



Program Annual Reflection

Academic Year 2023-2024

The 2023-2024 data needed to complete the Program Annual Reflection will be posted on My.Metro on or before Thursday, August 1, 2024. You can find it under Reports and by clicking the Annual Reflection link or by using this [link](#). If you have trouble accessing the data, please contact Provost Gort.

The completed Program Annual Reflection form is due on **Tuesday, October 1, 2024**.

Program Name: Creative Writing

The creative writing program empowers student voices during their academic experience and beyond. By teaching courses in a workshop setting, students develop their skills in leadership, listening, and writing through consistent feedback and interactive dialogue. Students read and write extensively in the core courses; assigned readings allow them to engage and learn from cultural and genre diversity. We encourage student involvement in our university arts journal, *Haute Dish*, to further learn the editorial process as well as adapt to a clear understanding of writing styles including documentation for academic assignments. Graduates of the program find work in editing, publishing, web design, freelance writing, etc. Several of our students go on to pursue a liberal arts graduate degree. Our students tell us our program is deeply impactful in terms of developing a writer's life committed to the arts.

Section I: Institutional Data: Please comment on the data from Institutional Effectiveness and Research. (Please limit responses to 200 words for each item)

- a. CRITERION 5: Number of majors: _____ **42** _____ Increase **X** Decrease Static

Is this number an increase, decrease, or static compared to previous year? **This is a decrease, as we are still recovering from Covid.**

Optional comments: We graduated six majors in spring, two over summer, '24.

- b. CRITERION 4: Retention of Majors and Pre-Majors or Graduate Students: Retention data provided by Institutional Effectiveness and Research

What trends do you see with this data compared to previous years? **We overall are static, and our numbers continue to increase for declared majors/minors.**

- c. CRITERION 4: Number of graduates: 11 Increase Decrease X Static
Is this number an increase, decrease, or static compared to previous year? **In 2018 we had 11 graduates from the program, which is the same number as 2023.**
Optional comments: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- d. CRITERION 5: Number of credit hours enrolled: 706
- e. _____ Increase Decrease X Static
Is this number an increase, decrease, or static compared to previous year? Click or tap here to enter text.
Optional comments: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- f. CRITERION 2: Number of credit hours taught by: **could not locate this information**
RF _____ CF _____ Increase Decrease Static

Percentage of total credits hours taught by RF _____ CF _____ **could not find this information.** Increase Decrease Static
Optional comments: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- g. CRITERION 6: Costs vs. Revenues: How does the cost per credit for your program compare with others in your college and the university average? What trends are evident compared to previous years? Are there particular expenses impacting the cost per credit data that need to be explained? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) Cost per credit for creative writing is \$236.00. The university average is \$146; CLA average in \$143.00.

Section II: Please reflect on the 2023-2024 academic year in the following questions. Please limit each response to 300 words.

- a. What are the greatest successes for your program during the 2023-2024 academic year? **It is typical for creative writing students reflect the success of the creative writing program. For example, Spring, 2024, Bryant Rooney, a creative writing major, won the CLA President's Outstanding Student Award. In spring of 2024, creative writing major, Tim Knight, received a scholarship for the Loft Mentorship Program where he focused on writing memoir; several students, both alumni and current, have ongoing publications in various literary journals both in print, and online. Most recently, creative writing major, Tom Folske published a piece of flash fiction in the literary journal, *Equinox*. Another creative writing student, Tara Guy, recently published a piece that was a class assignment in a journal titled *Horror Tree*. Previous to that Tara was published in the fall issue of the *St. Paul Almanac*. Yesterday during office hours I had an alumnus stop in to show me his recent publication in a print journal, *A Fanzine Compilation*. We showcase our program through publication and extra curricular programming. Our student literary publication, *Haute Dish*, which is published bi-annually, and has a volunteer student editorial staff of 12-16 students. *Haute Dish* receives well**

