

AWP

Director's

Handbook

*A Compendium of Guidelines and Information
for Directors of Creative Writing Programs*

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AWP Guidelines

for Creative Writing Programs & Teachers of Creative Writing

Introduction

The institutional membership of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, a national nonprofit corporation founded in 1967, includes a majority of the graduate programs in creative writing in North America. AWP is the primary source, internationally, of information on creative writing programs in English. *The AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs* (tenth edition, 2001) is the only comprehensive listing available.

Enrollment in writing workshops continues to grow, and new writing programs are established regularly, but the Master of Fine Arts in creative writing—the degree supported by AWP as the appropriate “terminal degree” for the practicing writer/teacher—is still misunderstood by many administrators whose responsibilities include the evaluation of writing programs and the recruitment, employment, and retention of teachers of writing.

Therefore, the Board of Directors of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs has developed this information on writing program curricula and policies regarding the hiring, promotion, and tenure of writers teaching in higher education. This statement was shaped by a two-year study conducted by the AWP Curriculum and Academic Policy Committee, chaired by Ellen Bryant Voigt (Warren Wilson College) and Marvin Bell (University of Iowa) in 1979. Since then, the document has been revised and reaffirmed by the AWP Board of Directors for each successive edition of *The AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs*. Aside from this document, we know of no other comprehensive set of guidelines regarding the hiring and tenure of writers who teach, their appropriate credentials, or academic policies affecting them. This document reinforces AWP’s commitment to the quality of teaching in this field, and it reflects AWP’s continued support of writers in the academy.

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS OF WRITING

Hiring, Rank, and Tenure

It is the position of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs that decisions regarding the hiring, rank, and tenure of teachers of creative writing should be based on the quality of the individual's writing and teaching. Academic degrees should not be considered a requirement or a major criterion which would overrule the importance of the writer's achievement in the art. In the hiring and promotion of a professor of the art of writing, significant published work should be viewed as the equivalent of a terminal degree by administrators and personnel committees.

If, however, a terminal degree is required, it is recommended that the Master of Fine Arts be considered the appropriate credential for the teacher of creative writing. Holders of this degree may also be prepared to teach literature courses as well as composition and rhetoric. AWP reminds institutions that the degree itself, and programs that award the degree, vary considerably; it is recommended that a prospective teacher's individual competencies be examined closely.

AWP assumes that the Master of Fine Arts in creative writing or its equivalent includes at least two years of serious study; a creative thesis (book-length collection of creative work); completion of course work in form, theory, and literature, including contemporary writers; and a substantial amount of individualized writing study, with criticism and direction of the student's writing by experienced writers through workshop, tutorial, independent project, or thesis preparation.

AWP believes that writing program faculty, who as creative writers are best qualified to make assessments of a candidate's work, should be given the responsibility of making professional decisions about their peers, and that their evaluations of the candidate, and their recommendations, should be given the utmost weight in the review process.

Parity

It is the position of AWP that creative writers be given parity with scholars in terms of salary, including senior positions at the top of the salary range, and that the MFA

degree be considered the equivalent of the PhD in literature, linguistics, or composition. While the system of part-time or visiting writing faculty is often used to increase the breadth of a program's offerings, such a system should not exclude writers from access to full-time, tenure-track positions and the possibility of renewal.

Course Load

According to AWP surveys, the majority of writing faculty members carry a course load of either two or three courses per semester or quarter in graduate creative writing programs. It should be noted that many institutions define "writing workshop" as equivalent to teaching two courses because of the additional work required in conferences, tutorials, and thesis preparation that writing students need for the development of their work. Other institutions consider a writing workshop equivalent to one literature course. AWP recommends that the course load for both undergraduate and graduate writing teachers be defined in a way that recognizes the importance of individualized attention to the student's creative work and increased amounts of conference and preparation time required. AWP also reminds institutions that a teaching writer needs large amounts of time to do his or her own creative work.

Workshop

AWP surveys conducted periodically since 1978 indicated that most teachers of writing felt they were most effective in the workshop format, and that the majority of workshops have a class size of 11–20. AWP recommends that workshop size not exceed 15, and that 12 be viewed as desirable and most effective.

Additional Recommendations

It is the position of AWP that teaching writers must have access to a liberal policy of leave and sabbatical. As with other arts, the writing teacher will be effective as a teacher only insofar as he or she is active and engaged as a writer; large, recurring periods of time devoted to the writer's own work are crucial to continued effective teaching.

AWP believes that writers should have the major voice in decisions concerning the hiring and retention of creative writing faculty, admission of students to the writing

program, the awarding of degrees in writing, the writing program's budget, and the allocation of physical resources. AWP believes that writers in the academy are best qualified to make such judgments in regard to creative writing programs.

A DESCRIPTION OF WRITING PROGRAM CURRICULA

Although they share common goals, criteria, and characteristics, writing programs in North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia are now many and diverse. AWP does not advocate one approach to the study of writing over another, but does seek, through its guide to programs, to help the student writer locate those programs which are most compatible with his or her goals and expectations. Prospective students using the guide are urged to read each program description carefully, and to pay special attention to the faculty listing, the coursework distribution and other degree requirements, and the statement of the program's aims.

The AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs makes a distinction between, on the one hand, courses in writing offered by an undergraduate or graduate literature program or department, and, on the other, a coherent curriculum in literature and creative writing designed for writing students. The primary aim of writing programs, through work in writing, form, and theory, and through the study of contemporary writers and past authors, is to help students become better writers. An education in the liberal arts and/or vocational training may be secondary aims. Writing programs are also characterized by the presence of active and experienced writers on their faculties, and the student's own creative work is seen as the primary evidence for decisions about admission and graduation. It should be noted that "creative writing" has traditionally encompassed poetry, playwriting and scriptwriting, translation, fiction, creative nonfiction, and other imaginative prose.

