

Third-Year Graduate Degree Program Review

Program: **Creative Writing (MFA) (CRW)**
 Year Approved: **2008**

The Office of Graduate Studies and the USF Tampa Graduate Council would like to ask you to complete this brief survey of your Graduate Program. This one-time survey, given to all recently approved graduate programs, will provide information about the program's standing and offers opportunities to showcase program's accomplishments in the first few years. Currently, no other mechanism is available to collect this type of information. The Graduate Council will prepare a brief report based on the survey, which will be circulated back to you and kept on file in the Office of Graduate Studies. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important project!

PART I: Program Metrics (pre-populated by the Office of Graduate Studies)

(Optional comments regarding these numbers may be separately attached.)

Enrollment Statistics	Current Year (2013/2014)*	2012/2013	2011/2012	2010/2011
Applied (SIF)	28	31	37	30
Admitted (SIF)	14	9	9	10
Enrolled (SIF)	9	9	9	9
Degrees Awarded (SIF)*	*	9	8	7
Time to Degree (if applicable) (info center mean)	2.75	2.75	3	3
Total program enrollment (SIF)	29	29	26	25
Number of graduate faculty** (PROFESSOR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR)	6	5	4	4
Student: Faculty Ratio (students per faculty)***	5:1	5:1	7:1	6:1

* Degrees not yet awarded for spring 2014

**Information not available on Info-center. Please provide a total number and then please attach a list of names, level (Full, Assoc., etc.), and research areas of these faculty

***Information not available on Info-center. Please provide.

Please note that in the table above we have changed the data provided by the Graduate Office, as those numbers seemed to reflect admissions information for the entire English graduate program rather than the MFA on its own.

Part II: Annual Student Success Metrics (populated by the Program)
 (Optional comments regarding these numbers may be separately attached.)

	Current Year (2013/2014)	2012/2013	2011/2012	2010/2011
Professional Presentations by Students	9	11	6	7
Student Publications/Creative Works	14	12	4	2
Student Funding and Scholarships (including internal awards)	14	11	8	6
Other				

Part III: Program Narrative

In a few sentences:

1. Note any programmatic changes since original approval or last review and why the changes were made (i.e. changes to degree requirements, courses, qualifying exams, theses etc).

New courses:

- CRW 6236 Nonfiction Writing
- CRW 6025 Special Topics in Creative Writing: The Craft of Nonfiction
- CRW 6025 Practice in Teaching Creative Writing. This course is required of all teaching assistants in creative-writing courses.
- LIT 6934 Selected Topics: Literary Editing and Publishing. This course is required of all students working on *Saw Palm*, USF's creative writing journal.

2. Discuss diversity in your program and you are actively involved in promoting this initiative.

Since its inception, the MFA program has enrolled students who come from a wide range of racial, ethnic, economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Four have military experience. Three of our faculty members (Ciresi, Roselló, Sukrungruang) are first- or second-generation Americans and have written extensively about the immigrant experience, which has helped to recruit students of similar backgrounds who wish to do the same.

MFA Students Since Program Inception:

Age range: 22-58

Hispanic: 8 students

Asian-American: 3 students
African-American: 1 student
International: 1 student
United States veteran: 4 students
First-generation American: 8 students

To maintain and increase diversity, our program advertises in the Associated Writing Programs bulletin, sets up a recruitment table at the AWP annual conference, and participates in department-wide initiatives to recruit minority students into the graduate program.

