

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR NEW PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA:  
BACHELOR OF ARTS PROGRAM IN ENGLISH AND CREATIVE WRITING**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to establish a new Bachelor of Arts Program in English and Creative Writing in the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed program will transition from a track in creative writing in the English Program in the Department of English to a standalone program. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

- ◇ Description of proposed program. The proposed program will require 42 semester hours of coursework, offering the study and practice of writing together with the study and analysis of literature. The proposed program will enable students to learn the historical and traditional aspects of English literature and its relation to the craft of writing. The program will provide the transferable skills important for a liberal arts major, including the ability to think strategically, read complex texts with comprehension, and master writing and speaking skills at an advanced level.

The Department of English currently offers a track in creative writing within its English Program. The track has an enrollment of 97 students; students have requested a more in-depth writing experience. If the proposed program is approved, the track will be closed and will be replaced the additional credit hours of the program; it will allow earlier declaration and entry into the university writing community and will help students to begin the major earlier and graduate in a timely fashion.

The Provost's Postgraduate Visiting Writers are recent graduates of the University of Iowa's MFA programs in Writing and Translation. In addition to advancing their own writing projects and teaching, they are charged with contributing to the writing environment for SUI undergraduates, graduates, and members of the writing community in Iowa City. Four writers participate each year, one from poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and, alternately, playwriting and translation. These visiting writers will also be instrumental in helping to offer additional experiences for undergraduate students, with these recent graduates working with undergraduates creating a benefit to each population.

- ◇ Academic objectives. The academic objectives of the proposed program include the following which will be assessed through the development of a formative portfolio, which will include representative work and experience that may apply to the next level of professional development or employment. Assessment may also take the form of exit surveys regarding students' future educational plans and careers.

- ⇒ Students will show the ability to reach closely, analyze texts across broad and diverse historical periods, show an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of works of literature and of peer writing, have a knowledge of literary forms, and have the ability to recognize and produce good writing.
  - ⇒ Students will have knowledge of representative critical approaches and methods of interpretation, including an understanding of literary vocabulary and terminology and how these also represent tools of the writer as well as the ability to apply them within the workshop setting. Student will improve their writing process, understanding how process functions and how an understanding of process can lead to better writing.
  - ⇒ Students will have advanced skills in oral and written communication, particularly the ability to discuss and offer feedback of peer work and written texts in a professional and constructive manner. Students will be aware of their transferable skill set and will be prepared for employment and for graduate study in a wide range of fields, not only through their coursework but through their participation in other events and activities related to the program.
- ◇ Need for proposed program. There have been ongoing requests from undergraduates about a creative writing program at the university. The Department of English currently offers a track in creative writing within the English Program but the track does not require extensive work in writing. Furthermore, students must have junior or senior standing to be admitted to the track. Students are interested in being part of the writing community; a standalone program would help facilitate their education and inclusion. A strong and open creative writing program that includes first-year students will help build a tight knit writers' community for students, enriching their education through peer to peer interactions and more extensive engagement with writing courses.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. One of the goals of the SUI strategic plan is to foster the arts on campus, especially those hurt by the flooding in 2008. As the plan says, "we will bring together the full range of our arts programs in innovative ways that will generate educational opportunities and stimulate creative work among students, faculty, staff, and visiting artists and scholars." The strategic plan at the institution level focuses not just on buildings but on intentional innovation in the arts. This proposed interdisciplinary program brings together literary artists and readers in an innovative way, strengthening the vision and presence of the arts on campus while enhancing the profile of the literary arts for the undergraduate student.

Goal I of the Strategic Plan of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is focused on student success, with a primary aim of providing "a rich and challenging undergraduate experience that develops in students the skills and understanding that contribute to rewarding personal lives, satisfying and productive work, and informed participation in a diverse, multi-cultural society." Like all liberal arts majors, the proposed program encourages students to acquire these experiences and transferable skills that are useful in many professions. Creative writers, for example, can be valuable to any endeavor requiring communication skills and an ability to see from multiple perspectives, with students gaining employment in such professions as marketing, advertising, web design, media design, publishing, editing, and translation as well as in the more traditional fields of teaching and research.

- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at SUI. The Department of English currently offers a track in creative writing within its major in English. The track has 97 students enrolled; students have requested a more in-depth writing experience. If the proposed program is approved, this track will be closed. Current students will be allowed to complete the track or may move to the new program of study. New students will not be allowed to declare the track so duplication with this existing program will not exist.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences also offers a Writing Certificate, a skill-based certificate to encourage writing across the curriculum which includes courses in technical writing, online writing, writing for the sciences, and similar emphasis areas as well as creative writing courses. The certificate may be earned by any undergraduate and thus serves a different audience than the English major, particularly since it focuses on writing that is appropriate for any major; it does not duplicate the proposed program.

The program of study offered by the Writers' Workshop is a master's program and is not open to undergraduates; the Writers' Workshop does offer courses for undergraduates, many of which are included in the proposed program, and will give undergraduates a larger access to the Writers' Workshop.

- ◇ Relationship to existing programs at other colleges and universities. Most post-secondary institutions in Iowa offer programs related to creative writing but few offer a program that integrates reading literature with writing as an art form. Loras College offers such a program with undergraduates able to choose a double major in Literature and Creative Writing or in Creative Writing. At Coe College, the Creative Writing program is offered as a "collateral major," requiring the completion of a second major.

Institutions in Iowa tend to offer a minor, an emphasis area, or optional courses in creative writing within the English major. For example, UNI offers a minor in creative writing, and ISU offers an English major with optional creative writing courses for interested undergraduates. Grinnell College and Central College offer creative writing courses embedded in their English majors. Morningside College offers the English major with a creative writing emphasis area and as does Upper Iowa University. Cornell College offers an English BA and a minor with creative writing offered as an emphasis area (along with the choices of literature and film studies). Mount Mercy University also offers a minor in creative writing within the Department of English. Wartburg College has a Writing program that focuses on English, technical writing, and creative writing, with students able to choose a three-course emphasis area. Drake University offers a broader Writing program with an emphasis available in creative writing.

- ◇ Unique features. For the past 75 years, the Department of English and the Writers' Workshop have been leaders in the area of writing. The MFA offered by the Nonfiction Writing Program and administered by the Department of English has been voted the number one MFA program in creative nonfiction in the United States. Likewise, the MFA program in the Writers' Workshop is annually noted as the number one graduate program in the country. The international reputation of writing at Iowa is boosted by a synergy across colleges, with the International Writing Program hosting published writers each fall from countries around the world and each spring traveling to other countries, taking Iowa writing "on the road."

This synergy helps the University and Iowa City draw writers of all ages and nationalities to its writing community. This community is bolstered by the strong readings series offered by the Nonfiction Writing Program, the Writers' Workshop, and Prairie Lights Books, with hundreds of readings archived by the Iowa Digital Library, creating a resource for future writers and scholars. The status of Iowa City as a UNESCO City of Literature has also enriched the writing community, with people from across the Midwest visiting the town during the annual Book Festival. The new MOOCs offered by the Department of English, "Every Atom: Walt Whitman's Song of Myself," and by the International Writing Program's series, "How Writers Write," have enrolled thousands of students and adult learners, enhancing the reputation of Iowa as the Writing University. The Summer Writing Festival, Iowa Young Writers Studies, the Certificate in Writing, the Center for the Book, the Iowa Playwrights Workshop, and the Iowa Youth Writing Project all help to turn Iowa City into a destination for young writers, who are drawn to the city for its heritage and for its current community of writers.

- ◇ Resources. The personnel, facilities, and equipment for the English program will be used to support the proposed program because a shift in enrollment patterns is expected. The cost is minimal for this program because existing faculty in related departments and colleges will participate. The program has a full-time advisor who works with students on internships and other opportunities. Thus the course work, faculty, and infrastructure for the major are in place, and the program of study will require no additional resources.

