using the same methodology for responding to the readings by having a methodology sheet.
- Additional private feedback sessions for writers in the Play Lab.

Panel Discussions

Panel discussions work with classes as a primary educational component of the Conference. They give participants a chance to hear a diversity of opinions on a given topic in a single sitting.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

47% excellent
44.5% good
6.5% satisfactory
2% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

48% excellent
39% good
2% satisfactory
7% unsatisfactory

While there were many positive comments on specific panels, the overall rankings were slightly down this year, although 87% of the respondents still said the Panel Discussions were good to excellent.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

Most of the issues that were raised in the critiques can be solved by working more specifically with panelists before the Conference on the agenda for their discussion, and making sure that the educational objective for the panel is clear. Also, as was true of the classes as well, these events need to have at least an hour-and-a-half or the question and answer periods at the end feel truncated.



Gary Garrison, Jon Klein, and Colby Kullman responding to Play Lab reading.

Classes

One of our goals is to provide educational, engaging, and inspiring classes to all attendees. These classes cover a very broad curriculum dealing with all of the varying aspects of theatre. We strive to attract educators and professionals that can best serve the needs of the students attending the classes.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

69% excellent
12.5% good
10.5% satisfactory
2% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

64% excellent
27% good
0% satisfactory
7% unsatisfactory

While the percentage of excellent ratings decreased by 5 percentiles, we are pleased that there has been an increase (9.5 percentiles) of combined excellent and good ratings.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

We had an exceptionally strong group of educators at this year's Conference, most of whom have committed to returning. We would like to bolster their ranks with new teachers, as a majority of our attendees are repeat attendees, and we need to provide them with new educational input each year.

Additionally, we would like to offer a larger number of classes, overlapping so that we can decrease class sizes, and offer classes multiple times to maximize the experience and benefits that these classes offer.

Those who found the classes unsatisfactory generally felt that the classes were too basic, and we will work on making sure that there are writing classes to satisfy our more advanced playwrights. While this response was not universal among experienced writers, it was still a discernable trend. The other concern was that there were not enough business classes, and more will be added to next year's schedule.

Our goal for next year's evaluations is to see a 0% unsatisfactory rating.

Evening Performances

We have evening entertainment every night of the Conference, and this year even started the night before the official kick-off. We attempt to stage a wide variety of work, from children's theatre to docudrama. The shows provide both education and entertainment for our participants. Ideally, they are also our main connection with the community of Valdez, who often can not take the week off to attend the day-time events due to work, but are available to see shows in the evening.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

78% excellent
18% good
4% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

39% excellent
50% good
7% satisfactory
2% unsatisfactory

While there has been a decrease in excellent ratings (39 percentiles) we take into account that most of our evaluation forms are filled out by Conference Attendees. This year we shifted the emphasis of our evening performances to encourage the community of Valdez to become more involved. A slight decrease in participant satisfaction was expected with this decision, and we felt that an 89% good to excellent rating was acceptable.

Anne Bowles in Perseverance Theatre's "Columbinus."



Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

First, we would like every evening performance to be produced by Alaskan theatre companies. Second, we would like to increase the number of the plays that were developed at the Conference in the Play Lab produced in these evening shows. Third, we would like to give Alaskan playwrights that have had

their work submitted to previous years' Conferences an evening of productions all of their own to encourage the "new voices" that we have right here in Alaska. Fourth, we would like to continue producing shows that appeal to the general public, outside of Conference attendees. Next year we plan on doing a mass mailing to our local community with descriptions of both the productions and who they are appropriate for.

Receptions

The after-show receptions give attendees an opportunity to meet and socialize with both each other and our featured artists.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

24.5% excellent
42% good
10.5% satisfactory
2% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

50% excellent
39% good
4% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

We are pleased that we doubled our excellent ratings in this section from last year and that there were no unsatisfactory ratings at all. Part of this success came out of the scheduling of the evening performances, which were shorter than in previous years, making going to a reception less of an imposition on participant time.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

The success of this year's receptions is a direct result of excellent catering and a group of extremely accessible featured artists and theatre professionals. There are no major planned changes to the receptions, just a continued attention to timeliness and food quality.



Participants eating at the annual kick-off fish fry.

