

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 3rd, 2024, all 12 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 satisfied that graduating candidates were leaving the program with a broad knowledge of literature and technique.

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 students and graduates this year:

Student and Alumni Accomplishments

- Rising fourth-year M.F.A. student Joaquín Gavilano was awarded a Student Artist grant and recognized by [Artists 360](#) for his work in literary translation. Artist 360 grants are awarded by the Walton Family Foundation and Mid-America Arts Alliance.
- Two poems from rising fourth-year MFA Cal Paule's forthcoming debut collection, "Black Box Named Like to Me" (Ugly Duckling Press) will appear in an upcoming issue of the Paris Review.
- CW concentration undergrad alum Caroline Jennings' poetry chapbook *Stop and Smell the Fractals (and Everything in Between)* was published in November by Finishing Line Press
- Second-year poet Claire Scott won the [West Trade Review](#) Prize for Poetry.
- Recent graduate Elizabeth Muscari was nominated for Best New Poets by Booth Literary Journal this Spring.
- Alumna Julia Paginelli-Marin has been awarded a Community Activator grant by Artists 360 to expand the reach of Bee Balm Arkansas, "a community writing workshop, reading series and publication" founded by Paginelli-Marin in 2022. Paginelli-Marin will use

grant funding to develop curriculum for community poetry-writing workshops, bring visiting writers to Northwest Arkansas and produce the organization's second volume in their chapbook series.

- Paganelli-Marin has also been awarded a creative exchange fund grant by CACHE to expand the reach of Bee Balm Arkansas.
- Poetry alum Jacob Shores-Argüello has been awarded the John Guare Writers Fund Rome Prize, a Gift of Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman for his work, “River Citizen.”
- Bayou Magazine nominated 2022 poetry alum Amelie Langland’s poem, “Listed in the Lagniappe” (Issue 78) for the Pushcart Prize.
- Translation alum Anna Vilner's translation of Hebe Uhart's "The Preparatory School" the August 31st, 2023 issue of The New Yorker.
- Vilner’s translation of “A Memory from My Personal Life,” by Hebe Uhart was published in the Paris Review in December 2023.
- Poetry alum Adam Clay’s latest poetry collection, *Circle Back* was released by Milkweed Editions in early 2024.
- *Americana*, a film written and directed by alum Tony Tost, was released in 2023.
- Recent graduate CD Eskilson’s two books are forthcoming in 2025: “Scream/Queen” (poetry) from Acre Books (Spring 2025), and “Poems / Dikter” (translated poetry collection) (1916), by Edith Södergran, forthcoming from World Poetry Books (Spring 2026). CD was also nominated for Best New Poets by Beloit Poetry Journal
- Alumna Alison Pelegrin has been named Louisiana Poet Laureate 2023-2025. Alison’s most recent poetry collection, “Our Lady of Bewilderment” (LSU Press) won the Phillip H. McMath Book Award in March 2024.
- *The Bass Reeves Trilogy* by alum Sidney Thomson has been adapted for television as Western drama series *Lawmen: Bass Reeves* on Paramount +. Thompson is a consultant for the show.
- Poetry Magazine featured two poems, "Thorazine at 10 a.m." and "Pharmhouse" by alum Brody Parrish Craig in their July/August 2023 issue. Craig’s new collection of poems, “The Patient Is an Unreliable Historian” will be released by Omnidawn in 2024.
- “Ghost Forest” a new collection of poems by alum and former Louisiana Poet Laureate Jack Bedell was released by Mercer University Press in early 2024.
- Alum Jen Jabaily-Blackburn’s first book of poems, “Girl in a Bear Suit,” was selected by Christopher Citro as winner of the 2023 Elixir Press Annual Poetry Prize and will be released in April 2024
- The fourth season of fiction alum Nick Pizzolatto’s “True Detective” premieres in January, 2024. Pizzolatto acts as an Executive Producer of the show, which he created and wrote from 2014-2019.

- And hundreds of poems, stories, novels, essays, and translations by graduates were published by well-known presses such as Milkweed Editions and in journals such as *Beloit*, *Booth*, *The Paris Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Bayou Magazine*, and *Poetry Magazine*, among others.

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.

In 2017, the Program in Creative Writing and Translation began teaching ENGL 2023, Creative Writing I, as a core course. Assessment data has consistently revealed that our student instructors consistently excel at teaching the course according to stated student learning outcomes and are therefore gaining valuable teaching experience for their professional resumes.