Graduate writing programs are listed in *The AWP Official Guide* in the following descriptive categories: **Studio**, **Studio/Research**, and **Research/Theory/ Studio**. Although the aims and specific curricula of programs within each category differ, the following general distinctions may be fairly made:

Studio writing programs place primary emphasis on the student's writing experience within the program. In this way, they most closely parallel studio programs in music, dance, and the visual arts. Most of the degree work is done in workshops, independent writing projects or tutorials, and thesis preparation. The study of

contemporary literature and the forms, craft, themes, and aesthetics of writing may be incorporated into workshops or offered through separate seminars. Faculty of such programs are selected for their achievement in the creative or artistic genres of literature and not for scholarly work. Students are admitted to such programs almost wholly on the basis of a writing sample, and in turn the significant degree criterion is the quality of the thesis manuscript.

Studio/Research writing programs usually place equal emphasis, in their curricula, on the student's writing and literary scholarship, with the belief that the study of literature is crucial to one's development as a writer. Seeking a balance between literary scholarship and literary artistic practice, these programs vary in the structure and amount of literature requirements, but they frequently rely on the regular English department faculty, noted for scholarly achievement, for many of the literature course offerings, while writers on the program faculty offer form, craft, and theory courses, workshops, and thesis direction. Studio/Research programs often require some kinds of comprehensive examinations, and candidates are expected to be equally well-prepared in literature and in writing. Admission is determined primarily by the quality of the original manuscript.

Research/Theory/Studio writing programs emphasize literary scholarship and the study and practice of literary theory. These programs also offer writing workshops, independent studies, seminars on contemporary literature and the craft of writing, and the opportunity to complete a creative thesis, but these programs require that a majority of the degree-candidate's course work will be completed in literary scholarship and theory, usually in seminars taught by English department faculty. The course of study typically spans two or more centuries of literature from two or more continents, and proficiency in another language besides English is usually required in earning the degree. Such programs align themselves both with academic traditions of literary research and with anti-traditional modes of cultural criticism that have become prevalent since the 1970s. These programs actively use the same criteria for admission and degree award that are applied to candidates in literary scholarship, including the comprehensive examinations, grade point averages, and previous undergraduate course work in literature.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

It is generally felt among creative writing program faculties that a series of readings and/or brief residencies by established writers is an important dimension of a writing program, offering students an immediate connection to contemporary literature and exposure to a variety of voices and aesthetic approaches. Because such a series is seen as integral to the curriculum, writing faculty should have the largest voice in determining the participants in such a series.

—The AWP Board of Directors

AWP Hallmarks

of a Successful Graduate Program in Creative Writing

Graduate programs in creative writing have evolved since the 1930s to offer a range of artistic experiences, approaches, and courses of study. Because there are many paths by which one may become a writer, the curricula varies from program to program. AWP encourages this variety and innovation while it sets general guidelines to help ensure a high quality of artistic literary training within these programs. Although the courses of study vary, AWP has noted the following shared characteristics among successful programs that nurture a culture of creativity, vitality, intellectual rigor, artistic discipline, and collegiality. These definitive hallmarks also form the basis for *The AWP Guidelines for Creative Writing Programs*.

A successful creative writing program has accomplished writers as faculty members, a rigorous curriculum, talented students, and strong administrative support, all of which are complemented by the assets that distinguish a generally excellent academic institution. The AWP Board of Directors recommends that a creative writing program undergo annual self-evaluation and periodic independent assessment in its effort to offer the best education for writers and to make the best possible contributions to contemporary letters. Independent assessments are especially valuable to programs that have been operating for fewer than ten years.

To facilitate, structure, and focus a program's self-evaluation or independent assessment, the AWP Board of Directors has established 28 *Hallmarks of a Successful Graduate Program in Creative Writing*. The hallmarks are grouped within five general categories as follows:

Accomplished Faculty

1. A strong, stable core faculty of distinguished publishing writers in full-time, tenured or tenure-track positions, so that students may study with a different writer each semester during a two-year or three-year program of study. Core faculty have distinguished themselves as artists who have published significant work in one or more of the following genres: fiction, poetry, creative

nonfiction, drama, or screenwriting. Core faculty members share equally in the duties of teaching, mentoring, advising, and thesis direction.

2. Faculty who are both working writers and committed teachers, who routinely make themselves available to students outside of class. Such faculty are professionally active, not only publishing creative work, but also providing leadership in the profession through national, regional, and local service. They are promoted and tenured based on publication of creative work, demonstrated ability as teachers, and contribution to the university and greater literary community. The program should have clear criteria based on these qualities to designate, hire, and promote creative writing faculty.
3. Distinguished visiting or adjunct faculty to supplement the work of the regular faculty.
4. A diverse combination of faculty members who provide expertise in various genres of writing as well as a variety of approaches to their craft, based on aesthetic differences related to their literary, ethnic, cultural, and other backgrounds.

Rigorous and Extensive Curriculum

1. An integrated, rigorous curriculum consistent with the mission of the program as “studio” or “studio/research” or “research/theory/studio,” three types of programs established by *The AWP Guidelines for Creative Writing Programs and Teachers of Creative Writing*. This curriculum provides graduate-level creative writing workshops and seminars taught by core creative writing faculty on craft, theory, and contemporary literature. The program should provide an enabling progression of both practice and study in the literary arts in order to prepare the student for a life of letters and to equip the student with the skills needed for writing a publishable book-length creative work for the thesis.
2. A good faculty-to-student ratio as established by AWP’s guidelines, allowing for class size of 11–20 students.
3. Courses in the catalog curriculum offered regularly and with consistent quality in the actual course schedule every semester or quarter.