Food

We provide coffee, tea, and snack cookies all day at the Conference, in addition to a full lunch and other concessions available for sale.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 8.5% excellent
- 19% good
- 42.5% satisfactory
- 19% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 21% excellent
- 43% good
- 25% satisfactory
- 4% unsatisfactory

While this remained our lowest ranked category, an increase of 12.5 percentiles of excellent ratings and a decrease of 15 percentiles of unsatisfactory ratings indicates that the food was improved greatly this year.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

Next year, the plan is to simplify our lunch offerings and offer them to all registrants for free (partially covered by a slight increase in registration fees). The planned addition of a “hospitality” position on our Conference staff will also increase the quality of attention offered to our guests. Our goal for next year is to eliminate unsatisfactory ratings and raise the excellent ratings beyond 40%.



Coordinator Dawson Moore discusses the gala dinner with participant Susan Nims.

Featured Artists

One of our goals in approaching the Conference is to create a group of professionals who can provide attendees with insight and inspiration from all aspects of theatre. We strive to contract featured artists that are accessible, entertaining, good-natured and talented. These people are hand-picked to best suit the needs of the Conference and the education we are looking to provide.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 80% excellent
- 11% good
- 0% satisfactory
- 9% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

- 68% excellent
- 25% good
- 7% satisfactory
- 0% unsatisfactory

With the elimination of unsatisfactory ratings we know that our goal for our featured artists was met. A 0% unsatisfactory rating tells us that no participants had a significantly negative experience with our featured artists, a fact of which we are very proud.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

Next year we plan to invite back the same featured artists while incorporating them in with new and exciting artists. The addition of a theatre designer to our featured artists group was an extremely popular move and we plan to continue to broaden the scope of our professionals and invite artists of diverse theatre professions.



Play Lab panelist Y York.

Quality of Conference Staff

Staff, and their coordination, is the backbone of any quality institution or organization, and PWSCC strives to have the highest quality staff possible year-round, and the Theatre Conference is no exception. Through staff meetings, information packets, and constant communication we try to make sure that all of our staff is qualified and capable of handling anything that comes their way or find someone who can.

In 2004 we received the following ratings in this section:

87.5% excellent
8.5% good
4% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

In 2005 we received the following ratings in this section:

100% excellent
0% good
0% satisfactory
0% unsatisfactory

A 100% rating of excellent is a great improvement on any of the past Conferences. We are pleased that our staff joined together to do their part in throwing a highly successful Conference. The major increase of community members coming to us as volunteers was also a great asset for our staff.

Our Goal for improvement in this section for the 2006 Conference:

While improving on a 100% excellent rating is not possible, we do feel that we can still improve. We hope to attract more community volunteer support in the next year, reducing each individuals workload. Also, we want to have the staff even better prepared and ready for the week. With the addition of a new College President, and Douglas Desorcie back as the Dean of Instruction, we will have one more administrator available next year. While we cannot show any improvement beyond the 100% excellent rating received this year, we are confident that an improvement of our staff will positively affect the other eight sections of our evaluations.



College employees Scott Frank and Michael Holcombe with volunteer Stacy Stites.

Would you like to see any other types of activities considered for future Conferences? If so, what?

- Yes. I think new writers would benefit from a course putting playwriting into a historical perspective. Many of our leading American playwrights are falling into undeserved obscurity, and it would be great to bring them back. Also, a course on play criticism might be good. It would certainly be controversial. There is a good young critic working for the City Paper in Washington, DC, whose presence would be an asset.
- I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the technical aspects of producing and would like more of this (including lighting & set design)
- I enjoyed the one indie short film. A new look at theatrical work.
- Possibly put a playwright and director together, let them brainstorm and conceive a short play. Give the playwright some time to write, have the director coach some actors, and see what happens. Then present the best of the collaborations.
- It may help to have class ‘levels,’ and extended periods of time for those. It seemed like one hour slots were not long enough for each class. Maybe less classes, but longer periods of instruction, or more two-part classes. It would be nice to have a period of time where multiple classes were taking place: one with an intermediate topic, and one with an advanced topic. For example, one room with a session on how to use the development process, going on at the same time as a session on how to draft a resume and market your finished plays. They don’t need to be labeled, and each should be open for everyone, but by doing that the classes can be more focused and with simultaneous classes it will reduce each class size.
- Class/workshop in devising and/or group creation.. Radio drama?
- Submission procedures.
- Maybe something where we break into groups and write or bring short pieces to be read with teachers in small progressive workshops.
- Longer acting workshops – one hour wasn’t long enough.
- Possibly an organized mid-week excursion to the surrounding area.
- Love to see more writer/actor classes... “how to write for actors,” that sort of thing.
- Love to see some workshops divided into beginner/advanced sessions.
- A scheduled tour or hike
- Seminars on Marketing Strategies, Collaboration, Rewriting, Making \$\$\$ through teaching.
- I thought activity selection was complete, thorough, and excellent!
- How about a pitch/networking session, where playwrights get a few minutes with theatre companies and directors. And encouraging them to be in contact with their developing work.
- More of the same (& similar)
- Return of the water show & bay cruise
- Demonstration/discussion/workshop on working process between director & playwright.