Faculty Accomplishments

Professor Rebecca Gayle Howell

- Keynote at CD Wright Women Writers Conference. Central Arkansas University. Conway, AR.
- Presenter at Beall Poetry Festival. Baylor University. Waco, TX.
- Presenter at Looking Glass Rock Writers Conference. Brevard College. Brevard, NC. |Just released: *El interior de la ballena / The belly of the whale* (Texas Tech University Press, 2024), novel-in-verse by Claudia Prado, translated by Rebecca Gayle Howell.
- *What Things Cost: An Anthology for the People* (University Press of Kentucky, 2023), co-edited with Ashley M. Jones, Emily Jalloul, Associate Editor. Current finalist for Foreword Reviews' INDIES Anthology of the Year.
- *A Winter Breviary* (Song Cycle Libretto by Howell; Composition by Reena Esmail) featured as title tracks on *A Winter Breviary: Choral Works for Christmas* by St. Martin's Voices. (Resonus, 2023.) | The third song of *A Winter Breviary* - "The Unexpected Early Hour [Lauds - Raag Ahir Bhairav]" - (Song Cycle Libretto by Howell; Composition by Reena Esmail) - included in *Carols for Choirs 6*, Compiled & Edited by Bob Chilcott & David Hill. (Oxford University Press, 2023).
- The first song of *A Winter Breviary* - "We Look for You [Evensong - Raag Hamsadhvani]" - (Song Cycle Libretto by Howell; Composition by Reena Esmail) - performed by the National Symphonic Chorus at Carnegie Hall.
- *Say Your Name* (Cantata Libretto by Howell; Composition by Reena Esmail) premiered on the West Coast by the Kirkland Choral Society and Philharmonia

Northwest in Seattle, WA, featuring soloists Stacey Mastrian and Danielle Reutter-Harrah and introduced by Charles Douglas III, Executive Director of Common Power.

- *Southern Indiana Review*. Excerpt from “Erase Genesis.” Winter. (Selected as a Ruth Awad Feature).
- *Orion Magazine*. “The Birds.” Fall.
- *The Southern Review*. ” Four translations from Claudia Prado. Spring.
- *Poetry*. Poem of the Day. “Every Job Has a First Day.” Spring.

Director Davis McCombs

- “The Shadow of the Dog” (haibun/essay) accepted by American Poetry Review.
- “After Hours” (haibun/essay) named winner of the 2024 Sand Hills Prose Contest (\$500), Augusta University.
- “Radical Heat” (haibun/essay) accepted by The Georgia Review. University of Georgia.
- “In a Cleft of the Rock” (haibun/essay) accepted by North American Review. Cedar Falls, Iowa: North American Review / University of Northern Iowa.
- “Ora Et Labora” (haibun/essay) accepted by Pensive, Northeastern University.
- “Asterisk” (haibun/essay) published in The Southern Review (vol. Spring 2023, pp. 315-328). Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
- “Limited Run” (haibun/essay) published in Good River Review (Issue 7), Spalding University.
- “The Private Frog” (haibun/essay) published in Blackbird (Spring 2024) Virginia Commonwealth University. <https://blackbird.vcu.edu/> .
- “Ephemeroptera” (haibun/essay) published in Plant-Human Quarterly (9th ed., vol. 2023 Summer Solstice Issue). Plant-Human Quarterly. <https://otherwisecollective.com/mccombs>.
- “The Bitter The Better” (haibun/essay) published in Plant-Human Quarterly (9th ed., vol. 2023 Summer Solstice Issue). Plant-Human Quarterly / Otherwise Collective. <https://otherwisecollective.com/mccombs>
- “Staghorn” (haibun/essay) published in Action, Spectacle (Winter 2023) <https://www.action-spectacle.com/>.

Professor Padma Viswanathan

- *Like Every Form of Love: A Memoir of Friendship and True Crime* published by Random House Canada, 2023, forthcoming 2024 from 7.13 Books USA.
- “**Rough**,” Translation from the Portuguese of a short story by Ana Paula Maia, Southwest Review Vol 108, #4, 2023.

- “**On Families We Don’t Choose**,” personal essay, *The Globe and Mail* newspaper; December 23, 2023
- 2023 Readings, lectures, panels: McGill University English Department, Montreal, QC; Drawn & Quarterly Bookstore, Montreal, QC; Another Story Bookshop, Toronto, ON; Us & Them Reading Series, Molasses Books, NY, NY; Bread Loaf Translators Conference, Middlebury, VT
- Served on faculty of Bread Loaf Translators Conference and Fairleigh Dickinson University Low-Residency MFA
- Founding Secretary, Portuguese-English Literary Translators Association; Board Member, Porter Prize
- Also forthcoming in 2024:
- ***Where We Stand: Notes on Speech, Place Justice***, translation from the Portuguese of a book-length essay by Djamila Ribeiro; Margellos World Republic of Letters, Yale University Press
- ***The Charterhouse of Padma***, Novel. Boston, USA: David Godine Books.