over 100 submissions annually. *Get Lit*, established in 2017, is our ongoing advanced writer's workshop which includes alumni and current students who meet once a month for three hours on zoom. *Spoken Word*, an annual event, continues to collaborate with the theatre department for student performances. Our faculty are very active in the creative writing community both at Metro and in the Twin Cities. Ed Lee, resident faculty, manages the Spoken Word event annually. In 2023 Ed was awarded a \$10,000 Minnesota State Arts Board fellowship for poetry. Suzanne Nielsen, resident faculty, continues to promote the Northstar Promise to everyone she stands in line with at the grocery store. Creative Writing resident faculty are featured readers at several local/national events. Belo Cipriani was recently on WCCO talking about The Process of Poetry. We are currently working on the details of our annual fall 2024 reading for *Haute Dish*. According to our annual reflection responses our program falls under "healthy" for mission; strength of structure/foundation; outcomes and achievements; and opportunities. We have a "neutral" rating for size of program, which we intend to grow over the next two years.

- b. In the next section, please provide information about new or continuing initiatives related to the program health and sustainability criteria and the results of those initiatives. Note: you may or may not have initiatives for each of the criteria.

i. CRITERON 1: Initiatives related to mission alignment and reputation and their results (initiatives might address anti-racism, serving first-generation college students, community engagement, partnerships, curricular mission alignment, etc.): Creative writing has a current collaboration with local literary arts organizations such as Rain Taxi. I mention this because Rain Taxi provides a varied list of offerings to include translation of manuscripts. This has resulted in increased student interest in poetry and literature in translation. For instance, recently a student requested working with a resident faculty developing an SDIS in Somali poetry translation. Perhaps there is a connection to our ongoing promotion of Rain Taxi. Other students expressed interests in translation as well. This is in direct alignment with the creative writing programs' anti-racism mission of serving first generation college students, making partnerships within the community, and our commitment to engagement and greater diversity goals. Our resident faculty member, Ed Lee, presented a paper at the AWP national convention titled "Beyond BTS and Squid Game: Korean Contemporary Poetry in Translation." This summer I spoke to several students interested in creative writing. I believe our minor numbers have increased significantly in the last two years. Our courses are full this fall, '24, and students new to the program are emailing me requesting information on becoming a volunteer editor. Our editorial staff continue to grow in diversity, and through student word of mouth we continue to reach out to all voices. Currently we have several first-generation majors; and there is a cohort of several students new to the program this fall, '24.

ii. CRITERION 2: Initiatives related to the strength of the program structure and foundation and results: To stay on the cutting edge of a creative writing program, we need to stay current with literary trends. With departmental support, our community faculty created and taught a course for our Topics in Writing this summer, '24, titled *Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing*. This course filled early and maintained a waiting list. We need to continue to offer these courses to deliver relevant creative writing

experiences to our students. Many voices believe in Metro State. Our program brings in guest lecturers such as Michael Kleber-Diggs, Sarah Cooper, Al Franken, Tig Notaro, among others for career and professional connections. Guests share their stories regarding the writing process, and welcome questions from all students. Many of our guests visit our classrooms for free because they believe in the mission of our university. Our program also engages in representing creative writing at undergraduate open houses. I think creating a two-year plan for course offerings helps our students. However, we do continue to work with students through SDIS/FDISs in situations related to graduation timelines. For example, in summer, '23 I completed two FDISs with students in Humor Writing. In Fall, '23 I worked with an SDIS in Advanced Humor Writing. In Spring, '24 I worked on three SDISs: Writing for Children, Writing Commentary, and Advanced Creative Writing. This fall I am working with two student FDISs, once again so these students can graduate this fall. We are finding that several of our FDISs are coming through as grad (G) level courses. Students enrolled in the MLS program often find our courses applicable for their intended graduate focus. These courses are adapted to a G-Level with professor/student discussion/plan. This semester (Fall, '24), I am working with two grad students.