- One-on-one sessions with panelists to discuss playwright's work, or work assigned in workshops in depth. Gary did this, but it was hit or miss in the hallway, etc. It would be better to arrange a sit-down for fifteen minutes.
- Bring Overnigheters into the main fold and really do them.
- Price breaks on Tour Boats for participants in a group (More than just 10%)
- More Activities centered exercises & workshops.
- Dialog following some of evening performances (Columbinus, evening of plays written by our Featured artists possibly).
- Outdoor, athletic activities.
- I'd like to have a workshop on adaptations- and one Aoise has suggested- on playwriting for fiction writers- emphasizing the differences and suggesting how to make the transition.
- More & varied workshops.
- One day of absolutely ten min plays- that is curtain to curtain (& use of a foghorn- as the old poetry slams at the fly by night club). Reader intro and setting w/ dressing o.k. outside the 10 min. Timing starts at rise. Ref. Commercial Production Aspects- Gary's Workshop.
- No. This was perfect. Maybe a few ten-minute plays.
- Mini-conferences with the featured artists, 10 to 15 minutes.
- Impromptu (and possibly very humorous) play reading by volunteers from the audience – preferably those without prior acting experience. In other words, give rank amateurs an opportunity to enter the theatre world!
- Dramatists' Guild / Business workshops. We can all write – need more workshops on marketing ourselves.
- I liked the 2005 format & activities.

Whom would you like to see invited to future Conferences?

- More producers/theatres/directors who can see our work for possible production.
- Me (Jonathan Myers) A member of Chicago Dramatists would be wonderful to have there as a panelist, speaker, and/or workshop leader. My vote would be Robert Koon, Director of the Playwrights Network for them, or Russ Tutterow, Artistic Director. I've worked with them a bunch in the past, and I'd love to contact them about it if you're interested.
- Crossover TV—Stage Actors
- Will Dunne. Octavio Solis.
- Caryl Churchill, Tom Stoppard, Harold Pinter, Jean Claude Van Italie, Ronald Rand, Robert Wilson, Sam Shepard, Michael Warren Powell
- Almost everyone who attended previous conferences said this was better without the celebrities. But do re-invite Gary, Michael, Y & Laura, please!
- Please, Please, Please, invite me back.
- Off-Broadway producers and writers: their work is especially interesting and we should know what subscription companies (Manhattan Theatre Club, Signature, etc) are looking for and how they operate.
- The featured artists have been excellent. If I heard they were all coming back next year, I'd do everything I could to get here.

- I loved how the Conference was this year, and heard that in previous years, the presence of more ‘famous’ people changed the dynamic. I would be sad to see that happen (this was my first year and I loved it).
- More of the same (& similar)
- Can I suggest you Google Steve Vineberg? He’s a well-known critic and teaches theatre. Wonderful guy with insightful, informed opinions. He directed me once (one of the best directors I’ve had), and has been teaching for 20 odd years. His students love him.
- Anne Bogart
- Gary Garrison, Danielle Dresden, Barclay Kopchak, Colby Kullman, Mark Lutwak, Gregory Pulver, Elaine Romero, Kate Snodgrass, Jayne Wenger, Ron Rand. I’m not familiar with the reputations of others who might be effective and available.
- Emily Mann
- Upper tier female playwrights such as Beth Henley, Wendy Wasserstein, etc.
- Directors
- Melissa James Gibson, more mid-career playwrights, like renne Groff, Lisa D’Amour, Melanie MARNICH, Neea Beber, Naomi Lizuka, Sheila Callughan, Anne Washburn, Young Jean Lee, Madeline George, Victor Ladafu, Kirsten Greenridge- people involved w/ new dramatists, 13f, playwrights center, etc.
- Tony Kushner again, of course!
- Try more West Coast playwrights – produced/published ones.
- People of Gary, Jayne, Aoise, Gregory< Steve, Jon, & Laura’s talent and teaching stature. Avoid the ‘stars’ for a while. I hear there was too much politics, and I’m glad this was my first Conference. Maybe Dan Sullivan. Although I suppose he’s a little starry...
- Suzan Lori-Parks
- Christopher Durang
- Barclay, Danielle, etc.
- 3 x Gary Garrison
- Gregory Pulver
- Jon Klein
- Paula Vogel
- Laura Shamas
- Children’s Theatre Practitioners
- Deborah Gideon
- Aoise Stratford
- Steven Dietz, Lee blessing, Patrick Shanley; also perhaps writers successful in musical theatre and children’s theatre.
- Elaine Romero
- I got to know Kevin DiPirro from CA, & it seemed that he might have a lot to offer workshopwise.
- Ridiculous suggestions? You asked!: Matthew Broderick (acted with AK rep in ’88), Kevin Klein, Kevin Spacey, Graham Walts, Joan Allen, Playwright of “Children of a lesser God” Mark _____?

