

Program Planning Summary

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (MFA) Concentrations in Studio or Arts Management

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P. George Benson, President

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Program Title: MFA Program in Creative Writing
Concentrations: Studio, Arts Management
Degree: Master of Fine Arts (MFA)
Implementation Date: August 2015
CIP Code: 231302
Number of Credit Hours in New Program: 45 hours
Site: College of Charleston (downtown campus), 66 George Street, Charleston, SC 29424
Palmetto Fellows and LIFE Scholarship Applicability: No
Delivery Mode: Traditional

Justification: The proposed Master of Fine Arts Program in Creative Writing aligns with the goals set forth in the College’s Strategic Plan by creating a rigorous, interdisciplinary graduate program grounded in experiential learning and led by an award-winning and diverse faculty of national reputation. In addition to raising the profile of the College regionally and nationally, this program will retain our state’s most promising students while drawing diverse students from across the country to live, work, and study in a spectacular Lowcountry setting.

While these students will benefit from what makes the College and our broader community so unique—from our deep archival collections and complex history, to our distinct cultural and geographical landscape—they will more practically impact our community by contributing to the creative economy of the Lowcountry. According to Daniel H. Pink in “The MFA Is the New MBA” from *Harvard Business Review*, creativity and graduate arts degrees have rising market value. A recent analysis conducted by researchers at the Darla Moore School of Business at USC found that “creative enterprise in the state engenders a core impact of \$9.2 billion and 78,682 jobs and a full impact of \$13.3 billion and 107,614 jobs.” With training in writing, editing, publishing, and arts management, students and young professionals who graduate from the program will be equipped to contribute to this creative economy and advance the College’s public mission by joining, growing, and sustaining literary initiatives in the area. Existing entities and events that provide opportunities for experiential learning include publishers such as *Crazyhorse* and History Press; businesses that emphasize community arts outreach such as Blue Bicycle Books; arts organizations such as Lowcountry Initiative for the Literary Arts and the Poetry Society of South Carolina; and annual events including Piccolo Spoleto Literary Festival.

Even as the proposed program contributes to Charleston’s unique literary arts culture, its institutional impact will be felt not only within the English Department, but also across disciplines and the College as a whole. First, the program will enhance and diversify our current English MA program community and strengthen the English/Creative Writing curriculum and community for our undergraduates. Beyond departmental impact, the MFA program supports the Strategic Plan by developing innovative and flexible interdisciplinary relationships with other programs. Already equipped to offer training in editing and publishing, the program’s first formal interdisciplinary relationship will be with the College’s School of Arts that offers a B.A., A.B, and Post-Bachelor’s Certificate in Arts Management, a partnership designed to prepare graduates for entrepreneurial and career pursuits related to the arts. Future interdisciplinary concentrations might include African American Literature and Rhetoric & Composition. Finally, the proposed program will have a broader institutional impact by presenting numerous fundraising opportunities as we strategically develop named fellowships, sponsored literary awards, and a visiting writer series—development initiatives that will, in turn, make our program more competitive.

National, regional, state, and local demand indicates that an MFA program with an innovative curriculum—situated in a culturally rich, international destination city experiencing significant population and economic growth—is well positioned not only to succeed but to thrive. Of the 148 full-residency Creative Writing MFA programs in the country, 25 are in what the U.S. Census Bureau identifies as South Atlantic states (Delaware, Maryland, D.C., West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida). Just one of those programs is in South Carolina—that at USC. Converse College offers a non-traditional two-year low-residency program leading to the MFA degree in Creative Writing. Coastal Carolina offers a MA degree in Writing. National data suggests that there remains strong demand for the MFA degree. The estimated number of total seats available for full-residency MFA programs (multiplying most recent numbers for average cohort size by number of programs) is 2,781. The 2014 MFA index from *Poets & Writers Magazine*'s estimates that there are between 3,000 and 4,000 individual applicants per year. More specific regional data regarding the number of applicants to USC's program suggests strong state demand as well. USC's MFA program received 150 applications in 2012, resulting in an overall acceptance rate of approximately 18%. Demand at the College is evidenced by robust undergraduate student interest in Creative Writing, a curriculum that has grown to include 103 English majors with a concentration in Creative Writing, and 35 Creative Writing minors.