3. Discuss student "creative works" (publications per student, etc.) captured in Part II above.

Full-length works by recent alumni include:

Alicia Thompson, *The Psych Major Syndrome* (young-adult novel)
Melissa Carroll, editor, *Going Om: Real Life Stories On and Off the Yoga Mat* (essays)
Phillippe Diederich, *Sofrito* (novel), publication date: 2015
Kimberly Karalius, *Love Fortunes and Other Disasters* (novel), publication date: 2015

Individual publications have appeared in some of the most highly-respected literary journals, such as *The Sun*, *Quarterly West*, *Kenyon Review*, *Tri-Quarterly* and *Epoch*

Current students and alumni have won the following awards and scholarships:

USF Outstanding Thesis/Dissertation Award (2)
AWP Intro National Awards in poetry and fiction
Florida Department of State Individual Artists Awards in fiction and creative nonfiction
Carl Djerassi Fellowship at the University of Wisconsin
David Nathan Myerson Award in Fiction
Pushcart Prize
Iron Horse Discovered Voices Award
Finalist, Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award
Finalist, Black Lawrence Press Big Moose Novel Award
New York State Summer Writing Institute scholarship
Key West Literary Seminars scholarship
Sewanee Writers Conference scholarship
Gulf Coast Association of Creative Writing Teachers Award in Creative Nonfiction
Ashbery Home School scholarship
Atlantis Award, semi-finalist
inclusion in the Creative Loafing "25 and Under" column.

4. Discuss placement of your recent graduates (e.g., types of employment, admittance to other degree programs).

MFA graduates must have a book under contract to become viable candidates for tenure-track positions at American universities. We strongly encourage all of our students to work toward publication; in the meantime, we provide them with advice on how to secure gainful employment in alternative careers such as editing and publishing. The English Department also has initiated a new graduate internship program that will provide MFA students with valuable experience in the workplace.

Alumni of the MFA program are employed as follows:

Full-time instructor at University of Tampa (1)

Full-time instructors at University of South Florida (4)

Full-time instructors at Full Sail University (3)

Adjunct instructors (11) at the following institutions: University of Tampa, Eckerd College, Ringling School of Design, University of South Florida Department of English, University of South Florida Honors College, Full Sail University

Librarian, Delray Beach

Advisor, Office of National Scholarships, University of South Florida

Communications and Marketing, University of South Florida College of the Arts

Information Technology assistant, University of South Florida

Communications officer, Citibank

Writer, Tampa Media General

Writer and editor, *Creative Loafing*

Independent technical writers and editors (2)

Yoga teacher and wellness consultant

Editor, Blair Publishing

Editor and writer, *Practical Sailor*

Assistant Fiction Editor, *West Branch*

Ph.D. student in creative writing/poetry at Georgia State

Prospective Ph.D. student in rhetoric/composition (currently applying)

M.A. student in linguistics, University of South Florida

Three alumni attended the University of Denver Publishing Institute Summer Seminar.
Two alumni have applied for Fulbright teaching opportunities for this coming year.

5. Identify qualities/metrics of applicants who prove to be successful in your program (e.g., REU experience, experience specific to your discipline, GRE performance).

As is the case in most MFA programs, evidence suggests that age has much to do with the level of success of our graduates. Students in the USF MFA program have ranged in age from 22-58; those students who begin to publish successfully while in the program usually are in their mid-thirties and beyond. Mature students tend to enter the program with clear-cut goals and good working habits. Those students who also are parents have a work ethic that contributes strongly to their success. The younger students who succeed usually hold undergraduate degrees in creative writing and thus have a solid foundation for graduate work. While undergraduate academic records play a factor in the MFA student's eventual success, GRE scores are not indicative of success in the MFA program.

Comment succinctly on the following (e.g., 200 words max).

Based on the data in Part I, discuss current enrollment trends, graduation rates, time to graduation, and retention. Provide details on how the program is addressing each of these areas and will correct any deficiencies (i.e. low number of applicants, loss of students etc.)

Current Enrollment Trends: We continue to receive an average of 31 applicants a year. Our intent is to accept and graduate 10 students per year.

Retention: The MFA program has a strong sense of community and we provide excellent advising and support for our students. Attrition has been kept to a minimum. Since program inception we have lost five students for the following reasons: spousal relocation, financial hardship, military duty, caretaking responsibility for ageing parent(s) and ill children.

Time to graduation: The MFA is a three-year program. Graduation rate has been consistent. With the exception of five students who completed the program on a part-time basis (all within the required five years), the rest of the student body has graduated in 2.75-3.0 years.