4. A good series of lectures, readings, and workshops by visiting writers to extend the regular faculty's ability to provide a variety of approaches to the art and craft of writing.
5. Student access to other classes in literature, journalism, publishing, composition, theater, or communications taught by distinguished faculty.
6. An affiliation with a journal, press, or other literary publishing venues that can provide editorial experience.

Excellent Students and Support for Students

1. A high ratio of applicants to admissions; generally high and selective admissions standards.
2. Financial support available to a large percentage of MFA students in the form of fellowships, scholarships, teaching or research assistantships, travel grants, etc.
3. If teaching assistantships are available, a regular program of TA training and mentoring to ensure that TAs develop good pedagogical methods and benefit from the experience of a skilled teacher.
4. Graduate student representation in decisions of policy and practice: the program is responsive to graduate needs and has a mechanism for evaluating its effectiveness annually while it periodically conducts larger, more comprehensive reviews of how to best serve the needs of students.
5. A high percentage of matriculated students who graduate from the program (and a low number of students who drop out or transfer out of the program).
6. A high number of students who go on to publish significant work.

Strong Administrative Support

1. Strong leadership by the MFA program director in planning, staffing, devising curriculum, and advocating program needs to the university administration.
2. Sufficient autonomy in regard to curriculum, admissions, budget, graduate support, physical facilities, and personnel to ensure quality, stability, flexibility, and the capability to act to take advantage of opportunities and initiatives in a timely fashion.
3. High morale and a sense of cooperation and collegiality among students and faculty; an atmosphere of open discussion and mutual support, as well as respect for cultural and ethnic differences.
4. A strong commitment of support from the dean and higher administration, including but not limited to financial resources, salary support, paid release time for faculty to pursue creative work, and clerical/administrative support for the program director.
5. A healthy relationship with the department in which the program is housed.
6. A strong, positive presence in the local community established through deliberate outreach.
7. Membership in AWP and other appropriate local, regional, and national associations to assure its faculty and students access to timely information about contemporary letters and the teaching of creative writing.

Other Complementary Institutional Assets and Infrastructure

1. A special focus, initiative, resource, or other opportunity for students that distinguishes the program from other comparable programs.
2. Faculty and student access to a good library with extensive holdings in contemporary literature and an adequate budget for adding new titles to those holdings, including new periodicals.
3. Classrooms, offices, and other spaces adequate to conduct workshops, conferences, readings, etc., which promote an atmosphere conducive to concentration, listening, and focused work.
4. Internet access and computer labs for research and training in computer skills, including those required for desktop publishing.
5. A campus bookstore that supports the curriculum, special events with visiting writers, and faculty and student authors.

—The AWP Board of Directors

AWP Hallmarks

of a Successful Undergraduate Program in Creative Writing

For their undergraduate students, many colleges and universities offer minors or concentrations in creative writing, and a few schools offer majors, or BFA programs, in creative writing. The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) recognizes that colleges and universities have different strengths and missions, and AWP encourages innovation and variety in the pedagogy of creative writing. Among its member programs, however, AWP has recognized common elements of successful undergraduate programs in creative writing.

These hallmarks represent a superior undergraduate program that offers a minor or a concentration in creative writing. Many of the hallmarks resemble those of a strong graduate program, but the undergraduate hallmarks differ from the graduate hallmarks especially in regard to curriculum. For undergraduate writers, a good four-year curriculum requires more general studies of literature, the arts and sciences, and the fine arts; it also provides extracurricular experiences in writing, publishing, and literature. Whereas a Master of Fine Arts program in creative writing places equal emphasis on the practice of craft and on the study of literature, an undergraduate program places a stronger emphasis on the study of literature.

Because a writer must first become a voracious and expert reader before he or she can master a difficult art, a strong undergraduate program emphasizes a wide range of study in literature and other disciplines to provide students with the foundation they need to become resourceful writers—resourceful in techniques, styles, models, ideas, and subject matter. The goal of an undergraduate program is to teach students how to read critically as writers and to give students the practice of writing frequently so that, by creating their own works, they may apply what they have learned about the elements of literature. An undergraduate course of study in creative writing gives students an overview of the precedents established by writers of many eras, continents, and sensibilities; it gives students the ability to analyze, appreciate, and create the components that comprise works of literature. A successful undergraduate program accomplishes all this through various means: through instruction from publishing writers who are gifted teachers, through a rigorous and diverse curriculum, through excellent support for students, through the administration's effective management, and through the institution's extracurricular activities, general assets, and infrastructure.

To help institutions structure and focus their self-evaluations, long-range plans, or independent assessments of their programs, the AWP Board of Directors has established the following hallmarks.

Accomplished Faculty

1. Full-time, tenure-track or tenured faculty members teach a significant majority of creative writing courses. The core faculty is composed of writers whose work has been published by nationally known, professional journals and presses respected by other writers, editors, and publishers. Writers will have published significant work and at least one book in each of the genres they teach (for playwrights, significant stage or film production may replace traditional publication). The program has core faculty members who are expert and accomplished in three or more of the following genres: fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, drama, or screenplays.
2. Faculty members are publishing writers and committed teachers who routinely make themselves available to students outside of class. Faculty members are professionally active, not only publishing creative work, but also participating in national, regional, and local organizations and activities related to teaching, literature, and the arts. Most faculty are experienced teachers of composition, literature, and other courses; however, the criteria for promotion, assignment of classes, and tenure of creative writing faculty focus on publication of creative work, demonstrated ability as teachers of creative writing, and contributions to the university and greater literary community.
3. Distinguished visiting full-time or adjunct faculty include writers whose credentials equal or surpass the members of the program's core faculty. Visiting or adjunct faculty teach primarily, if not exclusively, courses in creative writing; they are not used inappropriately to supplement other departmental staffing needs.
4. In universities, a graduate creative writing student's training may include teaching introductory or intermediate undergraduate courses in creative writing; however, the program's faculty members prepare and supervise the graduate teaching associates.

