



Creative Writing [CRWR]

Cycles included in this report:

Jun 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024

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Program Name: Creative Writing [CRWR]**Reporting Cycle: Jun 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024****1 Is this program offered via Distance Learning?****2 Is this program offered at an off-site location?**

No

2.1 If yes to previous, provide addresses for each location where 50% or more of program credits may be earned.**3 Example of Program Improvement**

2018-2019:

2019-2020:

Overall, to help improve the quality of the program and the master plan's efficiency and accuracy these specific steps should be taken in the year ahead:

1. Evaluate which questions from the exit survey are actually relevant to assessing the quality of the Master of Fine Arts program.
2. Continue to advocate for a return to former funding levels to ensure quality recruits and student retention.
3. Continue close mentorship to ensure students are successful in the program and beyond.

2020-2021:

Overall, to help improve the quality of the program and the master plan's efficiency and accuracy these specific steps should be taken in the year ahead:

1. Evaluate which questions from the exit survey are actually relevant to assessing the quality of the Master of Fine Arts program.
2. Continue to advocate for a return to former funding levels to ensure quality recruits and student retention.
3. Continue close mentorship to ensure students are successful in the program and beyond.

2021-2022:

Overall, to help improve the quality of the program and the master plan's efficiency and accuracy these specific steps should be taken in the year ahead:

1. Evaluate which questions from the exit survey are actually relevant to assessing the quality of the Master of Fine Arts program.
2. Continue to advocate for a return to former funding levels to ensure quality recruits and student retention.
3. Continue close mentorship to ensure students are successful in the program and beyond.

2022-2023:

As the new program director, I believe it is time for a major overhaul of the benchmarks. We are hiring two new creative writing teachers and with current faculty we need to consider what we need to assess that will help us improve the program. I hope to meet with IRE during the summer to consult with the best course of action. Our tools for gathering data also need change, not only the exit survey as reported in previous years, but the three-year survey and the Graduate Activity Report. The questions need to align better to benchmarks but also we need to find a way to reflect on the data we receive and find actionable ways to adapt the program. Part of this is trying to build sustainable connections to the majority of the alumni so they feel connected to the program and contributing to it even after they have left. This will help on several levels. Using them in professional endeavors and to help orient and help mentor students are also options that will keep them tied to the program. As far as within the program itself, we still need to address the feeling students have about being prepared for teaching. While you can never really prepare for teaching until you actually teach and have your own classroom, we need to build their confidence and their toolboxes so that when they do teach they will feel ready and supported. And finally we must nurture their writing and make sure they are pushing themselves to continuously improve their own writing and to continue to challenge themselves. Our internal and external tools are a solid way of monitoring this but we also may consider how these might connect to what year they are in the program with higher expectations for those in the third year and second year.

With our new hires we are also addressing some issues that may help the program and the students. Traditionally our program has had one poetry faculty member and one fiction faculty member and between these two one was director of the program and the other ran the McNeese Review. We are now going to have a program director who also specializes in one genre, two main genre teachers, and at least one other regular faculty member who also specializes in a second genre. With this structure, students will have more options for thesis directors and for finding mentors who work with them best. This should help the sustainability of the program and student resources as well. With new faculty we also expect more mentoring about publishing and students' submitting their work for publication. While we should be hesitant in using publishing while in the program as a benchmark because we do not want the students to submit work that is not ready, some aspect of this might be considered for assessment. Essentially since we want students to emerge as writers, we need to find some assessment that tracks whether they have established the processes and habits of writers that they can carry beyond the program.

2023-2024:

The first major area of improvement is teaching preparation with students feeling they were not prepared well to teach. With the new role of first-year students working as embedded tutors in the classroom, they are feeling much more prepared to be teachers of record in their second year. We have to decide if we want to update how we collect information about teaching preparation. Right now it is only whether they took a class in pedagogy and a question on the exit survey and 3-year survey.