Identify three programs that are considered to be peers.

1. University of Central Florida--comparable in size of student body, number of faculty, and age of program. Also comparable in terms of financial assistance offered to graduate students.
2. Florida International University--comparable in size of student body, number of faculty, and age/diversity of students. Also comparable in terms of financial assistance offered to graduate students.
3. Florida Atlantic University--comparable in size of student body, number of faculty members, and age of program. Also comparable in terms of financial assistance offered to graduate students.

Describe how the Program aligns with the strategic goals of USF.

Research and Innovation:

MFA students are engaged in creating and publishing cutting-edge fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, graphic narrative, and digital animation. Their work is disseminated widely through conference presentations and print and digital publication.

Student Success:

We have recruited a national and diverse student body and effectively mentored our students for timely degree completion and for future employment.

Global Impact:

We expose students to international perspectives through in-class readings and discussion of writers who come from a broad range of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. We encourage our students to pursue opportunities abroad such as Fulbright scholarships. We partner with the World Languages program and the USF Humanities Institute to bring in visiting writers who offer a global perspective.

Community Engagement:

The MFA program contributes to the intellectual and artistic life of Tampa Bay by sponsoring the following annual events:

Blank Pages Creative Writing Symposium
Writers' Harvest (fundraiser for Feed America)

National Poetry Month Celebration
Florida Literary Arts Coalition readings
Write Now program for pre-college students

Students also produce an annual print and online journal, *Saw Palm*.

What are three program goals to be accomplished in the next 5 years?

1. To continue to prepare our students for gainful employment inside and outside of academia.
2. To continue to help our students write and revise publishable book-length manuscripts.
3. To expand our program offerings to include courses in graphic narrative, digital storytelling, and writing for children and young adults.

Anything else you'd like to share?

To further increase diversity--and recruit the overall best students into our program--it is imperative that the university increase the level of financial assistance offered to graduate students. Over the past few years we have lost many of our top candidates to other programs that offer more robust graduate assistantship packages.

MFA Faculty Bios:

Rita Ciresi (MFA, The Pennsylvania State University, Fiction) is the author of the short-story collections *Mother Rocket* and *Sometimes I Dream in Italian*, and the novels *Bring Back My Body to Me*, *Pink Slip*, *Blue Italian*, and *Remind Me Again Why I Married You*. Her awards include the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction and the Pirate's Alley Faulkner Prize for the Novel. She has won support for her work from the Ragdale Foundation, the Hawthornden International Retreat for Writers, the American Academy in Rome, the Santa Fe Art Institute, and the state art councils of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Florida. Visit her website at www.ritaciresi.com.

John Henry Fleming (PhD, University of Louisiana-Lafayette, Fiction) is the author of *The Legend of the Barefoot Mailman*, a novel, and *Fearsome Creatures of Florida*, a literary bestiary. His short stories have appeared in journals such as *McSweeney's*, *the North American Review*, *Mississippi Review*, *Fourteen Hills*, and *Carve*. His work has been anthologized in *100% Pure Florida Fiction* and in *The Future Dictionary of America*. His awards include a Literature Fellowship from the State of Florida. He has a PhD in Creative Writing from The University of Louisiana-Lafayette, an MA in Creative Writing from The University of Southern Mississippi, and a BA in Psychology from The University of Virginia. At USF, he teaches graduate and undergraduate fiction writing courses, directs graduate theses, and is advisory editor of *Saw Palm: florida literature and art*. Visit his blog at www.johnhenryfleming.com and his website at www.fearsomecreatures.com.