No new facilities or equipment will be required for the proposed B.A. Existing faculty will develop and teach the three new courses that will be required for the program. The other requirements for the major will be fulfilled with existing courses from the Department of English, the Nonfiction Writing Program (within the Department of English), and from the Writers' Workshop. An advisory board composed of representatives from the Department of English and the Writers' Workshop will be created and will make recommendations regarding the curriculum, requirements, exceptions to the requirements, and similar matters, such as assessment of the major. For example, the Advisory Board will discuss and guide the major on issues such as the development of appropriate new courses. The board's leadership will be represented by both the Department of English and the Writers' Workshop, with one member from each serving as co-chair of the board. The current Department Executive Officer and Director of Undergraduate Studies the Department of English will implement the new program of study and oversee daily activities related to the major; new staff or administrators for the program will not be needed.

- ◇ Student demand. There has been ongoing interest shown by undergraduates.
- ◇ Duplication. Elements of the proposed program are available at a number of other post-secondary institutions in Iowa. However, the proposed program differs from those programs because it integrates reading literature with writing as an art form.
- ◇ Workforce need/demand. The proposed concentrated curriculum will enable students to acquire the tools for developing the essential, transferable skills at the core of a liberal arts major. Creative writers may be employed by any business requiring communication skills, including public relations, marketing, advertising, web design, media design, social media communications, teaching, publishing, editing, and technical writing, including technical writing in the sciences, health care professions, and computer science, all in need of highly skilled writers to interpret these technical fields to the general public.

There is also the expectation that public relations will experience a 12% growth; marketing and advertising are also projected at this rate. Those with a specialty in communication and writing may be employed as managers (12% growth), administrators (9%growth), or administrative service managers (12% growth), particularly within the state and federal governments, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions.<sup>1</sup>

- ◇ Consultation with representatives of other programs. The deans within appropriate colleges at ISU and UNI were consulted about the proposed program. Both institutions were supportive of the proposed program, noting that the program was an appropriate fit given SUI's reputation in this field.
- ◇ Letters of support. Letters of support are provided in the Attachment.
- ◇ Cost. The initial cost of the proposed program will be \$91,500; this will be covered by internal reallocation of resources by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. By Year Three, the cost may increase to approximately \$370,000 with increased revenues from additional credit hours.

		New Costs	Total Costs
Year 1	No new costs	\$0	\$0
Year 2	Lecturer and additional teaching assistant	\$91,500	\$91,500
Year 3	Possible teaching assistant	\$30,636	\$122,136
Year 4	Tenure track line	\$131,308	\$253,444
Year 5	No new costs expected after year 4		

The proposed program involves the shift of an existing track to a stand-alone program. The Department of English and the Writers' Workshop are working closely together to offer the required course work for this proposed major; as the major grows, an additional lecturer, teaching assistants, and a possible tenure-track line may be needed but for now the goal of the program is to use existing resources, and return the numbers enrolled in the Department of English to its 2011 levels. The Department of English will offer and teach courses with the administrative home in English and faculty and instructors from the Writers' Workshop will teach courses with the creative writing designation. Three new courses will be developed for the major, particularly a foundational course. Because this is an interdisciplinary major, the cost of instruction is shared among those offering the courses, with the administrative burden shared by the Advisory Board.

- ◇ Projected enrollment. The enrollment is expected to be 50 students during year one, increasing to 200 by year seven.
- ◇ Anticipated sources of students. Current English major who are pursuing the creative writing track are likely to transfer to the proposed program. Other students will be new undergraduates, resulting from outreach done by the Admissions Office, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Office of Strategic Communications.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics: Occupational Outlook Handbook, Employment Projections.