Program Demand and Productivity: The proposed program will admit twelve students per year and, in its second year, will begin graduating twelve students per year, for an ongoing enrollment of 24 students. The program size will allow us to become increasingly selective as our reputation grows.

Employment Opportunities for Graduates: The MFA degree is flexible, with graduates alternately moving on to earn advanced degrees (e.g., PhD in English or Creative Writing); pursuing teaching positions at the college or secondary level (at independent schools); working in the fields of professional writing, editing, publishing; and increasingly working in a much broader range of vocations, such as advertising, marketing, public relations, new media, information technology, product development and design, as well as management, human resources, and business consulting. Some graduates will return to careers they had put on hold to earn a degree that offers the time, space, and support to write. Though precise employment statistics are difficult to quantify, the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that there are 145,900 jobs in the category of "Writers and Authors;" 127,200 jobs in the category of "Editors;" and 72,680 jobs in post-secondary English Language and Literature—all categories set for growth. Two competitive one-year teaching fellowships for program graduates at the College will allow recipients to gain teaching experience in creative and academic writing increasing their employability.

Curriculum: The proposed program offers a distinct MFA experience by providing two concentrations, each of which will deliver the pre-professional training and experience that will help graduates successfully pursue career goals. The Studio Concentration involves intensive preparation in creative writing workshops, craft seminars, and literature courses. This specialization accommodates students interested in pursuing writing fellowships, residencies, and/or PhDs in literature and/or creative writing with the broader goal of pursuing work in publishing, editing, or academia. This concentration will include co-curricular work on the College's national literary journal, *Crazyhorse*, as well as *Illuminations Literary Magazine*.

The Arts Management Concentration partners with the Master of Public Administration certificate program in Arts Management, accommodating students interested in the arts and community development and in careers in nonprofit arts organizations at the local or national level. Students can pursue opportunities in **arts education and outreach, cultural diversity programs, public arts, independent presses, youth writing centers, and fundraising. This specialization will include** co-curricular work in the literary arts management and editing via internships and community-based organizations.

MFA in Creative Writing (45 Credits)	
Four MFA core workshops	12 credits
Internship (<i>Crazyhorse, Illuminations</i> , local publications/organizations)	3 credits
Thesis	6 credits
Studio Concentration	
Two CW electives: Reading for Writers; Elements of Form & Craft; or a secondary genre workshop	6 credits
Four courses in English and/or American literature, one of which may be in Critical Theory, Research Methods, or Reading for Writers	12 credits
Two electives, either Arts Management, English and/or American literature, Rhetoric & Composition, Publication Practicum	6 credits
Arts Management Concentration	
Four Arts Management courses (at least two required classes and at least two certificate electives, such as PUBA 656, PUBA 660, PUBA 661, PUBA 663, PUBA 664)	12 credits
Three courses in English and/or American literature, one of which may be in Critical Theory, Rhetoric & Composition, or Reading for Writers	9 credits
One CW elective, either: Reading for Writers; Elements of Form & Craft; or a secondary Genre workshop	3 credits

Articulation and Inter-institutional Cooperation: This program offers an opportunity to collaborate with other institutions. MFA graduate students from the College could participate in and initiate readings/literary festivals in the Southeast region (e.g., literary festivals at Western Carolina University, USC, and Clemson) and could present at the National Graduate Creative Writing Conference (hosted at a different institution each year).

Estimate of Costs: New costs associated with the proposed program total \$81,000 for a new line (salary + benefits: \$71,000), operating (\$5,000), and a reading series (\$5,000). Program tuition revenue is projected to exceed, after two years, ongoing program costs, which include scholarship and tuition abatements, the post-MFA teaching fellowship, and starter funds for a visiting writer series. Administrative support is housed in the English Department and the program will be directed by the Creative Writing Coordinator. The institution is prepared to allocate funds to support the program.