5. A program's faculty provides depth and expertise in at least three genres and in various aesthetics and philosophies of the craft of writing. A diverse faculty provides a range of aesthetic points of view related to literary, ethnic, cultural, or other influences. For each genre offered in the program's curriculum (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, etc.), the core faculty includes one or more individual members per genre, who each have publications primarily in that genre. A program's faculty resources are supplemented, not replaced, by visiting full-time faculty, adjunct instructors, or graduate teaching associates.
6. Since undergraduates with a minor or a concentration in creative writing must also study a wide range of literature, the program, or the department in which the program operates, also has an excellent full-time faculty of scholars who teach a wide range of courses that cover many authors, eras, and continents of literary history.

Rigorous and Diverse Curriculum

1. Students take courses that provide a broad background in literature, the arts and sciences, and the fine arts; and they enjoy other extracurricular experiences essential to an undergraduate education. Although students in a creative writing program are not necessarily English majors, it is important that an institution offers courses in literary studies that are historically, intellectually, geographically, and culturally wide-ranging and varied. For the minor, or for the concentration, students take a balance of courses in literary studies and creative writing with less than 50% of the courses in creative writing. Students should take courses that explore a wide variety of literature, both past and present, as well as courses that apply various forms of literary criticism. Students should be proficient in a second modern or classical language.
2. A tiered curriculum provides introductory, intermediate, advanced courses, and an independent study, a senior thesis, or capstone course in creative writing. Programs provide a practicum, such as an internship, and advising on job opportunities and graduate schools. A system of prerequisites, which tracks courses taken and grades achieved, assures that students take courses in an appropriate order. Because too much specialization too soon is generally not in a young writer's best interest, students in undergraduate writing programs typically are required to take writing workshops and seminars in more than one genre. The best

undergraduate creative writing program offers advanced courses in at least three or more separate genres (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, drama, screenwriting). A senior thesis, project, or capstone course completes the program, requiring both a longer creative manuscript and a critical paper. In the junior or senior year, a student completes an appropriate internship.

3. Introductory creative writing courses have class size restrictions equal to or less than an institution's restriction for composition classes (but no greater than 22 students). Intermediate and advanced courses have class size restrictions of 12–18 students, with a maximum of 15 students in advanced workshop classes (optimum workshop class size: 12 students).
4. Courses are listed in the school's catalogue and offered regularly so that students may complete the program in a timely manner consistent with other programs at the school.
5. Creative writing courses, including workshops, include craft texts and literary texts (anthologies, books by individual authors, literary periodicals) that offer appropriate models for student writing. Workshops also include anthologies or other primary works and critical texts. Undergraduate workshops are generally more structured than graduate workshops, since it is not assumed that students know the elements of prosody or storytelling. Undergraduate workshops, especially at the introductory level, require students to work in various forms, styles, modes, and genres.
6. Lectures, readings, and workshops by visiting writers (especially those from outside an institution's state or region) extend the regular faculty's ability to present a variety of approaches to the art and craft of writing.

Excellent Support for Students

1. Undergraduate students participate in all facets of the program, both curricular and extracurricular, and are not marginalized by graduate students or faculty. Students serve on committees relevant to the undergraduate creative writing program.

2. Students edit their own literary magazine (50% or more is devoted to literary works) with a faculty advisor who guides but does not censor their editorial process. The majority of published works are by undergraduate students. The editorial staff is not represented excessively among the magazine's contributors.
3. Students have regular opportunities to participate in public readings of their works, including solo readings for students completing a senior thesis or project.
4. Students participate in programs that promote and celebrate literature, writing, and reading in their communities.
5. Internship opportunities are available for creative writing students in a variety of writing, editing, and publishing professions. A formal affiliation with a professional literary journal or press is especially desirable.
6. Creative writing students are as academically competitive and qualified as students in other undergraduate departments. Financial aid for creative writing students is comparable to the support for students in other departments. Both the institution and the program work in consort to enroll qualified students of different backgrounds, social classes, and races. A significant number of students continue their studies in graduate programs and go on to publish their work.

Administrative Support

1. A program director (tenured or on tenure-track) provides strong leadership in planning, budgeting, staffing, and advocating the needs of the program to the administration. The director maintains a productive relationship not only with the department in particular that sponsors the program, but also with the institution and local community in general.
2. A high sense of collegiality exists among students and faculty. An open atmosphere invites discussion, collaboration, and diverse cultural and ethnic contributions.

3. The dean and higher administration demonstrate a strong commitment to the program, including but not limited to support for financial resources, salaries, release time for faculty to pursue creative projects, and clerical/administrative assistance to the director. A special focus, initiative, resource, or other opportunity for students distinguishes the creative writing program from other comparable programs.
4. The program maintains membership in AWP and other appropriate local, regional, and national associations to assure that its faculty and students have access to timely information relevant to contemporary letters and opportunities in creative writing.