- Would be nice to have one very well known playwright (how about a woman) to do a key note-style event and maybe draw more anchorage and local people in- don't know who to suggest specifically.
- Mae Wellman, playwright
- More actor oriented individuals to do workshops. So enjoyed Mariam Seldes. Least enjoyed: Ronald Rand- very basic stuff @ thurs. workshop- didn't stimulate me to attend Fri.'s workshop.
- Tom Stoppard, Edward Albee, Bill wms (again), Laura Linney (again), Asian playwrights (who may have in English). More on this later,
- 1. Cherry Jones 2. Anyone from Shakespeare & Company = the teachers and producers.
- Agents/business folk – or anyone who can get us work.

What did you enjoy most about the Conference?

- General sense of everything being under control and the feeling they actually were.
- Being with the PWSCC staff, and residents/playwrights/actors from Alaska. There was a refreshing openness to our talks, a willingness to share expectations and dreams and so forth – much more so than with the professionals from the Lower 48. The Alaska theatre people seemed all to be unencumbered with attitude, reserve, etc., and put one immediately at ease.
- A refreshing, more relaxed and happy staff and panelists.
- Meeting people, having conversation, intense exposure to the art while being away from all else. Time for my imagination to run wild. I really enjoyed staying at the college in the dorm-like atmosphere. It created a strong sense of community and an opportunity for bonding.
- A wonderful friendliness and warmth, a sense of community that has been missing for the past five years.
- The classes and workshops – real professional development.
- The responses to the plays by the assigned respondents – you learn a lot by seeing how other people could improve their plays.
- The Play Labs, the classes that had writing, the people! Inspiring, positive atmosphere of the people and surroundings.
- Valdez is BEAUTIFUL beyond belief!
- An atmosphere so open and welcoming to newcomers such as myself.
- *Columbinus* was a beautiful, powerful, touching show.
- The staff and organizers were so helpful and friendly.
- The workshops were good! I especially appreciated movement with Michael and Gary's classes on playwriting.
- Support.
- Workshops and peer discussions.
- Almost everything... the democracy, and the Play Labs, of course.
- Interaction/conversations with colleagues
- Play Lab, Gary & Michael's Seminars, meeting new people

- The wonderful theatre community, young and old, beginning and established, given the time and setting to bond in their mutual passion.
- Classes, except Ron Rand acting class, which was too elementary.
- Design element – Gregory’s perspectives valuable addition to panels.
- Panelists accessibility – Gary reading and critiquing monologues, etc.
- Evening of plays from the festival, but don’t force a theme.
- The people were fabulous and the variety of activity was exciting. I didn’t realize I’d be able to act, write, attend all kinds of classes and performances, etc. I enjoyed the variety best.
- Play Labs, although some feedback sessions were truncated because of long plays.
- Gary’s workshops; Y York’s workshops
- The atmosphere is so friendly!
- Networking
- The casual relaxed atmosphere – the non-hierarchical exchange between colleagues.
- Just about everything: the play labs, the classes, the evening performances and the socializing.
- The workshops, the Play Lab critiques, and the conversations. The Conference was the best managed I’ve ever attended – marvelous!
- The people I had the opportunity to meet and the work accomplished.
- Playwriting workshops. Chat with fellow playwrights. Hanging out at Fringe. Bonfire solstice party. Generosity of people like Gary Garrison, Mark Lutwak, Y York, Kate Snodgrass, Ronald Rand, Jayne Wenger... all of them treating us with respect.
- The loyalty, enthusiasm, courtesy, devotion, hard-working staff & crew. The panelists’ sincere interest in helping playwrights, giving homework and assignments.
- Fringe on Wednesday night!
- Hearing my partner perform (Dave Herndon)
- Rubbing elbows with new writers.
- Diversity of and the participants...pleasure in being together.
- Play labs & feedbacks.
- Gary’s workshops. His, Aoise’s, Gregory’s, and Steve’s ‘homework.’ Having been to writing Conferences, I expected that. The Play Labs were of amazingly high caliber. And I was amazed by the talent of the actors. Y York’s playwriting workshop helped me jump start a new play.
- The democratic atmosphere of give & take; the ability to continuously focus on the craft of the playwright and to sit anywhere one liked and not feel anything was closed to me. The strong workshops. The more relaxed schedule & pacing.³
- Alaska
- Play Labs & evening performances. Appreciated the attention paid to ending performances on time.
- Classes
- The Variety of Plays

