

McKenzie Hightower

**Graduation Year:** Senior

**College:** Arts & Letters

**Major(s):** English and Film

**Minors(s):** None

**Scholar Group Membership:** No

**Did you received other funding for this project?:** No

**Could you have completed this project without CUSE funding?** No

**More details on CUSE funding assistance?**

**Project Title:** Conference Attendance: Association of Writers and Writing Programs

**Project Location:** Los Angeles, California

**ND Faculty Mentor:** Valerie Sayers

**Project Type:** Conference - Attendance

**Why did you undertake this project/experience?** Deepen your knowledge of a topic or issue, Prepare for graduate school (MA or PhD), Career discernment and/or preparation

**Did your funded experience help you:**

**[Deepen your understanding of your coursework or field of study]:** Very Much

**[Discern your interests and post-bac goals]:** Very Much

**[Become confident in your ability to set and achieve your goals]:** Very Much

**[Gain a more nuanced view of local, national, or global communities]:** Very Much

**[Improve your written and verbal communications skills]:**Very Much

**Tell us about your experience.**

My day consisted up waking up around 8AM and walking around the bookfair until the first lecture started at 9:30 or noon. After the lectures I would network with future MFA programs I hope to apply too and then go to readings and meet-and-greets with editors, agents, and writers from all over the country.

**Describe the impact this project had, both on you as a student-scholar and on the people you worked with.**

Every experience that CUSE has allowed me to undertake with their generous funding has been impactful for me, but this conference was honestly such a milestone for me. I want to be a writer. I want to teach writing. I want to immerse myself in a writing community. This conference allowed me to do all those things and more. It was honestly a little overwhelming, because there was every major writing program, literary magazine, and famous writer you could think of at the conference. I got in line to get coffee one day and Cornelius Eady, a famous American poet was standing right next to me. I even managed to strike up a conversation through my awe. I discovered new outlets and venues for my creative work and I have even already submitted some short stories to them. Additionally, this conference attendance grant allowed me the opportunity to meet up with writers I had developed a relationship with thanks to my previous

