

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 6th, 2022, all 9 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. One additional student graduated in Fall 2021, having met the same evaluative criteria successfully. Three eligible students will delay graduation to Fall '21, as they've been awarded Sturgis Fellowships to study abroad this Fall.

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,

- Hiba Tahir and Alys Dutton have secured representation by literary agents for their forthcoming novels.
- Karstin Johnson and Hiba Tahir were awarded Individual Fellowship Awards for their work by the Arkansas Arts Council.
- At least five MFA students have been awarded Sturgis Fellowships to study abroad in Germany, Italy, France, and Mauritius in the coming semesters.
- 2019 poetry alum J. Bailey Hutchinson's collection *GUT*, winner of the UA Press Miller Williams Poetry Series Prize was released in March 2022. J. Bailey was promoted to associate editor at Milkweed Press this year.
- LSU Press will distribute an English-language version of poetry alum David Brunson's anthology of poetry by Chilean writers, "Una cicatriz donde se escriben despedidas. Antología de poesía venezolana en Chile."

- THUNDERBIRD INN by alum Collin Callahan was named the winner of Conduit Magazine's Minds on Fire Open Book Prize. The collection was released in Spring 2022.
- "A Child of God" by alum Z.D. Harrod, was named winner of American Literary Review's Flash Flood contest.
- Alum Tobias Wray's NO DOUBT I WILL RETURN DIFFERENT MAN, winner of the CSU Poetry Center's 2020 Lighthouse Poetry Series Competition was released in Fall 2021.
- LSU Press released Alison Pelegrin's latest collection of Poetry, OUR LADY OF BEWILDERMENT in March 2022.
- BURNING ALL THE TIME, alum Christopher Murphy's debut collection of short fiction was published by Mongrel Empire Press in September 2021.
- Alum Chelsea Rathburn won the 11th annual Zócalo Public Square Poetry Prize.
- In other terrific publishing news, fiction alum ('19) Elizabeth DeMeo was promoted to editor at Tin House Books in 2022, and Anthony Blake (poetry, '19) accepted a position as an associate publicist at Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Literary Translation alum Sabine Schmidt won the Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts 2021 Artist Award.
- Two current MFA students, poets Robin Bruce and Karstin Johnson, along with alums Willi Carlisle (poetry '14) and Jane V. Blunschi (fiction '16) were awarded 2020 Artists 360 grants from Mid-America Arts Alliance and the Walton Family Foundation.
- Our faculty-founded, our MFA student-run literary magazine, *The Arkansas International* was awarded a 2021 Whiting Literary Magazine Prize in September. This tremendous accomplishment is the direct result of many hours of dedication and hard work by the magazine's staff, and we could not be more thrilled to witness their achievement. From the judges' citation:

"Distinguished by exceptional fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and comics that are as attentive to place as they are to language, the Arkansas International lives up to its name, publishing fiercely observant and open-hearted work by writers from around the globe. When this literature converges and collides with emerging work from within the United States, the result is breathtaking. The ambition of this bright new star in the literary firmament is nothing less than to build a world community of writers and readers."

Issue 12 of *The Arkansas International* is due out soon, and Issue 13 is well underway. M.F.A. students comprise the editorial board of *The Arkansas International*, through which they're gaining significant professional experience in editing and publishing.

- And hundreds of poems, stories, novels, essays, and translations by graduates were published by well-known presses and in journals such as *Bayou*, *Beloit Fiction*, *Booth*,

The Citron Review, Cream City Review, Ecotone, The Southern Review, Catapult, Portland Review, Rattle, Muzzle, Michigan Quarterly Review, and Story Quarterly, among others.

Faculty Accomplishments

- Professor Geoffrey Brock won the 2021 National Translation Award in Poetry for his translation from Italian of "Allegria" by Giuseppe Ungaretti.
- We learned this Spring that Visiting Assistant Professor Jennifer Croft was named a 2022 Guggenheim Fellow in Fiction. Jennifer's translation of Olga Tokarczuk's *THE BOOKS OF JACOB* was released in February 2022. *YENTE*, a short story by Tokarczuk and translated by Croft, was published in *The New Yorker* in September, 2021. . Croft and Tokarczuk won the 2018 Man Booker International Prize for Croft's translation of Olga Tokarczuk's "Flights."
- Professor Padma Viswanathan (along with co-editor Edwin Frank) was named runner up for the TA First Translation Prize for a debut literary translation for her work on *SÃO BERNARDO* by Graciliano Ramos.
- Professor Viswanathan was promoted to full Professor in 2021, and was awarded a Cambridge Faculty Fellowship. Dr. Geoffrey Brock was awarded a Cambridge Faculty Fellowship in 2021 as well, and Professor Bryan Hurt has been awarded a Cambridge Faculty Fellowship for the coming academic year.
- Throughout the fall and spring semesters, we hosted four terrific guests through the Walton Visiting Writers series: translator Kate Briggs, poet Rachel Mennies, and novelists Patrick Cottrell and Sarah Gerard, who conferenced with students, delivered fantastic talks on the craft of writing, and gave free public readings of their work. It was so gratifying to know that the students were able to work with these writers, considered among the best in their fields, and to have an opportunity to invite the larger community to experience their work firsthand at the readings.
- April saw a particularly exciting event in the series, as we welcomed the Arkansas International Featured Reader, acclaimed poet Maggie Smith to Fayetteville. After a lively, informative, (and very fun!) Q & A with our students and faculty, Maggie gave a reading from her latest collection of poetry, *GOLDENROD*, to a large and appreciative audience at the newly and beautifully renovated Event Center at the Fayetteville Public Library.
- The Spring '22 semester ends on a high note as we learned this week that acclaimed literary translator and poet Rebecca Gayle Howell will join us in the Fall as an Assistant Professor. We are thrilled that Rebecca will be a member of the program's faculty, and look forward with excitement to working with her. We know that the students will benefit greatly from her expertise, artistry, and warm collegiality.

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 are satisfactorily teaching the course according to stated student learning outcomes and are therefore gaining valuable teaching experience for their professional resumes. Please do let me know if a more detailed report on this data is preferred; I am happy to send that along.