- ◇ Articulation agreement. Currently, there are no plans for articulation agreements.
- ◇ Off-campus delivery. The proposed program will be offered on campus.
- ◇ Opportunities for internships. The proposed program does not require an internship, but the Department of English strongly encourages all students to participate in internships and related activities. The department offers a course focusing on career strategies which gives students additional help finding internships and other strategies to prepare for a career related to the English major.
- ◇ Marketing plan. Upon approval of the proposed program, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences will work with Admissions and the Office of Strategic Communication to develop a marketing plan; generally, a new major is added to the application, to all relevant materials, and web sites to inform students about the major. Additionally, campus visit days highlight new majors as do special open houses and visits with high school counselors. Admissions will plan special events for future students to attend, such as literary events in Iowa City. Most importantly, faculty will meet with students to discuss the major. The professional advisor in English also meets with future students who are invited to attend class on campus. The Office of Strategic Communications will help create information and stories about the major because of its connection with the long history of the literary arts at Iowa.
- ◇ Evaluation plan. Each year, every major at the University of Iowa participates in campus-wide assessment of programs, with departments submitting their annual plans and steps taken for improvement to the Office of Assessment. Additionally, the College reviews new programs after the third year, asking the departmental chair or the program director to review with the Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (UEPCC) the enrollments, course offerings, progress toward degree, assessment outcomes, and other details. UEPCC then makes recommendations to the College on any needed changes to the program of study. Departments are also reviewed every five years by the College and by outside reviewers who are experts in the field and, at that time, all existing majors within a department are also reviewed, with curricular offerings and requirements discussed, with changes recommended. Additionally, the Department of English will require the development of a formative portfolio, which will include representative work and experience that could be used for application to the next level of professional development or employment. Assessment may also take the form of exit surveys on students' future educational plans and careers and efforts to track our graduates' success in applying to appropriate graduate programs, professional schools, or positions in relate fields.
- ◇ Date of implementation. Creation of the proposed program will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University's General Catalog. The anticipated implementation date is Fall 2016.



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DATE: February 23, 2015

TO: Helena Dettmer, Associate Dean  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Iowa

FROM: Amy Slagell, Associate Dean   
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Iowa State University

RE: Proposed BA in English and Creative Writing BA

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is happy to support the proposal for a new English and Creative Writing major at the University of Iowa. The excellent reputation of the Iowa Writers' Workshop will make the new BA program highly visible from the moment it is available to students. Converting the current creative writing track within the English major into its own BA program so that students can build a community of writers within the major throughout their four years will clearly support student success and is responsive to student needs.

The Department of English here at Iowa State offers an MFA program in Creative Writing and the Environment; faculty and students in the program appreciate the culture of writing and the many events available in Iowa City. We look forward to future collaborations with University of Iowa faculty and students through forums such as the Iowa Humanities Festival.

We wish you success with your efforts and look forward to learning how your new major helps students achieve their future goals.

To: Helena Dettmer, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and  
Curriculum and the Humanities, UI  
Jonathan Wilcox, Chair of the Department of English, UI

From: Julie Husband, Head, Department of Languages and Literatures, UNI  
Joel Haack, Dean, College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences, UNI

November 18, 2014

RE: Response to University of Iowa proposal for a BA English and Creative  
Writing

The Curriculum Committee of the Department of Languages and Literatures at UNI met on November 12 to discuss the University of Iowa's proposal for a new undergraduate major in English and Creative Writing. We noted the strength of this major given the strong reputation of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the opportunities afforded to undergraduates through a stronger connection with IWW. The thorough grounding in literature and the range of creative writing workshop experiences seems a powerful combination, although the breadth of the major might seem more typical of a comprehensive university.

We determined that this new program does not duplicate UNI's Writing minor, often combined with the English BA, for a number of reasons. The appeal of our combined program, in large measure, stems from its close association with the *North American Review* and the many opportunities that students have to work on this nationally known literary magazine. Students gain publishing and editing experience through the magazine and, at times, combine the creative writing minor with the professional writing minor for a broad experience in multiple genres of writing. We see this combination to be our distinctive branding of creative writing.

We wish you much success in this new program at the University of Iowa.