- The people: all! Great organization. Food was very good this year. Loved having a morning off! Workshops by Gary Garrison. Kate Snodgrass' subtext workshop. Michael Hood's movement workshop. Writing workshop of Lisa R.. Many of the feedback comments per Barclay, Danielle, Elaine, Mark, Aoise, Jayne.
- The experience of having my play in the lab- the evening performances- meeting people, old friends and new.
- The people! The workshop/classes & the feedback.
- 2 x Gary Garrison
- Meeting People
- The quality of actors.
- Camaraderie among playwrights
- I enjoyed the Fringe and its location.
- Writing exercises in class.
- Comraderie among actor & playwrights, meeting new people. Workshops w/ Laura Shamas- area I knew little about. Loved Michael Hood's workshops & Gary Garrison's. So enjoyed the comments & discussions by Gregory Pulver: input by a costume/lighting designer most interesting.
- Ensembleness and comraderie by everybody- includes staff of col & cntr. The (comfortable repeat) of the evening events, after show. (museums, welcoming parties, etc. Chances to meet sponsers as well; the mix.
- Relaxed atmosphere, quality of work.
- Hearing the audience response when good actors read my lines
- Grouping of panelists varied- good. Having a designer on the play lab panel! Having such a dynamic designer Gregory L. Pulver discussing the language of the play & its relevance to design = sweet!
- The opportunity to get advice from experience theatre folk
- The informal atmosphere.
- Just enough daily activities.
- Gary garrison

What Improvements would you Suggest?

- Assign a staff member to each play lab & workshop to keep each activity within assigned time.
- The doors. Either disable the latches or post signs reminding people to open and close them quietly.
- Have the Community College Culinary Department prepare food menu then bid it out. The food was often not edible.
- I think it may be better to start a little later in the morning. I felt sorry some playwrights who had plays at 9:00 a.m., [as] the attendance was lower. Maybe start and end an hour later? Also, it would be helpful to have a larger block of time for lunch – not just to eat, but to have a relaxing time and to take care of general things.
- The quality of the evening performances was mixed. I'd like to see a good, perhaps classic play or two.

- I really like the Connie Congdon method of critique, as opposed to the Liz Luhrman method of analysis and post-reading discussion.
- I found the serving of pasta with mere vestiges of meatballs and no salad or vegetable embarrassing (as I thought of outsiders) – and tuna melt was unappetizing. The soups were great. I know \$\$\$ is an issue, but I do think even at \$6.00 it can be better. For example, a little chicken served in a rice dish with herbs, etc, can go a long way on a little money.
- Add a class for playwrights that is basically Acting 101. All directors and playwrights should have to try acting.
- Is it possible to provide cots at the school for sleeping?
- Choose a different venue for the Fringe than the Totem (bad sound & lights)
- Find a way to enforce time restraints – one piece ran over an hour. Very bad behavior.
- Fewer panel discussions. They're less intimate, a little more exclusionary.
- Maybe more focus on the business side of things.
- The panel discussions need a moderator and someone to run a microphone to the audience members who are recognized with a question so we can all hear.
- Something healthier than cookies as a snack (fruit, nuts, plain yoghurt) at least available at the front desk.
- Clone Dawson and Adam.
- Some of the seminars should have been longer: Y and Laura and particular couldn't get to a lot of their material.
- Let us know what sort of food will be served at the receptions.
- More writing classes.
- Get rid of the last traces of the two-tiered system that mostly went the way of the dodo when Edward Albee pulled his star troopers out: let the featured artists eat dinner with the hoi polloi. I realize it saves money to have rich donors spring for dinner, but there are other ways of getting around that (get restaurants to donate a certain number of dinner vouchers and pass them out to featured artists), and the conference would feel a lot friendlier if everybody was going to more or less the same places, sitting down to restaurant meals together. A lot of the important socializing goes on as you find a group to go to dinner with, or bump into other conferees in the same restaurant; the few times when one of the featured artists skipped out on the arranged dinners and showed up at a restaurant I was eating at, it seemed like the most natural thing in the world to ask them to join us. That would happen a lot more without the arranged dinners in donor homes. (And even if the money politics of the area make it necessary to keep doing this elitist thing, do *not* run the digital images from those dinner on the Conference TV screen for everyone to watch!)
- In the info received prior to the Conference, there could be more information about the Fringe Festival.
- Contact list of Conference participants.
- More hot water! There're more tea drinkers these days!