Other Complementary Assets and Infrastructure

1. The program sponsors a series of visiting writers that includes public readings but also offers students private opportunities for workshops and discussions with visiting writers. Visiting writers represent a wide variety of styles, genres, and backgrounds.
2. The program sponsors a festival, workshop, or conference that attracts an audience from outside the school with whom students can interact intellectually and creatively.
3. Faculty and student access to a good library with extensive holdings in contemporary literature and an adequate budget for adding new titles to those holdings, including new periodicals.
4. Classrooms, offices, and other spaces adequate to conduct workshops, conferences, readings, etc., which promote an atmosphere conducive to concentration, listening, and focused work.
5. Internet access and computer labs for research and training in computer skills, desktop publishing, and Web page design.
6. The program encourages students to travel to readings, workshops, festivals, conferences, and other special events. As much as possible, the program provides support for student travel and participation in such events; this support is especially important for students of colleges and universities in remote areas.

7. Affiliation with a professional literary journal allows students to observe and, for advanced students, to assist in the process of editing and managing the journal.
8. Students participate in literary competitions, including the national Intro Awards competition and the AWP Program Directors' Prizes for Undergraduate Literary Magazines.

—The AWP Board of Directors

AWP Assessments

Introduction: Hallmarks of a Successful Program

The Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP) is an association of 350 colleges and universities in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. AWP has established criteria for the evaluation of programs in order to promote excellence in the teaching of writing. These hallmarks, one set for graduate programs and another set for undergraduate programs, may be found at AWP's Web site, www.awpwriter.org. The hallmarks also appear in *The AWP Program Director's Handbook*, a PDF publication. AWP recommends that a creative writing program should use these hallmarks periodically to conduct internal reviews.

AWP also conducts assessments of creative writing programs with the following objectives in mind:

- to provide a program with an unbiased, objective, and comprehensive external review;
- to catalog strengths and weaknesses in teaching and administration;
- to verify whether or not the institution has adequate resources to offer a degree in creative writing;
- to make recommendations on how to improve each major component of the program;
- to help administrators do their jobs more effectively.

AWP is aware that each institution has limited resources. An AWP assessment is designed to enable the university's leadership to decide whether or not a program merits additional investment and to determine what prerequisites must be met for each new allocation of support. AWP assessments are designed to enable a department chair or program director to catalog the successes and needs of their program, so that he or she may develop a timeline for what the program must achieve to earn additional support from their dean, provost, or president.

The goal of an AWP assessment is to help a program provide its students with the best possible education in the art of writing. The welfare of the students is at the heart of the assessment team's concerns.

AWP has conducted assessments of the programs at Northern Michigan University, the University of Georgia, Miami University, and the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. The provost of the University of Georgia wrote to the director of the program there that, "This is one of the most comprehensive, thorough and valuable reports I have seen developed by an outside organization. I am impressed by their effort, valuable comments and specific recommendations."

Methods & Procedures

An AWP assessment evaluates every aspect of your program.

The Professional Standards Committee (five members of AWP's board) and two to four additional academic professionals comprise the assessment team. The committee selects two to four people (depending on the size of the program) to serve as the on-site evaluators of your program.

The committee selects on-site evaluators who have a keen understanding of creative writing curriculum, program development, pedagogy, and issues related to the hiring, promotion, and retention of faculty. AWP board members, experienced program directors, and the Executive Director of AWP are among those who typically serve on such a team.

If AWP were engaged to assess your program, the team would examine c.v.s of the literature and creative writing faculty, department policies and handbooks, university catalogs, other publications of the program, and your program's written responses to the team's initial inquiries. After the examination of all this information, the team would visit the campus for three days to do the following:

- a) interview faculty members of the program;
- b) interview students;
- c) meet with the chair, directors, and other departmental officers;
- d) visit and speak with the committees that attend to the writing program
- e) attend classes;
- f) speak with the dean who oversees your college or division;

- g) tour the facilities, including the library;
- h) evaluate sample theses.

Below are some of the initial requests for information that the team typically makes of the program before its visit:

1. Please set up the appropriate appointments and meetings to make the interviews possible.
2. Please send a list, by title, genre, and author, of all theses conferred in the past three years, so we may randomly pick a few for review.
3. Provide that part of your department's mission statement that deals with graduate education and research. Supplement your statement with specific goals and strategies as they pertain to the topic at hand, as suggested by the outline below.

Mission:

Degrees Offered:

Narrative on Program's Philosophy or Pedagogy:

Specific Goals and Strategies:

- a. Admission (requirements & procedures)
 - b. Completion requirements
 - c. Graduate curriculum (append both listing of course offerings and narrative descriptions as they appear in the catalog)
 - d. Graduate instruction (all matters relating to the academic relationship between students and faculty).
4. Provide, in tabular form, the number of students (a) enrolled for the fall semester only and (b) graduating for each year the program has been authorized. Note: for graduation data, total all students receiving degrees in Summer, Fall, and Spring graduations. Also, please give your best estimate for projected enrollments for the next five years.
 5. Characterize the graduate students in your department (i.e., percentage who earned undergraduate degrees at your institution, percentage from other in-state institutions, percentage from out-of-state institutions, and percentage of foreign students). Include statistics for GPA and, if relevant, GRE or other national exam.

6. Describe the ways you recruit students and indicate how successful those methods have been.
7. Describe the process and criteria by which you select students for admission.
8. Provide, in tabular form, the numbers of applicants and the numbers of students admitted to your program for the past three years.
9. Describe the strengths of your graduate program. What are you doing to maintain and improve these?
10. Excluding facilities, describe the weaknesses of your graduate program. What are you doing to remedy these?
11. In realistic terms, discuss those facilities, at hand or needed, that are crucial to the success of your program. Does the physical plant adequately support your academic program?
12. Describe the adequacy or needs of your library holdings in terms of graduate education in your discipline.
13. Describe the climate for research and/or creative work on your campus and in your department. How is this reflected by concrete actions, programs, policies, etc.?
14. Rate the morale among (a) faculty, (b) graduate students, and (c) undergraduate minors and majors.
15. Do you use Teaching Assistants? If so, please indicate:
 - (a) what ratio of graduate students are TAs,
 - (b) the dollar amount of a nine-month TA,
 - (c) the duties assigned to TAs,
 - (d) the training your department provides TAs, and
 - (e) your comparative assessment of how competitive your TA package is with those of comparable institutions in your region.
16. Does your department use Research Assistants? If so, please answer (a) through (e) above for RAs.

