



COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY™

*Office of the Provost*

April 29, 2008

Dr. Garrison Walters  
Executive Director  
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education  
1333 Main Street, Suite 200  
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Dr. Walters:

Coastal Carolina University is submitting for your consideration the attached Program Planning Summary for a Master of Arts in Writing (MAW).

Thank you for your help in the reviewing process. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Sheehan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Robert Sheehan  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

## **PROGRAM DESIGNATION**

<b>Institution:</b>	Coastal Carolina University
<b>Academic unit involved:</b>	Edwards College of Humanities and Fine Arts, English Department
<b>Name of proposed program:</b>	Master of Arts in Writing (MAW)
<b>Proposed date of implementation:</b>	Fall 2009
<b>New program or modification:</b>	New program
<b>Number of credit hours:</b>	30

## **JUSTIFICATION OF NEED**

Coastal Carolina University's (CCU) new CHE-approved Mission Statement calls for "selective master's programs of national and/or regional significance in the arts and sciences, business, humanities, education, and health and human services." At this time, the university has graduate programs in business, education and the natural sciences, but as yet CCU has not provided its service region with any graduate education opportunities in the humanities. Operating under the premise that advanced training in writing and writing technologies has applications across many academic disciplines and in many professional settings, the Department of English proposes a Master of Arts in Writing (MAW), a flexible degree that responds to the local need for advanced education in writing and the increasing national interest in creative and professional writing. Students may choose to focus on professional writing, creative writing, or take courses in both areas.

Aspiring writers, journalists, editors, and grant and technical writers can enhance their credentials with an advanced degree in professional writing, earning them higher salaries and making them more competitive in the job market. According to the U.S. Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics, "employment of writers and editors is expected to grow 10 percent" over the next decade, and writing career options will increase and evolve with technology:

Technical writing, blogging, and other writing for interactive media that provide readers with nearly real-time information will provide opportunities for writers. Print magazines and other periodicals increasingly are developing market niches, appealing to readers with special interests, and making Internet-only content available on their websites. Businesses and organizations are developing newsletters and websites, and more companies are publishing materials directly for the Internet. Online publications and services are growing in number and sophistication, spurring the demand for writers and editors, especially those with Web experience. Professional, scientific, and technical services firms, including advertising and public relations agencies, also are growing and should be another source of new jobs. (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos089.htm>, March 22, 2008)

As South Carolina's economy grows, it will participate in the national shift toward information-based industries which need trained writers, content managers, publishers, and editors who are comfortable in both print and online environments.

Yet the demand for writing programs is not exclusively driven by the professional/technical market. According to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), the number of graduate programs in creative writing has increased tremendously over the past fifteen years. There are over 260 creative writing master's programs in the country and only one of them is located in our state. This gives CCU a unique opportunity to offer study in an in-demand discipline underserved by our state's universities and to further solidify our mission mandate to fill a "leadership role as a regional center of economic and intellectual resources."

Our region lacks graduate writing programs for classroom teachers, even as the pressure for educators involved in writing instruction to hold master's degrees increases. According to the Horry County teacher salary scale, public school teachers with master's degrees earn \$5000-\$8000 more per year than those who possess only a bachelor's, and they earn greater yearly raises. Consequently, local teachers who seek to enhance their salary and career mobility turn to CCU for flexible, high-quality, convenient advanced education. While the Spadoni College of Education offers the M.Ed. for certified teachers, the program concentrates on educational theory, pedagogy and curriculum, with 24 of its 36 required hours devoted to instructional topics. The MAW proposed here will focus more on writing as a discipline, craft, and professional tool and offer courses in literature, rhetoric, writing technology, and creative workshops. The MAW will serve different intellectual and professional objectives than the M.Ed., but since effective writing is essential in every academic discipline, the MAW is likely to appeal to just as broad a range of teachers and educational administrators. Such a degree would even have appeal for educators who have already completed one master's degree but are still interested in graduate study as they pursue the "plus 30" designation. A master's degree in writing will also qualify graduates to teach writing at the community college level and some courses at four-year institutions.

## **ANTICIPATED PROGRAM DEMAND AND PRODUCTIVITY**

CCU completed an initial analysis of the potential market for this proposed program in the fall of 2007. Our data indicates that there is interest in this program and that such interest is broadly distributed across groups that include current Coastal undergraduates, recent Coastal alumni, and community members not yet affiliated with the university but underserved by the university's current graduate offerings.

In an email survey conducted among CCU juniors and seniors, 57% of respondents (65 of 115) indicated they would be interested in the MAW program. That level of interest is consistent with the results of a similar survey conducted via the CCU student newspaper. Of the 48 total respondents, 63% said they would apply for the MAW if it became a reality. These students are not necessarily seeking traditional "English major" careers in teaching/academia. For example, the MAW combined with a B.S. in Resort/Tourism could lead to job prospects in tourism promotion. Students whose undergraduate training is in management might find the MAW allows them to market themselves as corporate writing specialists. Science majors who pursue an MAW could seek employment in the science publication industry writing experiment protocols, lab manuals, and progress reports. Students who take undergraduate degrees in the humanities could use the skills gained in the MAW to work in the nonprofit sector as grant writers or content specialists.