- PLEASE put more emphasis on participants/panelists not rewriting the plays but giving positive comments first/last so that the critiques or questions become more clear to the writer.
- It would be neat to have some options of smaller sign-up classes, or one on one meetings with playwrights.
- Perhaps a little shorter conference or two days with only ½ slates.
- More food at lunchtime.
- Include time to relax, shop, see Valdez. Less intensity instead planned activities from 9:00 a.m. to midnight. Every minute is scheduled, this is too much to do. Less work for the crew and staff.
- Don't change a hair for me.
- Keep pushing to raise the quality of plays selected.
- Somehow limit audience members feedback to playwrights (timewise)
- Send out a newsletter in Dec. or Jan. with any info available around then.
- I personally did not appreciate the evening macabre.
- Continue to use a hand mike during comments so that all people can be heard & the mike can act as a story stick reminding speakers to pass along the opportunity to speak.
- Avoid having panelists like Shane and Elaine represented as “New Voices” in the Play Lab. As a true new voice, I was somewhat taken aback by their presence. No, I was hacked. And when there's a workshop on subtext, avoid devoting the majority of it to asking the audience for examples. I and other playwrights were hoping for guidance on how to employ it.
- Limit entry to readings once they've begun. Perhaps a 'hall crier' announcing a one-minute warning.
- Schedule no more than 2 Play Labs at the same time.
- Cut off works 50 minutes after they've begun; anything longer eliminates comment periods & is frustrating to the audience (& me!).
- Give panelists a few blank pages for response notes.
- Better communication about Fringe.
- Yet another evening of a full length production would be fabulous (wouldn't it?).
- Fewer academic theatre types, more working playwrights
- I appreciate how the panelists endeavored to be positive in their critical comments during the Play lab. However, I found myself missing Albee and Guare's trenchant remarks. I feel the scale was weighted a bit too much on the coddling side. Let's move toward the center, balanced between coddling and harshness.
- Suggest having one evening free also. If possible cooling the air in the “big theatre” would be highly desirable (very warm!) & in Room C. It probably would be a scheduling nightmare, but it would be nice to have shorter plays at end of the day, especially as the week goes on... for the sake of the playwrights as well as the audience.
- Somewhat shorter? 8 days is a long conference. A well-known key note type person. Real milk or cream with Coffee.
- More time for talkbacks during workshops- I felt like we'd just get a great convo going & it was over.