17. Do you foresee important changes in enrollments, faculty, employment, etc., in the next ten years that will influence graduate education in your department? If so, please explain how you are planning to accommodate such change.
18. Please comment on any topic you wish to address in relation to graduate education in your department.
19. Indicate the number of faculty in your department in each of the following categories, again in tabular form, for the fall semester of each year your program has been authorized: Full-time faculty; all faculty holding terminal degrees; all faculty directing graduate students.
20. Does the range of specialty fields represented by your current faculty adequately meet your needs in terms of graduate education? Explain.
21. Please list and attach a c.v. for each member of your graduate faculty; clearly indicate: (a) which are tenure-track and (b) which are visitors. Each c.v. should indicate relevant publications with complete bibliographic data and all other relevant professional credentials. Either on the c.v.s or as a separate addendum, please indicate the number of student theses directed by each member of the graduate faculty.
22. Please enclose four copies of two recent departmental or program newsletters.
23. Describe any fundraising that has been done for the program.

Once the assessment team has finished a draft of the report, it is presented to the program's director so that he or she may correct errors in fact-finding or in the interpretation of information.

While the program director is reviewing the draft, it is also reviewed by the AWP Board of Directors for fairness and thoroughness. After the board's approval of the report, AWP will send your program ten bound copies, one loose-leaf copy, and a PDF file of the report. As a courtesy, we will send copies directly to the university officials who meet with members of the team. As long as your program provides the team with all the necessary information in a timely fashion, you can expect the final report six weeks after the team's visit to your campus.

Fees & Expenses

AWP's fee for assessments ranges from \$4,000 to \$5,500, depending on the size of the program, requested focus of the report (undergraduate study, graduate study, or both) and the number of genres which the program teaches and accepts for thesis work.

Your institution would pay for the team's travel, accommodations, and meals at which you or members of your faculty or administration are present. AWP pays for the team's incidental expenses, the team's honoraria, and office expenses for the production of the final report.

When to Schedule an AWP Assessment

Because an AWP assessment would require a significant investment of time, effort, and money from your institution, you should not schedule an AWP assessment unless your program is truly eager for advancement and wishes to find the best possible evaluations and recommendations to facilitate that advancement. If you and your institution's leadership are content with your program's current operations, if you merely wish to fulfill the periodic reporting requirements of your university, or if you merely need a perfunctory report to provide information to your regional agency for accreditation, it may be better for your program to hire its own evaluators as per the guidelines established by your institution.

AWP's assessments are most useful when you and your program are ready to implement changes and develop a four-year plan to improve your program.

If your program meets two or more of the conditions below, it is highly likely that an AWP Assessment would prove to be highly beneficial. We recommend that you schedule an AWP assessment

- when your program has stability in leadership. (AWP's assessments will provide a roadmap for a program's progress, so it is crucial that the program have a talented director who is eager to act upon the assessment and provide the continuity to execute a three or four-year plan.)

- when your program has conducted at least one internal review. (Often a program is content when it should be trying harder; an internal review often helps to form an awareness of how a program compares to its peers; an internal review helps to develop a receptiveness to the need for change.)
- when a majority of your colleagues are eager for changes and improvements in your program but you and your colleagues remain uncertain about the exact needs, strategies, and priorities.
- when the department wishes to change its Masters of Arts (MA) degree program to a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree program.
- when the college or university has begun strategic planning—targeting the creative writing program for development towards national eminence.
- when a program has been in operation for three or more years.
- when the program has the support of its department chair, dean, or other university leaders and they need to verify the components of your program that merit additional support.

Please contact the Executive Director of AWP if you would like to schedule an assessment of your program, or if you would like help in determining whether or not your program is ready for an assessment. (703) 993-4301.

AWP's Recommendations Regarding Non-Tenure Stream Faculty

These recommendations embody AWP's concerns about the exploitation of non-tenure- stream faculty. The term "non-tenure stream," or NTS, includes faculty otherwise known as adjunct faculty, lecturers, or instructors who teach either full or part-time in higher education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the proportion of appointments in higher education held by part-time or adjunct faculty has increased from 22% in 1970 to 43% in 1998. At many institutions, especially at community colleges, more than half the appointments are NTS faculty.

While increases in the price of tuition have out-paced inflation, colleges and universities have assigned more of their classes to poorly paid and poorly treated teachers. Although the popular assumption may be that professors are comfortable members of the middle class with genteel jobs that afford time for research, the reality has become that most college and university teachers have challenging work loads, no job security, low pay, no health benefits, and little time off to conduct research or complete creative work. Many NTS faculty members have no offices, no secretarial support, no financial support for travel or research, and limited access to basic office supplies and photocopying. Many NTS faculty members are appointed to classes only a few days before the start of the semester. Many NTS instructors are paid \$1,200 to \$3,000 for conducting a class with a duration of 14 weeks; this level of pay is a small fraction of what tenured faculty earn per class. At these low levels of pay, if NTS faculty do a good and conscientious job with each class, they will be earning less per hour than workers in the fast-food industry. AWP believes that these poor working conditions and poor compensation thwart every institution's efforts to establish excellence in higher education.