Professor Toni Jensen

- Book publication: *The Masters Review Volume XII: With Stories Selected by Toni Jensen (vol. XII)*, April 2024.
- “Women in the Fracklands” essay excerpt published: *Nonwhite and Woman: 151 Micro Essays on Being in the World*, Woodhall Press, 2023.
- “Women in the Fracklands” essay republished: *Body Language: Writers on Identity, Physicality, and Making Space for Ourselves*, Catapult Press, 2023.
- “James Welch Distinguished Native American Visiting Writer Fellowship,” University of Montana, January-May 2024.
- Visiting Writer, Groton School, January 2024.
- Brigham Young University, English Reading Winter Series Guest Writer, January 2023.
- Mankato State University’s Eddice B. Barber Writer in Residence, Mankato State University, Mankato State University, March 2023.
- Guest writer/speaker: Cherry Tree Young Writers Conference, Washington College, Washington College, July 2023.
- Guest panelist, Bucknell University Humanities Center Speakers' Series, October 2023.

Professor Geoffrey Davis

- “One Wild Word Away,” a collection of new poems was released in April 2024 from BOA Editions.

Professor Geoffrey Brock

- Professor Brock published three new books in the past year: *After* (poems, Paul Dry Books, 2024), *Before Nightfall* (translation from Italian of a YA verse novel by Silvia Vecchini, NYRB Kids, 2024), and *Social Fiction* (translation from French of comics by Chantal Montellier; NYRComics, 2024). The latter was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award in the graphic novel category and was reviewed by Laila Lalami in *The Nation* and Rachel Cooke in *The Guardian* and named to several “best of 2023” lists.
- Published eight new poems (in *Ecotone*, *The London Magazine*, *Copper Nickel*, *32 Poems*, and *Literary Matters*); four new translations (of Italian poet Vivian Lamarque, in *Copper Nickel*); and one new peer-reviewed essay (“Tuning In: On Retranslating Quotations,” in *California Italian Studies Journal*).
- Provided the English subtitles for a new feature-length film adaptation by Yohei Yamakado of Fernando Pessoa’s play *O Marinheiro*.
- Brock gave readings in Montreal, Cambridge MA, Ripton VT, Tulsa OK, and Fayetteville AR; and served on the faculty of the Bread Loaf Translators Conference and on the Board of Directors of the American Literary Translators Association.

Associate Director Jane V. Blunski

- Led a memoir writing craft class and writing workshop in collaboration with Bee Balm Arkansas in September 2023.
- “Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen Years Old” (nonfiction essay) appeared in *Cherry Tree Literary Magazine, Issue 10* in early 2024.

Other Program Accomplishments

- Our faculty-founded, M.F.A. student-run literary journal, *The Arkansas International*, published its 15th issue. M.F.A. students comprise the editorial board of *The Arkansas International*, through which they’re gaining significant professional experience in editing and publishing.
- Uchenna Awoke, our inaugural *Arkansas International* Writer-at-Risk, moved to Northwest Arkansas just over a year ago. The program, spearheaded by Prof. Padma Viswanathan, has been supported in large part by Chancellor’s Grant funds awarded to Prof. Viswanathan.

Uchenna’s first novel, *The Liquid Eye of a Moon*, forthcoming this summer. He has spent much of his time in Fayetteville writing, but he’s also done readings, taught a fiction-writing workshop at the Fayetteville Public Library and participated on a panel sponsored by the University of Arkansas’s Scholar at Risk Committee. For this, we also welcomed a visit by Alison Russo, Executive Director of the APF, who was very pleased with what she saw of the program. This Spring, he accepted an offer of a fully funded MFA at the University of Iowa.

- Issues 8 & 9 of The Diamond Line Literary magazine, which features the fiction, poetry, and visual art of undergraduates at the U of A were released in the Fall and Spring semesters, respectively. Led by Assistant Director Jane V. Blunski, the magazine is the product of section of ENGL 3903, Literary Magazine Publishing. A link to the magazine's website is here: <https://thediamondline.uark.edu> and digital copies of all three issues are here: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/diamondlinelitmag/>.