- Someway to screen readers/actors. Some way to have more plays available for readers- especially mature readers who can adapt to most age ranges (arrow up) 40 yrs.
- Number revisions. Eg. 18.3.1... date/time or change #, or some system. Perhaps a designated (tape off a square) area, an hall pool bullpen for late recasting, where people could hang out & be picked up at the last min. The hopeful coffee area- no green card needed. Optional email list share. Sign up or copy down. (website) Even could let people list recommended sites (and who recommended them). Same old crashbar noise problem- duh- lock down the crashbars, that's not illegal. Use the hardware tool or make your own mechanical solution (bunji to a bottom plate[like a door hanger hangar in reverse]). A skim milk or cream liquid budget for the morning; and the hot water always ran out pretty fast, too. Even more design (for playwrights understanding) workshops and panelists. This year's guest Gregory, was excellent, with the perfect attitude, "This is how we help you show off your work." (was gonna say this is how we help you get it up... same idea, really lights, action, drama, excitement- show biz – perform) Not just read-biz on every panel. A designer or some dept. Banquet tables: Water! Coffee. Everybody ran dry (or were drowning themselves during Ben Hur)
- A general "Note" Board for "official" changes and announcements- updated as necessary = daily
- Panelists tried to hard to be 'gentle' with the playwrights. We were told what they 'loved' about each play, but there was a paucity of constructive criticism. Most of the 'critiquing' seemed to come from outspoken members of the audience, and many of the comments were perceptive enough to help the writers. The panelists need to be more authoritative and didactic.
- The Play Lab 'cast list' should tell the genre of each play (comedy, etc.) and approximate length. The brief synopsis is not sufficient to make an informed choice, and I do not like walking out after realizing I've made a mistake.
- Shorten the Conference by a few days (Monday – Saturday).
- Up the quality of the classes – most were geared toward amateurs.
- Move rehearsals earlier.

How did you hear about the Conference?

- Offered a role by ACT three years ago.
- Friends from the Opera Guild – Jean Paal) in Anchorage & the newspaper in AND & the press, Catherine Stadem's radio show on KSKA
- Word of mouth. Jean Mockin in Fairbanks.
- Don't remember
- Call for scripts – Boston Playwrights Theatre opps, Dramatists' Guild Newsletter, Playwrights Center Opportunities, internet sources. It was all over the place.
- 2 x ADN
- Playwriting professor.
- Colby Kullman
- Cyrano's (Came last year)

- 2 x InSight for Playwrights
- Have come before
- Known about it for a long time.
- 5 x Mailed brochure
- Anchorage Press.
- Boston Playwrights Forum newsletter
- Have been coming for a few years.
- 3 x Word of mouth.
- Been coming for years
- 2 x Friends
- Live in Valdez
- 2 x Friends and family.
- 6 x Website
- 7 x Prior attendance.

Any Additional Comments?

- Hoorah to Dawson for making it happen. In some ways I miss the input of “stars,” but I enjoyed the sense of equality fostered by the deletion of full length plays! Overall a seemingly smooth running, very valuable conference that needs to be kept in Valdez. Thank you.
- More of Gary Garrison
- It’d be great to have a list of e-mail addresses so we could contact each other after the Conference.
- I cannot speak too highly of Adam, Christopher, and Ryan.
- A few more craft workshops.
- Workshops were dynamite. I was exhausted by giving my full attention all the time at everything – and am grateful to have been offered so much.
- Gary Garrison’s energy and what I can best call “love” infused the Conference with an extraordinary spirit – at least from my viewpoint.
- The absence of the illuminati also contributed to a feeling of freedom, of ownership of this Conference, and enhanced our self-esteem, opening us to more sharing, more creative responses, etc.
- *Mommy Dance* charming to a degree, but trite and simplistic.
- *Clurman* – no arc, no variations, pulse or ‘music’ to performance – plagued with bad grammar and mispronunciation.
- PWSCC staff were phenomenal. Every request was honored with graciousness. Relations with all of them were characterized by friendliness, openness, and ease.
- This Conference was really about more than the theatre – it’s about good, fun, excitement, life. Thanks, Dawson, you be d’man!
- I loved it! Thank you! See you next year!
- I love coming here – it has ‘enriched my life immeasurably’ (words with quotes to be read in Pat Neal’s voice).
- I’ve had a wonderful time and I feel that I’m going home with more in my bag of [playwriting] tricks.