We also anticipate demand from among the participants in CCU's large noncredit enrichment programs as well the South Carolina Writer's Workshop. A further needs study conducted by CCU will reveal the level of interest in the private sector. According to the most recent statistics, 49.3% of the jobs in Horry County were in the Service industry (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Accounts Data). While many of those jobs involve person-to-person contact, almost all of those jobs are undergirded by written texts—sales scripts, company policies, promotional materials, press releases, web content, service agreements, and manuals. A great deal of the service sector depends upon professional writing, and this degree would address that factor.

The university's service area would benefit from the MAW as well. Every year the English Department receives numerous contacts from area educators regarding potential graduate study. There were 19 unique indications of interest in potential graduate programs in English at CCU in 2007-2008. In addition to teachers, we anticipate interest from administrators who are charged with developing written policies, procedures, manuals, handbooks, and web content. Given the flexibility of the proposed degree and the wide range of potential interest groups, we are confident that this program will meet an area demand and draw from a viable pool of potential applicants.

## **ASSESSMENT OF EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROPOSED PROGRAM DUPLICATES EXISTING PROGRAMS IN THE STATE**

Currently no programs in South Carolina combine creative and professional writing. The only graduate degree in creative writing offered in the state is the Master of Fine Arts at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. This is a terminal master's degree requiring three years of full-time study, whereas Coastal's MAW would be a two-year program that emphasizes creative and professional writing equally and will likely serve a significant number of part-time students.

No institutions in the state house graduate programs dedicated to professional writing at this time. Clemson University offers a Masters of Arts in Professional Communication (MAPC). Unlike the MAW program proposed here, the Clemson program combines the study of professional writing with that of visual and oral media as well as with communication theory and research. Similarly, an MA in Communication offered by the College of Charleston and several Mass Communication degrees offered by the University of South Carolina (Master of Mass Communication, MA in Journalism and Mass Communication, and Ph.D. in Mass Communication) all focus on communication theory and research methods rather than on the practice of professional writing.

Other existing graduate degrees in English, such as the MA degrees in English offered by the University of South Carolina, Winthrop University, Clemson University, and the College of Charleston/Citadel, provide training in literary criticism and in the theory of composition and rhetoric. None of these MA programs are dedicated to the practice of creative and/or professional writing. Whereas an interdisciplinary Master in Liberal Arts degree offered by Converse College maintains a concentration in English for those who seek advanced study, it does not focus on the practice of writing at the graduate level. With its proposed program, the MAW at CCU will be serving a need unmet by any other MA program in the state.

## **RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM TO EXISTING PROGRAMS AT THE PROPOSING INSTITUTION**

The MAW is designed to facilitate collaboration within the University. By developing and offering a slate of graduate-level writing courses, the MAW may serve as a source of writing-intensive graduate coursework for CCU's extant or future

graduate programs. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field of professional writing, select courses in the proposed program curriculum may be available for co-listing or as electives in graduate programs housed in the College of Natural and Applied Sciences, Marine Science, and the College of Business Administration.

MAW courses that meet NCATE requirements could provide additional course options for CCU's Spadoni College of Education. The College of Education offers a 36-hour Master of Arts in Teaching, and the Department of English currently provides 12 "content" hours for those MAT students who seek to specialize in English. That arrangement has allowed the Department of English to develop graduate courses and a cohort of graduate faculty, and those content courses—provided almost exclusively in the summer—could also serve the needs of students in the MAW.

We also believe that this degree will build on our already strong undergraduate writing program. The Department of English already offers extensive coursework in technical and professional writing, much of it in service to CCU's Wall College of Business. That experience, plus the significant resources already in place in support of creative writing (workshops at the 200, 300 and 400 level, a successful reading series, developing publication venues) has provided us with the administrative experience and curricular infrastructure necessary to offer this new degree.

#### **RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS VIA INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION**

The degree will also provide collaborative potential for other South Carolina colleges and universities. The MAW program could cooperate with the MFA program at USC—as well as with the undergraduate creative writing programs at the College of Charleston, Francis Marion University, and elsewhere—to develop, organize, and co-sponsor literary festivals and conferences. MAW graduates would be prepared to pursue more advanced degrees armed with skills that are necessary for almost all graduate and professional coursework: writing, editing, presentation, and publication. The MAW is flexible enough to prepare students for employment at other state institutions of higher education (especially in areas such as university relations and publications), yet it can also be used as an intermediate degree for students who hope to pursue further graduate study. Our students will be well-prepared to enter the Ph.D. in English and the MFA in creative writing at USC, programs housed in the Center for Electronic and Digital Publishing and in the Pearce Center for Professional Communication at Clemson, and even MBA, law, and education degree programs throughout the state.

#### **TOTAL NEW COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED PROGRAM**

Currently, the Department of English has three full-time creative writing faculty and two other full-time writing specialists dedicated to writing instruction at the undergraduate level. Two new full-time faculty hires would be needed by the second year of the program. Each new hire will cost an estimated \$55,000-\$65,000 annually.

The Department of English has proposed that a classroom be converted into a "Publishing Lab" that will include state-of-the-art hardware, software, and professional writing resources. While that facility will have undergraduate applications, in the evening and summer it will be heavily used by MAW students. This facility will cost \$32,000 to equip and an estimated \$5000 annually in upgrades and support. The equipment and upkeep costs will be covered by existing technology funds. The University will also seek to provide a graduate assistant per academic year to work in the Publishing Lab, assist with creative writing programming (a reading series and online journal) and help establish and maintain a chapter of the Society for Technical Communication and develop Society-sponsored programming. No additional funds for this program are being requested from the state.



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Dr. David D. DeCenzo, President  
Coastal Carolina University

April 29, 2008