Although AWP recognizes that many public institutions have budgets subject to the caprice of state legislatures that often fail to address the needs of a growing population of college-bound students, AWP urges faculty members, department chairs, and university leaders to provide better education for their students while their institutions provide fair compensation and professional working conditions for NTS faculty. Today's universities require investments that are colossal compared to the needs of universities in the 1950s and earlier. Modern universities need more complex equipment and infrastructure, research laboratories and computer networks, and our colleges and universities have done an excellent job in meeting these needs. Academe must focus the same care and investment on its most precious resource: its teachers.

Toward that end, AWP has provided these recommendations for the employment of NTS faculty:

1. Institutions should create and periodically revise NTS policy statements consistent with their mission statements. Institutions should devise strategic plans that include two objectives towards the goal of establishing excellence in education: (a) reducing the percentage of NTS faculty; and (b) providing adequate pay, good working conditions, health benefits, and professional support for NTS faculty.
2. In political advocacy among state legislators, university leaders should make investment in faculty a priority. University leaders should advocate investment in professional pay and working conditions for NTS faculty; they should also advocate increased investment to increase the percentage of full-time, tenure-track faculty.
3. Colleges and universities should develop comprehensive hiring plans that eliminate excessive NTS faculty appointments. Each department should set limits on its number of NTS faculty members in relation to the number of tenured or tenure-track faculty members. NTS faculty should be used only to meet short-term or special needs (such as unanticipated enrollment surges, grants, experimental courses, sabbatical replacements), rather than to routinely staff regularly-offered courses. At four-year colleges and graduate schools, NTS appointments should constitute no more than 10% of a department's total faculty; at community colleges, NTS faculty members should comprise no more than 30% of the faculty.
4. Departments should establish an equitable compensation scale for NTS employees. Salary schedules for NTS faculty should be based on a scale comparable to that of tenure-track assistant professor, and pay should be proportionate to work assignments. Salaries should reflect qualifications, experience, years of service, and workload (including hours of instruction and related work outside the classroom, as well as any required service or research).
5. Departments should develop clear job descriptions and criteria for evaluation of NTS faculty. Departments should provide NTS faculty with these accurate job descriptions specifying expectations for teaching, service, and/or research. Processes for hiring, evaluating, and assigning NTS faculty should be comparable to those for tenure-earning faculty while taking into account the particular demands of NTS work. The evaluation mechanism should help assess which part-time faculty are eligible for conversion to full-time employment.
6. Part-time NTS faculty should not be required to serve on committees, advise theses, or to coordinate community service projects unless they are given additional compensation above and

beyond the typical wage for teaching each class. Full-time NTS faculty should not be expected to serve on committees unless their pay (per class) is commensurate with the level of pay (per class) of tenure-track, assistant professors.

7. Departments should provide new NTS faculty with systematic orientation to their jobs and departments. Handbooks on departmental policies regarding NTS employees should be provided. Departments should provide mentorship and advisors to those NTS members who have fewer than three years of teaching experience at the college level.

8. Benefits for NTS faculty should include health insurance, as well as access to other forms of insurance and retirement planning available to tenure-track faculty.

9. Teaching load for all faculty assigned to writing workshops or writing-intensive courses should not exceed 15 students per class for graduate seminars. At the undergraduate level, writing-intensive courses should not exceed 22 students for introductory classes while advanced writing workshops should not exceed 18 students. AWP maintains that the optimum level of enrollment, for both graduate and undergraduate writing courses, is 12 students.

10. Working conditions for full-time NTS faculty should be comparable to those for tenure-earning faculty and should include assigned office space, phones, clerical support, photocopying privileges, computers (including email accounts and Internet access), parking assignments, and other ancillary privileges.

11. Professional development funding, including incentives, grants, merit raises, and travel money, should be available to NTS faculty.

12. NTS faculty should have a voice in setting departmental or institutional policies that affect them, and they should have academic freedom to express their professional judgments.

13. NTS faculty who wish to bargain collectively should do so.

14. Academic associations, conferences, and publications should provide forums, analyses, and news coverage on the treatment of NTS faculty to help persuade political leaders and academic administrators to improve the compensation and working conditions of NTS faculty.

15. Please see AWP's other documents *AWP Guidelines for Creative Writing Programs and Teachers of Creative Writing*, *Hallmarks of a Successful Graduate Program in Creative Writing*, and *Hallmarks of a Successful Undergraduate Program in Creative writing*.

AWP is committed to help its member institutions develop programs that ensure fair and professional support for all faculty including NTS faculty.

—AWP Board of Directors, 2003

Exit Survey of Graduates of a Creative Writing Program

[Note: AWP recommends that programs conduct annual surveys of outgoing students. AWP supplies this form only as an example to help a program devise its own exit survey of graduates. Each program should improve upon this survey as its faculty members and administrators see fit. To provide the best comparative data, the form must remain the same, year after year, to chart the program's progress clearly. In other words, the program should make sure that its first exit survey form contains all the areas that will help the program director, department chair, and deans administer to the program over the next five years. The program should give special attention to the general areas targeted for improvement by the university's strategic plan, and develop survey questions that address those areas of special interest to the university's leadership. The surveys should be sent to graduated students with a return envelope including postage.]

Please help us better serve our current and future students. Please take the time to answer these questions and to speak your mind.