- This was my first year, so I didn't have anything to compare it to (i.e. I didn't care that there weren't a bunch of stars walking around, and I was not disappointed). PS Valdez is soooo hard to get to.
- The Featured Artists were very accessible, but there were a couple of notable exceptions. Elaine Romero was especially generous and helpful.
- Information received prior to the Conference: "Slow in coming!"
- Evening Performances: "Jill Bess!"
- Food: "Grouchy staff sometimes"
- Congratulations on creating this incredible experience! In general, some of the class/workshop topics were too broad for anything but a really quick overview, but I don't know how to suggest an alternative. I loved this week – it's been fabulous!
- It was a great time, and it was great to be part of such an event. I hope to continue participating in the future. The environment and the town provide the perfect atmosphere for this type of event – that is its unique quality, one that I believe everyone enjoyed and respected.
- I have attended other conferences where I traveled a long way to get to the conference. All conferences, including Valdez, do not allow time to see the community nor time to shop and sight see. Perhaps you could have tours of Valdez for newcomers or those interested in seeing the Valdez community.
- Something on legal issues [would be good] – right of privacy, adaptation rights, etc.
- Developing a good website.
- I want to come back, either as a playwright or a reader. I want to come back, maybe even some day as a panelist. I want to come back. Oh, did I say that I want to come back.
- The hardest working men in show biz; it was obvious Doug/Dawson/Adam started early and planned well. The very first after-performance horsed overs gathering could use a combo in the corner (or on the lawn) for mellow dancing. It's really a mizer, after all. The piano is nice, the other times.
- Extraordinary work by Dawson and the school staff, all of whom have been unbelievable. I am very grateful for this great gift of spending a week learning, writing, and networking.
- I came in 2000, and I know this one would be different because of Albee's blackballing. It was different- it was better.
- Hope the Conference will stay in Valdez... can walk to Conference from many accommodations, have the ocean, road access from Anch. reasonable Restaurant prices, somewhat fewer tourists than say Homer or busier ferry ports.
- The featured artists were very approachable, and they encouraged the participants to seek them out. They were excellent teachers, too. Also, the quality of the play's presented I the Play Lab were the best ever.
- Kudos Dawson!
- Thank you for an amazing experience, I hope I can return next summer!!
- Adam – your man at the college – is an absolute gem. Poised, generous, gentle, mature beyond his years.

- Play Lab: “In general well chosen & worthwhile--- Dawson would be a great solo judge.” “I found the Luhrman response pattern laborious (4 steps) which ate up too much time to both explain & follow through on. I agree with accenting strengths before discussing weaker points but disliked the predetermined message pattern which at times plow & at times meant that only a love fest was possible.” “Great to have constant regrouping of panel constituencies.”
- This has been the most enjoyable Conference for me in the history of the event. I have been coming every two to three years, and if the Conference continues in this vein, it will need to become an annual event on my calendar.
- Featured Artists: “approachable, accessible, generous.”
- The staff outdoes themselves with helpfulness & cordiality (poor English, but heartfelt sentence).
- Food at lunch was much improved (lack of lunchtime speakers was relaxing!).
- Had a great time, but I did feel as if many panelists were out of touch with much of what’s going on in Contemporary theatre, beyond really high-profile stuff.
- Thank you Dawson! This Conference was every bit as good if not better- than last year’s.
- Evening performances: “excellent with the exception of the night of violent and depressing plays from past labs- they were not very interesting as plays as well as being annoying.”
- A great success- all the changes and adaptations worked well. Good emphasis on craft. Extremely well organized and accommodating. Stayed at college in tent-very happy with that arrangement.
- More vegetarian options for food.
- Really enjoyed the 7:30PM performances- excellent choices- nice having people performing that you could relate to and could talk to during the Conference.
- A more equal way to let reader’s know there are parts available at the last minute. i.e. a sign up sheet in AM with information re: where readers could be found if necessary. Did not feel it was a detriment to not having famous, well known personalities here. It is nice to know there are others who have a lot of information to share at the Conference.
- Food: less onions- we talk! No pre-dressed salads, otherwise, all good.
- Better w/o all the celebrities
- Dawson, I’m sure you’ve heard it before, but I must say it again: the positive atmosphere created here is absolutely beautiful and a reflection of your incredible dedication to making the Conference a success. Kudos and many thanks!
- Dawson rocks- Doug = Thank you!:)
- Gary Garrison’s crude behavior and Gala striptease were totally unnecessary. Please find someone with more class next year, and perhaps lay out rules of decorum. Thank you.
- The *Beyond the Veil* production was an unfortunate selection of morbid, depressing, and unenlightening drama. The acting was excellent however. Discussions after the performance revealed similar comments from other audience members.
- Keep up the good work!

- Dawson, yet again, thanks for the ride. The caring atmosphere keeping growing. Kudos to you, awesomely done!
- Talent pool/background of writers was very diverse, so classes tended to aim at the lowest level.
- Read over all the comments, but don't take anything too seriously: yo were right on the money with everything that was done.
- Adjudicators treatment/special dinners, VIP cards, etc, seemed to create a hierarchy in a festival I thought was trying to deprogram that hierarchy.



Gregory Pulver, Sara Wagner, Gary Garrison, and Aoise Stratford share a rose on the final day of the 2005 Theatre Conference.