The second improvement is by having second- and third-year students teach one 101 and one 100 course; this is not necessarily tied to any data point but to the data as a whole where time to write and read is one of the biggest issues students cite. We are freeing up some time for the students because they only have one class that produces a heavy grading/feedback load. This ideally will give students more time to do more writing and reading, the most important goals of our program. Again, whether we want to adapt our review to find a way to capture if this is actually the case is something our program must think about.

The third improvement emerged from the students themselves organically connected to students' growth as writers and their submission records after they graduate. A visiting writer mentioned how she and her friends had a competition of who could get to 100 rejections of their work first. The students initiated a similar contest that included a spreadsheet they could report their progress. Half the students participated in this challenge and collectively the students reached a 130 rejections. Learning to be resilient in the face of rejection is essential for artists, so this exercise, which I have already started to gather data from, tracking how many submissions students make each year, is valuable and fits with our goals. Plus, it also resulted in ten publications, which is high for our program in one semester. Some form of this should be added to our program assessment to help ingrain in all of us the necessity to submit work.

The fourth improvement is now more faculty focused on the MFA; this is not tied to any specific data point either but connected to quality of life in the program and also future careers. Students are exposed to more ideas about writing and can connect with the best person to support their work. It is an important update to our program that already shows it can attract more students (our next class of students doubled in size and may almost be triple in size as we wait to hear from some waitlisted students) and eventually retain more students once they are here.

4 Program Highlights from the Reporting Year

2019-2020:

Alumni & Student Successes:

Despite these challenges, our students have continued to accomplish great things. Seven out of 18 MFA students published their work in literary journals this year. Our alumni are publishing and earning numerous accolades, including publishing books and stories and poems. Notable book publications were Dorsey Craft (Olbrich)'s collection of poems, *Plunder*, as well as her chapbook, *The Pirate Anne Bonney Dances the Tarantela*.

Notable Placements:

Two 2020 graduates will begin Ph.D. programs in the fall: Sarah Harshbarger will attend the University of Tennessee and Matthew Moniz will attend the University of Southern Mississippi. Ashlee Lhamon now works in public relations at McNeese State University.

2020-2021:

With the occurrence of the pandemic and two major hurricanes three students left the program during or at the end of the year. Also Chris Lowe, our fiction professor, accounting for one-half the MFA faculty, has elected to leave the area and the university in the wake of the hurricanes. In addition, our application numbers for the incoming class continue decrease due to low stipend, high housing costs, and lack of desire to live in a hurricane-prone and ravaged area. We have secured Endowed Professorships to assist in funding our writers' series and conference attendance for students and faculty. Though the pandemic and hurricanes curtailed much of these activities, we were able to host readings and conferences with visiting writers via Zoom in the spring.

Alumni & Student Successes:

Despite these challenges, our students have continued to accomplish great things. Five out of 15 remaining MFA students published their work in literary journals this year. Our alumni are publishing and earning numerous accolades, including publishing books and stories and poems. Notable book publications were Eric Nguyen's novel, *What We Lost to the Water* (named a 2021 Summer Book Pick by Barack Obama), Carrie Green's poetry collection, *Studies of Familiar Birds*, and Brett Hanley's chapbook, *Defeat the Rest*.

Notable Placements:

The 2021 were well placed. Ladi Opaluwa (fiction) will begin the Ph.D. program in English at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. Maegan Gonzales was hired as a full-time dual-enrollment instructor at SOWELA. Gauri Awasthi has received a paid publicity and editorial internship at Four Way Books in New York City.

Alumni placements include Dr. Danielle (Grimes) Sutton, assistant professor of English at Columbus State University in Georgia, and Gerald Withers, instructor, Columbia College in South Carolina.

2021-2022:

Recovery from the pandemic and the hurricanes of 2020 has continued slowly. Some students began the academic year remotely, but by mid-fall semester everyone was on site. The cost and availability of housing have been a significant hurdle for our students as they are almost exclusively out-of-state students.

