

To: University Senate

From: Senate Planning and Review Committee
Frances Jackson, Chair

Date: October 26, 2010

The Senate Planning & Review Committee received the proposal for a B.A. degree in Creative Writing submitted by the English Department. This is our report.

Summary

The English Department has offered workshops in creative writing for many years. This proposal would create a new major and minor in Creative Writing (CW) with two tracks. The B.A. degree in CW is a 44 credit program. Students will take 5 CW workshops (20 credits), 2 cognates (8 credits), and 4 English electives (16 credits). As part of these 44 credits, 12 of the English course credits must be in Literature and must span 3 centuries of literature. Of the 5 CW workshops, at least one must be at the 400 level. In addition, students are required to take either 2 semesters of a foreign language or 1 semester of a foreign language at the 115 level or higher. The CW minor is composed of 24 credits, which includes 4 credits in Eng 216, two CW workshops, and 12 credits of English literature. Students will also be encouraged to take one course in a related art form, e.g., Cinema or Theatre. This proposal includes 7 new courses. There are two tracks being proposed: Poetry/fiction or TV/Screenwriting. Only two other universities in Michigan have a major in CW, although almost all Michigan universities have courses in creative writing.

Four faculty vitas were included with the proposal. Two faculty appear to have a background in poetry, and two have a background in CW. There is a need for at least one faculty member who has a background in TV/Screenwriting. That is an immediate need. The proposal also requests one Graduate Assistant. By year 4, an additional faculty member is requested, specialty is unspecified. A half-time secretarial position is also requested.

The source of students are current students attending OU and students recruited specifically for this major/minor. Evaluations conducted by the English Department reveal that CW is the number one requested program by current students. It is projected that there will be a small number of students selecting this major initially, increasing to 45 students by year 5.

SPRC requested letters that would establish the employment opportunities for students graduating with this degree. Three letters were received. One letter is from a publishing company, one from a private educational company, and the third from the OU Marketing Department.

The library report is included with the proposal. The library report requests only a modest (approximately 2100 – 2500 a year) amount of money each year to increase/improve the resources for the “craft” of CW.

This proposal was approved by the CAS COI on November 23, 2009. It was approved by the CAS Assembly on April 13, 2010.

Strengths of the Proposal

This proposal is consistent with OU's mission and the 2020 strategic initiative. In general it is considered a strength that only two other universities in Michigan offer CW as a major. The qualifier for this statement relates to questions as to *why* only two other universities in Michigan offer CW as a major even though almost all universities in Michigan offer CW in some other format. The fear is that the other universities may know something we don't know about the ability to sustain and support CW as a major. After some deliberation and review of the enrollment projections, SPRC believes that the enrollment projections are realistic and may even be too conservative.

In addition to the above, this major will allow students to give expression to their fears and longings, a literary tradition. It is also a strength that students are required to take literature classes that span 3 centuries. This strong foundation in literature supports the goals and objectives of this program.

Concerns

As stated above, the enrollment projections are modest, starting with 7 students and projecting to 45 majors by year 5. However there is a question on whether this proposal will actually increase enrollment or capture students from other majors?

This major will require 44 credits, and the minor requires 24 credits. This major has two tracks; poetry/fiction and TV screenwriting. SPRC believes that TV/screenwriting is the most likely track to attract new as well as current students. The proposal acknowledges the need to hire faculty qualified to teach in that track. With the recent upsurge in movie production in the local area, it would have been nice if the proposal had addressed whether internships with any of the production companies had been explored.

SPRC sent a list of concerns and omissions to the English Department. A revised, corrected proposal has been submitted and all concerns addressed. This proposal received unanimous approval.