Jay Hopley (PhD, Purdue University; MFA, University of Iowa, Poetry) is the author of *Green Squall*, which was chosen by Louise Glück as the winner of the 2005 Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. *Green Squall* also received the 2007 Great Lakes Colleges Association New Writers Award, a 2006 Florida Book Award, a 2006 *ForeWord Magazine* Book of the Year Award and a 2007 National "Best Books" Award from *USA Book News*. *The Killing Spirit: An Anthology of Murder-for-Hire*, his first book, was published in the United States and Europe by The Overlook Press and Canongate Books in 1996. His work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in numerous magazines and journals including the *American Poetry Review*, *the Kenyon Review*, *the New Republic* and *the New Yorker*. In 2009, Jay received a Marfa Residency Fellowship from the Lannan Foundation and a Whiting Writers' Award from the Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation. In 2010 he was the recipient of a Rome Fellowship in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters/the American Academy in Rome. Visit his website at www.jayhopley.com.

Jarod Roselló (MFA and PhD, The Pennsylvania State University, Fiction/Graphic Narrative/Digital Storytelling) is a Cuban-American teacher, cartoonist, and writer, born and raised in Miami, Florida. His comics and fiction have appeared in *the delinquent*, *Cause & Effect Magazine*, *Gulfstream Literary Magazine*, *Sonora Review*, *Neon Literary Journal*, *Fast Forward Flash Fiction, Volume 3*, *Sorry Entertainer*, and *Gin Palace*. His chapbook of fiction, *This is Not Where You Belong*, was published in 2012 by [Aestel and Acanthus](http://www.aestel.com). He is co-founder of [Bien Vestido](http://www.bienvestido.com), a small press dedicated to publishing comics and zines by latina/o cartoonists and artists. His full-length graphic narrative, *The Well-Dressed Bear*, is forthcoming from Publishing Genius.

Heather Sellers (PhD, Florida State University, Poetry and Creative Nonfiction) is the author of *You Don't Look Like Anyone I Know*, a true story of family, face-blindness, and forgiveness (Riverhead), an O, Oprah book of the month club selection also featured on *Good Morning America*, *Rachel Ray*, NPR's *All Things Considered*, and Dick Gordon's *The Story*. Her essays appear in *The Sun*, *Good Housekeeping*, *O Magazine*, *The London Daily Telegraph*, *Brevity*, and *The New York Times*. She is at work on a second memoir and two collaborative projects. Sellers is also the author of [three volumes of poetry](http://www.heathersellers.com): *Your Whole Life*, *Drinking Girls and Their Dresses*, and *The Boys I Borrow*. Recent poems appear in *Prairie Schooner*, *The North American Review*, *Field*, *The Bellingham Review*, and *The Sun*. Her current manuscript is titled *The Vine* and features a sequence of poems about growing up in Florida entwined with poems on the death of her father.

In 2001, Sellers published [Georgia Under Water](#) (Sarabande) a collection of linked short stories that won a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers award. She's written a children's book, [Spike and Cubby's Ice Cream Island Adventure](#) (Henry Holt), [two books on craft](#), *Page after Page* and *Chapter after Chapter* (Writer's Digest), and a [textbook](#) for the multi-genre creative writing classroom, *The Practice of Creative Writing* (Bedford St. Martin's), newly out in its second edition.

[Ira Sukrungruang](#) (MFA, The Ohio State University, Creative Nonfiction) is a Chicago-born Thai-American and the author of the memoir *Talk Thai: The Adventures of Buddhist Boy*. He has co-edited two anthologies about obesity: *What Are You Looking At: The First Fat Fiction Anthology* and *Scoot Over, Skinny: The Fat Nonfiction Anthology*. Ira has published his essays, poems, and short stories in many literary journals and anthologies, including *Creative Nonfiction*, *the Bellingham Review*, *North American Review*, *Isotope*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Post Road*, and *Tilting the Continent: Southeast Asian American Writing*. He has received the New York Foundation for the Arts Nonfiction Fellowship, The Just Desserts Fiction Prize, an Illinois Arts Council Literary Award, and he's received support from the Ragdale Foundation, Blue Mountain Center, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Writers Colony at Dairy Hollow. Currently he is at work on several projects: *The Talk of Butterflies: A Memoir of Siam*, *Buddha's Dog: A Memoir of Forgiveness*, *Southside Buddhist: Essays*, *The Golden Mix: Stories*, and an untitled novel.