We were able to host one online visiting writer and one in-person visiting writer in the fall, and this spring we hosted a major event celebrating the 40th anniversary of the MFA program, which included three alumni readings on campus by alumni and a crawfish boil. On Thursday, May 7th, Eric Nguyen ('15) read from his best-selling novel based on his thesis, *Things We Lost to the Water*. On Friday, April 8th, Morri Creech ('98), Pulitzer Prize finalist, read from his new manuscript forthcoming from LSU Press. On Saturday, April 9th, Adam Johnson ('96), winner of both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, read from his novel in progress. In addition on Friday, Adam led a craft talk for all MFA students, which was highly effective.

Nearly all of the MFA students, as well as faculty Allie Mariano and Michael Horner, were able to attend the annual Association of Writers & Writing Programs conference in Philadelphia. Unfortunately due to our static low funding we lost three of our seven first-year students who are leaving to attend programs with double our funding. Our meager stipends and waivers unfortunately don't make us very competitive and our applications were the lowest we've seen in a decade. Many people we offered spots to turned us down for better financial offers or because they couldn't afford to come for the amount we offer. Because of this, we were only able to recruit seven people. The program will be at its lowest enrollment in over a decade next year due to this. Our program was featured on the national podcast, *MFA Writers*, with an interview of recent alumna, Gauri Awasthi.

Alumni & Student Success:

Despite challenges our students continue to publish and present their work. Jack Vanchiere won the national Sigma Tau Delta poetry award at the national convention in Atlanta. After graduation he will work as an intern at the Headlands Artists Colony in California. Jordan Sheryl McQueen published a story in the anthology *It Came from the Swamp*. Reese Menefee has a poem forthcoming from *The Sun* and has started a literary e-zine called *MoonCola*. Rachel Pittman has published poems in *Gingerbread House* and *WhaleRoad Review*. She also won a residency fellowship from the Writers Colony at Dairy Hollow. Alex Howe published two poems in *New Ohio Review*.

Recent graduates Gauri Awasthi and Maegan Gonzales were awarded full scholarships to the prestigious national conference, Community of Writers. Our alumni continue to publish widely and well.

Notable Placements:

Gauri Awasthi works as an editorial assistant at the Cheney Literary Agency in New York. She also teaches Decolonizing Poetry workshops for Catapult. Ladi Opaluwa began the PhD program in English at University of Louisiana-Lafayette.

2022-2023:

We have had several current students have their work published this year: Bob Miller, Meilyn Wood, Reese Menefee, and Rachel Pittman. Two of those students are first year students. One of the first year students was told by visiting writers that his work was publishable and exciting. Current student published the most outstanding McNeese Reviews in recent memory. Four students presented at two different regional conferences. We also had a successful time at AWP in Seattle with selling the McNeese Review, visiting presentations, and networking.

Our students continue to be successful in their writing:

- Avee Chaudhuri's got a great new piece in the Missouri Review
- Scott Thomason, whose novel was named an honorable mention in the Chapter One Prize
- first issue of Ladi Mary Opaluwa's Efiko mag
- Victoria María Castells's collection of poems, *The Rivers Are Inside Our Homes*, from University of Notre Dame Press
- Brett Hanley (MFA, '18), poetry editor at *Southeastern Review* and PhD candidate at Florida State, has an interview with Sun Yung Shin up on the journal's website.
- Gage Saylor (MFA, '18) has an essay in the new *Southern Humanities Review*
- Gage Saylor's (MFA '19) collection *Where Were You When It Happened?* is a semi-finalist for the Iron Horse Book Prize
- Neil Connelly had several stories and nonfiction pieces published this year.
- Michael Shewmaker's LSU Press poetry book, "*Leviathan*."
- Allen Braden had a poem in *The Verseville*

This list should be seen as incomplete! Our alums are editors of journals and writers who consistently get their work published.

Academics:

- Two students from the class of '20 completed their PhDs this spring.