CRITERION 3: Initiatives related to the outcomes and achievement of the program and results (might include licensure/certification, accreditation, student evaluations/student satisfaction, or other recognition):

- iii. CRITERION 4: Initiatives related to the outcomes and achievements of students in the program (might include student retention, graduation rates, closing equity gaps, etc.): **In Section II, a, I shared some of our student achievements. When I reflect on this question, I think students offer up clear and direct feedback on outcomes and achievements. Here are a few recent comments from our majors: "There are so many elements of this class that I truly enjoyed, and that helped me grow as a writer. I LOVED the 10-15 minute free-writes, and then sharing those writings with the class. It forced me to pay attention to my own thoughts, and because I only had 10 minutes to produce something, I had to put my immediate thought to paper. I was surprised by what I was able to produce. And now I have so many ideas for future short stories! The other thing that impacted me was to think about "showing" versus "telling," and to use the five senses. I hadn't thought about my writing in that way before. Lastly, when I write a piece of work, I am personally invested in it and am not usually open to others critiquing it. It feels somewhat insecure having others tell me there's a lot wrong with it. I always felt offended. But the way you facilitated the discussion around each of our pieces, was soft, yet direct, and supportive. Everyone took risks with feedback, but in a respectful way. Thank you for fostering such enriching conversations." Another comment stated: "I'm wrapping up my thoughts on your class. I was thinking about what you said about having a notebook ready to jot down phrases you come across, or whatever might inspire you on a given day. Personally, I was thinking, 'Nah, I'm not going to do that. I'm not that committed.' Last night, I wrote down a phrase I heard from a documentary. Today, I found a phrase I liked as I was reading an article for another class. I felt the need to write that down as well. I**

laughed silently to myself as I reflected on what you said. I am now looking for a notebook to put these two phrases in. I love it! Thank you, I really enjoyed your class, your energy and humor, and honesty. I don't think I shared with you that I am taking Belo's class this semester. I will use Poet's Companion and all my notes I took from your class to aid me." We have been graduating on average 8-10 students per year, and many of our students go on for graduate studies. Our students regularly publish work in various literary journals/publications and share their news with us throughout the semesters.

- iv. **CRITERION 5: Initiatives related to the size of the program and results (might include articulation agreements, outreach efforts, student retention and completion, etc.): According to analysis we remain static with retention and number of graduates from the program. We are up to date with articulation agreements; however, we are working on CCRs for several of our required courses to be listed under Goal 6. Throughout the year our resident faculty visit local high schools and hold workshops in classes. Also, our resident faculty visit several WRIT courses and lecture on descriptive narrative writing. As stated earlier, we have strong alumni representation at our *Get Lit* monthly meetings, and many of our students inform us of their career progressions. Retention is key for our students, and that is why so many current AND alumni participate in events such as Get Lit, Haute Dish, and individual projects.**

- v. **CRITERION 6: Initiatives related to the revenue and expenses of the program and results (might include increasing class fill rates, reducing program costs through schedule management, faculty workload management, etc.): Our creative writing program is very cost-effective operating with 1.75 resident faculty. Our community faculty teach almost half of courses offered a semester as we have 1.75 full time resident faculty in the program. of our teaching on average semester. A community faculty working with TREC taught WRIT 359: Creative Writing Boot Camp at Fairbault in spring semester with a total of 20 students. That same community member taught a summer WRIT 359 at Stillwater with 12 students enrolled. Our creative writing courses usually fill, especially in Fall. It was unfortunate that we ended up cancelling WRIT 300 this fall, '24. As stated earlier, we had community faculty, Chavonn Chen, hired to teach the course for us. We are excited to work with Chavonn, and to add her to our roster of instructors. Unfortunately, this past spring, '24, we lost long-time community faculty member, GE Patterson, to full time work at The Loft Literary Center. GE had taught for us going on three decades. We want our program to be represented by instructors of color, and we hope to keep our classrooms rich in diversity. We also want to continue partnerships with other departments to offset costs, such as we will possibly participate in another theater collaboration, as well as a collaboration within our WLL department. Again, we offer many SDIS/FDIS options in our program due to our two-year schedule, and the potential outcome of cancelled classes. Students do not want to wait a semester, and in some cases several semesters, to graduate, and therefore this is an option we'll continue to honor.**

