**Master of Fine Arts**

Program Outcomes for the MFA in Creative Writing are as follows:

1. Students should be able to produce material in their chosen genre of a quality that is comparable to the material being published in contemporary literary magazines and journals.
2. Students should have a broad theoretical and technical understanding of their chosen discipline and of at least one secondary creative discipline.
3. Students should be able to write clear and engaging prose about writing craft and literary analysis and be able to produce sustained and coherent critical papers at an appropriate level of sophistication.
4. Students should complete their courses of study in a rigorous and timely manner.
5. Students should be adequately prepared for a career in writing and publishing, including an ability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses in their own work, a sense of the literary marketplace, and a plan for seeking publication.
6. Students should be able to evaluate writing in a way that might serve through teaching or community writing/literacy programs.

**Data & Usage**

In order to determine whether each program had met its outcome goals, faculty evaluated the thesis and comprehensive exams of the 14 MFA students who graduated in May 2010. Faculty also considered student responses to exit survey questionnaires (see attached).

**Discoveries**

1. The theses were of high quality, and with the possible exception of one thesis, were considered by the evaluators to be of publishable quality.

2. Students did exhibit a broad understanding of their chosen discipline, and a sufficient grasp of one other creative writing genre.

3. The comprehensive exams showed that students were able to write clearly and engagingly about literature, but did not demonstrate a sustained or coherent critical effort.

4. Four students completed their courses of study in a timely manner, and one did not. This student left the program to pursue another career path, and chose to finish the thesis several years after having left the program.

5. While three students indicated on the exit survey that they did not feel adequately prepared for a career in writing, three of the five were able to land significant first jobs in the field. One other is already employed in a related field, and the fifth student has had on-campus interviews for distinguished teaching positions.

6. In comparing the exit surveys from 2010 to those from 2006, it is clear that significant steps have been taken to address previous concerns. Out of the 12 surveys, the MEAN score on 15 out of the
twenty questions was between a 1 or a 2. The MODE was a 1 on eleven of the twenty questions, and a 2 on seven of the questions. The surveys revealed especially high satisfaction with the thesis process. All 12 surveys showed either a very strong or strong agreement that there was sufficient latitude in choosing thesis and that the thesis construction was valuable. Students also overwhelmingly agreed that the program gave them a depth of intellectual enrichment, the quality of instruction was high, faculty were accessible, fellow students provided academic stimulation, the required work was appropriate and that visiting writers/scholars greatly enriched their education.

Nine of the twelve either strongly agreed or agreed that they would enthusiastically recommend the degree program, with 2 students neutral. Nine of the twelve also agreed that they were prepared for the next step in their professional careers. Ten of the 12 strongly agreed or agreed that they had plenty of access to research tools in the program. This is a marked improvement over the previous survey where this had been a concern.

Two questions revealed a mixed response. On the question of TA training, six of the eight students responded favorably (either strongly agreed or agreed) while 2 disagreed. As the TA training has since been reconfigured, this may or may not be a concern. On the question regarding having adequate information about and support for professional activities, the responses varied widely from strongly agree to disagree.

The main areas of concern among students surveyed have to do with the range of courses and faculty expertise:

- Students indicate disappointment regarding the balance between core curriculum and elective courses.
- Students indicate not enough attention is being paid to contemporary poetry in literature courses.
- Students indicate the range of literature courses offered is not adequate.

**Recommendations**

It appears that MFA graduates are producing quality work and are having considerable success in finding employment in the field following graduation. The survey reveals that students in the MFA are generally satisfied with their educational experience and feel that they are getting the faculty and departmental support they need to pursue writing careers. The faculty and program appears to have stabilized since the survey from 2006. While the majority of the concerns from the 2006 survey have been addressed, that that was the last assessment available reveals a gap. It will be important for department to assess annually in future. It might also be useful to track graduates as they continue their careers. Student concerns about curriculum should be noted. MFA students in particular expressed dissatisfaction about what they viewed as a lack of courses pertinent to their chosen field, particularly in the area of literature courses on poetry. The English Department should review its graduate course offerings and consider including more courses pertinent to MFA students. Faculty should also consider including more poetry in their courses.