

Academic Program Assessment Report

M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing & Translation

Assessment Tools

As outlined in our Academic Program Assessment Plan, the Program in Creative Writing and Translation uses the following assessment tools for student learning outcomes:

- A combined thesis defense and oral examination.
- A yearly review of each student's academic progress toward the M.F.A. degree.
- An indirect review of our graduates' professional success via published works, national program rankings, and anecdotal evidence.

Assessment Results

Thesis defense/oral exams: As of May 6, 2016, all of the M.F.A. students eligible to graduate this spring had successfully written and defended a thesis manuscript that was deemed publishable by their thesis committees. Through oral examination, the committees were furthermore satisfied that each candidate was leaving the program with a broad knowledge of literature and technique.

Yearly academic review: In May 2016, the director and assistant director of the M.F.A. program jointly examined each student's academic transcript. Of 36 students, all showed satisfactory progress toward their degrees (though one student is withdrawing from the program for personal reasons).

Graduate success: In its latest ranking of M.F.A. programs, *Poets & Writers* placed the University of Arkansas M.F.A. program 8th in the nation (out of 150 programs) for job placement and 18th for post-graduate fellowships. Among the many accomplishments of our graduates this year,

- After completing a year in the Rolex Mentors & Proteges program, which paired him with renowned author Michael Ondaatje, alum Miroslav Penkov published his novel *Stork Mountain* to critical acclaim.
- Chloe Honum accepted a tenure-track position as assistant professor of poetry at Baylor University; among many honors this year, she won a prestigious Pushcart Prize for her poem "Snow White."
- Nic Pizzolatto's drama *True Detective*, which he created and writes, returned to HBO for a second season; HBO contracted with Nic to develop additional content for the cable network through 2018.
- Tony Tost continued his work as a writer and producer on season 4 of the television series *Longmire*, which moved from A&E to Netflix this year.
- *The New Yorker* magazine featured two recent graduates: Kathleen Heil, who is completing a year as a Sturgis International Fellow in Berlin, with her poem "Kegger in Georgi Balanchivadze's Back Yard," and Jacob Shores-Arguello, with his poem "In Ukraine."

- Cody Walker appeared in the 2015 Best American Poetry anthology with his poem “Trades I Would Make.”
- Hardin Young won a prestigious Individual Artist Fellowship for screenwriting, awarded by the Arkansas Arts Council.
- And hundreds of poems, stories, novels, essays, and translations by graduates were published by well-known presses and in journals such as *Poetry*, *Harvard Review*, *The Oxford American*, *The Southern Review*, *The Cimarron Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *The Guardian*.

Use of Results

Almost without exception, students in the M.F.A. program graduate within four years. These students produce publishable manuscripts, and many go on to prestigious post-graduate fellowships and residencies, as well as careers in teaching and writing.

Last year, the Program in Creative Writing and Translation established an M.F.A. Curriculum committee. In order to diversify and deepen our graduates’ knowledge of literature, the committee implemented new requirements for courses that emphasize cultural diversity and for courses that focus on literature written prior to 1900. These changes are reflected in the forthcoming graduate Catalog of Studies.

In addition, the committee agreed to change the way we academically advise students so that their fourth (final) year can be committed to coursework that focuses on the development of publishable manuscripts and that prepares them for post-graduate publication and careers.