

Criterion III: Evidence of Continuing Preparation and Study

Brief Narrative

Within Criterion III, I will highlight areas essential to my continued preparation and study. These include program course proposals for future consideration; updated program requirements with Goal 6 additions; lectures/workshops I've attended; and presentations and guest speaking. These are all areas that remind me of why my personal educational journey is never ending.

Ongoing course prep takes time; time for research and time for rejuvenation. My spring, '23 sabbatical indulged within me a rejuvenation into my creative process, which ultimately reflects my continuing course prep and study. During my sabbatical I dedicated to write 70 poems in 70 days, and I also planned to meander by catching up on reading, both for pleasure and for scholarship.

I took time to delve into researching future texts for my courses. Some texts I read in full, and I wrote a few reviews for Goodreads and Amazon. I altered my assigned reading lists for my upcoming courses to accommodate some of my recent reads. Selecting course texts requires careful and important decision-making. A big component of successful writing is reading. If I can't grab students with the assigned texts it will interfere with every required assignment. We read for pleasure, and we read to improve our writing.

Exploring the literary market expands my thoughts on new course offerings. Years back I developed courses that became staples for the creative writing major: *Writers as Readers*; *Writing Humor*; *The Graphic Novel*, and *Travel Writing*. I continue to explore options for developing new classes. In this criterion section I offer some sample courses I have yet to propose. The creative writing program currently covers all major genres, at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. Although we have some excellent ideas for expanding course offerings, I firmly believe one of the reasons our program stays steady in times of covid and low enrollment is because we have stayed constant and consistent with our offerings, and we don't overload. Keep things steady yet current. To illustrate this you may refer to our updated major/minor degree plan, and a simplified yearly plan for completion. Also, our program recently took action on getting our courses listed under Goal 6, as they fall into all the requirements.

We currently have over 50 majors/minors, and my advising role with creative writing majors truly enhances student/teacher trust. Often I am asked, "Do you identify first as a writer or a teacher?" I don't hesitate; I identify as a teacher, then writer. I teach and I write daily. It is my service to community. I'm always looking for ways to engage students in a course, a book, and a new perspective on life.

I often think how one piece of writing leads to another, and writers everywhere are always on the look-out for a nugget to trigger an idea. Writing becomes a collaboration of these ideas and thoughts, and brief moments in time that grow and unfold the way any artistic work of art transforms. This collaboration gives each voice a distinct difference in its telling and its form.

Through writing, reading, and participating in workshops we fine-tune an end product.

Whenever I ponder the process, I think of how essential attending workshops are for all the reasons I just mentioned. If ever I am available, I attend presentations of colleagues and guest lecturers. I attend workshops on zoom regularly through the Loft Literary Center, and The Believer Magazine. In addition to attending lectures and workshops, I offer my services openly to colleagues. Anything to promote reading and writing I try to make an appearance. Since my tenure I have visited several classes of my colleagues and within the community that I consider myself fortunate. Sometimes these visits spark interest in students; sometimes they perhaps serve as an interruption of prescribed agenda, but I can't help but think if even one student leaves the lecture thinking, "huh," I've done my service successfully.

I believe there are five key points for successful teaching:

1. Be open minded to how the course is delivered
2. A virtual cohort is nonetheless a cohort
3. Take learning seriously
4. Welcome challenges and run with them
5. Don't take yourself so seriously

These are the rules that work for me. I am closing this narrative with some inspirational quotes that are also part of my mantra team.

Some Words of Inspiration

The being of our sentences, in the climate that fostered them, not ours to own, like a book, but to be with, and sometimes to be without, alone and desperate. -John Ashbery

Thinking not to grow up is the brightest kind of maturity. -John Ashbery

Her veins run mogen david and her mind just runs. -Lucille Clifton

Perhaps we wanted to ensure that someone loved us at the end. -Rafael Campo

Home-made, home-made! But aren't we all? -Elizabeth Bishop