- vi. **CRITERION 7: Initiatives related to new opportunities for the program and results (might include partnerships, unique program strengths/distinctions, innovative teaching practices, collaborating with other departments to share curriculum, curriculum that is part of other programs/GELS/RIGR, etc.):** **As stated under CRITERION 5, we are in the process of getting our required courses added to Goal 6. These courses include WRIT 352: Writing Memoir; WRIT 353: Writing Short Fiction; WRIT 354: Writing Poetry; WRIT 356: Humor Writing; WRIT 357: Writers as Readers; WRIT 358: 1000 Words or Less; WRIT 481: Advanced Creative Writing. Our creative writing/literary arts collaboration with Rain Taxi, a local non-profit literary arts organization is an important connection for our students because collaborating branches into potential internship opportunities for our students. In addition, we plan to create co-taught courses with lit and language, our department colleagues.**

- c. **Were any initiatives put on hold or discontinued during the 2023-2024 academic year and why? We put on hold our request for a full-time faculty member in creative writing. Part of this decision is solely based on the financial status of the university, and a slight decline in student enrollment. At the same time our program suffers the challenges of program growth. When covid hit, some of our majors put their degrees on hold, and for a few semesters we did not see some of our students. When students did return after a few semesters of hiatus, we had a total of 11 students graduate in the last three semesters. Our numbers are increasing; I know this because of having direct contact with students expressing an interest in our courses. Our minor declarations have increased, and our major declarations will continue to grow partly due to Northstar Promise.**

- d. **What were the greatest challenges for your program during the 2023-2024 academic year? To start, our program went through a re-org change. We moved from Fine Arts to Writing, Literature and Languages (WLL). Although this re-org proves to be a beneficial change for faculty and students, we are still learning from one another. Through this exploration faculty are recognizing how our programs benefit further learning for our majors. Declining enrollments throughout higher ed remain a huge challenge. However, with the NorthStar Initiative our enrollments are due to increase over the next two years. In addition, administrative turnover has been a challenge for CLA, however now we have someone in the dean role to advocate for us. I do hope that the new advising structure will address our students' needs. There's been a massive turnover with advisors who knew our program well. If data specific to our program seemed easier to obtain, that would relieve an ongoing challenge. One consistent challenge since Covid is the mode of delivery for class offerings. I think it is important to offer options, and I find the two options that seem to work well for creative writing courses are either face-to-face, or synchronous. Because our courses rely heavily on the process of workshopping, I think it's important to build a sense of community. Other instructors may build community well in the other options.**

- e. What are the external factors that are contributing to your greatest challenges (external to your program)? **Budget constraints are always an issue. We'd love to bring in published authors for lectures/workshops for our students, however this costs \$, and we have none.**
- f. Based on this reflection, what are the priorities, opportunities, initiatives for your program for the 2024-2025 academic year? **Our priorities include a focus on continued growth within our program. I am waiting on stats for our program to determine exactly where we are at. Last year our numbers looked like this: MAJORS: 48, however this was the only stat we were able to locate. We are committed to continue to diversify the faculty and course offerings, and particularly committed to increasing our faculty by one full time member during a budget surplus. We can grow our student numbers by attracting more than a Minnesota-based perspective of students through offering a variety of class delivery instruction. We will continue and expand on our collaborating with our colleagues for the best learning options of our students.**
- g. What resource needs does your program have to support the priorities, opportunities, and initiatives during the 2024-2025 academic year? **One additional full-time faculty added to our program.**

Signed by program members below: Suzanne Nielsen