1. What type of student were you? (Please check one.)

a. *full-time student*

b. *part-time student*

2. Please rank numerically the importance of each reason why you chose the MFA program. (Circle the appropriate number.)

a. the general reputation of the university

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

b. financial support

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

c. the quality of the program's faculty

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

d. the quality of the Department of English

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

e. curriculum

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

f. the location

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

g. the recommendation of a friend

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

h. the recommendation of a former teacher

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

i. the recommendation of a graduate of the program

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

j. other—please describe: _____

(0) not important (1) somewhat important (2) important (3) extremely important

3. What is your *most* important career goal? (Please check only one.) To become?—

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a professional freelance writer | <input type="checkbox"/> | a journalist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a published author | <input type="checkbox"/> | a business manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a professor | <input type="checkbox"/> | an arts administrator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a teacher in grades K-12 | <input type="checkbox"/> | an editor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | other (please name here): _____ | | |

4. What is your *secondary* career goal? (Please choose only one.) To become?—

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a professional freelance writer | <input type="checkbox"/> | a journalist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a published author | <input type="checkbox"/> | a business manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a professor | <input type="checkbox"/> | an arts administrator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a teacher in grades K-12 | <input type="checkbox"/> | an editor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | other (please name here): _____ | | |

5. How do you feel about the length of time it is taking you to earn your degree?

- too long too brief appropriate length

Please comment:

6. Did you ever have difficulty enrolling in your preferred classes?

- often sometimes never

If so, which courses were difficult to get into?

7. Please comment on what you think is the most appropriate size for graduate classes. How many students? Why?

8. How could the department have helped you better to achieve your educational objectives?

9. Improvements in the amount or quality of which of the following would improve the quality of your experience at the university (please check all that apply):

- Library books
- Journal subscriptions for the library
- Film/video equipment
- Computer equipment
- Other; please specify:

10. What was the most valuable part of your overall academic experience in the MFA program? Explain.

11. What was the least valuable? Explain.

12. List any courses or subject areas you think should be added to the program and explain why.

13. List any courses or subject areas that you think should be dropped and explain why.

14. What course did you find most valuable? Why?

15. What course did you find the least valuable? Why?

16. Please rate the quality of instruction within the Creative Writing Department. (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

17. Please rate the quality of instruction within the English Department. (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

18. Did you find instructors to be accessible and helpful? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) no, not at all (1) sometimes (2) most of the time (3) yes, consistently

19. Did you find grading standards to be fair and consistent? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) no, not at all (1) sometimes (2) most of the time (3) yes

20. In what ways was the program different from what you expected it to be?

21. Would you recommend the MFA program to others? Please rate how highly you would recommend it overall. (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) terrible, not at all (1) poorly (2) average (3) good (4) excellent

22. What do you consider to be the major strengths and weaknesses of the MFA program?

23. Upon entering the program, how did you view your own background as a reader and critic of literature? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

24. Now that you are leaving the program, has your background in literature improved?

(0) no, not at all (1) slight improvement (2) significant improvement (3) tremendous improvement

25. Now that you are leaving the program, how do you view your own background as a reader and critic of literature? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) average (3) good (4) excellent

26. Upon entering the program, how did you view your own skills as a writer? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) average (3) good (4) excellent

27. Now that you are leaving the program, have your own skills as a writer improved? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) no, not at all (1) slight improvement (2) significant improvement (3) tremendous improvement

28. Now that you are leaving the program, how do you view your own skills as a writer? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) average (3) good (4) excellent

29. Please rate the quality of your own educational experience in the MFA program. (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

30. If you served as a teaching assistant, please rate your experience. How would you rank the training the program provided? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

31. How would you rank the advising you received from the faculty on your thesis work? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

32. How would you rank the advising you received from the faculty to help you prepare for a life-long career as a writer? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

33. Will you be seeking an academic job? yes no

If you answered yes, how would you rank the advising you received from the faculty to help you prepare to compete in the academic job market? (Circle the appropriate number.)

(0) completely inadequate (1) somewhat inadequate (2) sufficient (3) good (4) excellent

Please feel free to write additional comments here in the space provided below, and use the reverse side of this page, too, if necessary. Thank you for your help.

Numbers of Degree-Conferring Programs

in Creative Writing 1975-2004

YEAR	AA	BA/BS MINOR	BA/BFA MAJOR	MA	MFA	PHD	DA	TOTAL
2004	10	318	86	154	109	42	1	720
2002	8	283	70	151	99	41	1	653
1998	8	318	12	143	83	29	1	586
1996	6	298	12	134	74	28	2	548
1994	6	287	10	139	64	29	3	532
1992	6	274	9	137	55	27	3	505
1984	4	155	10	99	31	20	5	320
1975	0	24	3	32	15	5	1	80

AWP's institutional membership has more than quadrupled since 1975. The number of creative writing programs has increased by 800% since 1975. AWP's institutional membership, in 2004, includes 380 colleges and universities as well as 60 writers' conferences and centers. The table above quantifies the growth of writing programs and AWP's expansion along with them. The numbers of degree-conferring creative writing programs are compiled from successive editions of *The AWP Official Guide to Writing Programs*.

The table above includes member as well as non-member institutions. Most institutions offer two or more degree-conferring programs in creative writing.

Most BA and BS programs are not, generally, creative writing programs but traditional majors in English literature or another discipline with a minor, a concentration, or an emphasis in creative writing.

It should also be noted that the vast majority of the 2,100 departments of English in North America offer classes in creative writing; the departments and programs accounted for above are only those that have shaped occasional offerings of creative writing classes into, at least, minor tracks of their curricula. Among undergraduate students, classes in creative writing are among the most popular elective classes.

*The Association of Writers & Writing Programs
is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization of
22,000 writers, teachers, and students,
350 creative writing programs
in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.,
and 60 writers' conferences and centers.*

*AWP's Professional Standards Committee
serves as an advocate for
standards of excellence in the teaching of creative writing;
it supports fair treatment of writers in the academy,
provides writers with advice and referrals to legal counsel,
and conducts inquiries into disputes
over the hiring and promotion of faculty.*

*AWP also conducts
professional, independent assessments of
creative writing programs
and provides many other services
for writers and creative writing programs.*

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