



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Cc: David Bowie, Professor; Chair, Department of English  
David Stevenson, Professor; Coordinator, Creative Writing & Literary Arts

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Creative Writing & Literary Arts MFA

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** None

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Members of the program review committee:**

David Bowie, Professor and Department Chair  
David Stevenson, Professor and Coordinator

### **Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role**

UAA's mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities and its diverse peoples. It is also committed to instruction at multiple academic levels, success of all students regardless of their higher education goals, and service to the diverse peoples and communities of the state. UAA's core themes are (1) Teaching and Learning, (2) Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity, (3) Student Success, (4) UAA Community, and (5) Public Square. UAA values international and intercultural education, diversity of experiences and perspectives, and the diversity of our unique location in Southcentral Alaska that comes from the Alaska Native peoples of this area.

The College of Arts and Sciences contributes to UAA's mission with a suite of programs that provide, among other things,

1. general education courses for undergraduates in CAS and other Colleges,
2. opportunities for undergraduates to pursue majors in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts, and

3. opportunities for faculty and students to pursue research and creative activities in CAS's academic disciplines,
4. graduate programs for advanced studies.

Given decreased enrollments across UAA and significant budget cuts to CAS, the challenge is to serve UAA's and CAS's missions with only 75% of the funds it had in 2018-2019. CAS's shrinking budget is especially challenging for programs that rely on state financial appropriations through CAS because the programs have a gap between (a) the total costs of everything the program does and needs, and (b) the tuition CAS receives to cover those costs. This describes most programs in CAS: most rely on state appropriations and CAS has 30% less than it had two years ago.

The MFA in Creative Writing and Literary Arts serves that mission with graduate-level training in fiction, literary non-fiction, and poetry. Many of the creative works produced by the graduates are about Alaska and many of the students are from all corners of Alaska.

### **Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity**

At any given time, approximately 40 students are in this 45-credit program, producing an average of 10 MFA awards per year, putting it near the top of CAS's graduate programs. At the same time, however, it ranks at the bottom of CAS's masters programs in student credit hours per full-time equivalent faculty. When all costs for running the program are included, student tuition does not cover the cost, requiring CAS to allocate state appropriations for this program. The program's director has worked hard to address this issue.

### **Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success**

There is little doubt about the quality and success of the program. At its core is the summer intensive where faculty and students spend 13 days living and working together in a dynamic, brilliant community – like nothing else in CAS – that moves each student toward a finished work of fiction, non-fiction or anthology of poetry. The program is among the leaders in CAS graduate programs in the number of degrees awarded, its graduates have an outstanding record of accomplishments and accolades.

### **Program Duplication / Distinctiveness**

UAF offers an MFA in Creative Writing. Although there is overlap in the programs, the delivery methods are different with UAF's program built on students being in-residence throughout the academic year, whereas UAA's program is built on students working remotely for all by two-weeks per year. Combined, the two programs average approximately 16 awards per year, with 6 from UAF and 10 from UAA.

### **Commendations and Recommendations**

The program is commended for (a) its innovative approach where students who are dispersed geographically come together for two-weeks of collaboration and training, (b) producing far more graduates than average among CAS's masters programs, (c) the accomplishments of its graduates, and (d) working hard to narrow the gap between the program's expenses and the tuition that students pay for the program. The faculty should also be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

### **Decision**

Deletion. This is a remarkable program of which CAS is proud. However, budget cuts are forcing CAS to offer fewer programs to students in the future, especially programs where the tuition students pay does not cover the costs of the program. Although unfortunate, CAS likely cannot sustain this program beyond its current cohort of students. Program deletion requires approval by BOR and NWCCU.