Placements:

- One graduate of 2023, Rachel Pittman, is going to Georgia State U and another, Reese Menefee, has a job teaching DE at a high school in Kentucky.
- Maegan Gonzales is currently working as a full-time faculty member at McNeese.
- Allie Mariano hired as an Assistant Editor at Oxford American
- At least three students of the class of '20 got jobs as technical writers.

2023-2024:

One big highlight is having two new faculty members who have added to the program immensely with multiple publications already in this period as well as several readings. Another faculty member and program alumni, Kevin Thomason, will have his book of poetry published this year.

Another highlight was the Frank Granger Celebration in honor of one of the first students to graduate from the program and a great friend of the program over the years. The reading featuring two former students who were also previous directors of the program, Neil Connelly and Amy Fleury, was one of the best, moving readings ever hosted here.

Another program highlight is a project the MFA program did with the city of Lake Charles. Here's what Lake Charles City Hall said in a statement:

"The City of Lake Charles is proud to partner with McNeese State University to announce a new QR Trail feature at Riverside Park. Students in the university's MFA program participated in curating and creating poems, stories and written word that capture the nature of how animals, plants and people intertwine to create a biodiverse ecosystem where we all can live and thrive. As you visit Riverside Park, scan the QR codes along the trail to be transported to the student-designed website housing their creative works. The City would like to thank Dr. Keagan LeJeune, Dr. Wendy Whelan-Stewart and all of their students for their partnership in this unique endeavor aimed at enhancing our City parks."

Highlights from our alumni:

- Alumni had an amazing year with at least six books published as well as multiple short works and one judge for a prestigious award:
- J Bruce Fuller book of poetry: *How to Drown a Boy* from LSU press.
- Former May Sarton winner, Dorsey Craft Olbrich is this year's judge for the May Sarton contest.
- Ladi Opaluwa had a story published in *Craft*
- Chris Lowe had a book published, *Make Some Wretched Fool to Pay* from UL Press
- Shannon Wolf published her book of poetry *Green Card Girl*
- Allie Mariano was managing editor of *The Oxford American* for a year
- Keagan LeJeune published his nonfiction book *Finding Myself Lost in Louisiana*
- Robert Tyler Sheldon's poetry collection *Everything Is Ghosts* will be published this year with Finishing Line Press.
- Gage Saylor ('18) is a finalist for Black Lawrence Press's Hudson Prize
- Morri Creech collection of poems *The Sentence* was published by LSU press.
- Angelina Oberdan Brooks ('10) new chapbook, *Heavy Bloom*

Highlights from our current students:

- Bob Miller had pieces published in *Propagule* and *Brusier*
- Katelynn Adrian has a CNF piece accepted for publication in September and presented her paper at the Sigma Tau Delta Convention
- Gwentyth Wheat had poems published in *LIGHT Magazine* (Fall 2023), *Great Lakes Review* (Fall 2023), *Voicemail Poems* (Spring 2024) and had a Pushcart Prize Nomination, ZAUM Press (Fall 2023)
- Karris McCollum had six publications: The Rtist, 6K-word short (published in audio), NoSleep Podcast; Every Time I Remember You, 2K-word CNF, *Fourth Genre Magazine*; Making Space, 50-word micro, 50 Give or Take; Grindstone, 100-word micro, Free Flash Fiction; The Woman from Somewhere, 4K-word short, *Mount Hope Magazine*; Con Fuoco, 750-word flash, *Gargoyle Magazine*; and *We Obedient Children*, 4.5K-word chapbook (first place prose contest winner), Etchings Press. Karris also presented a paper "Where Goes Profit, There Follows the Editor: Recent Market Trends in Novella Sales," Dalhousie University's "Consilience" Conference.
- Taylor Mahone had a story in *Moon Cola*.
- Meilyn Woods had a story in *The Global Youth Review* and she had her paper accepted for presentation at the Craft Critique Culture Graduate Conference: Black Legacies, in Iowa City this spring.

5 Program Mission

The program gives graduate students pursuing the 60-hour MFA in Creative Writing training in their craft and the necessary academic background to become competent professionals and teachers of writing and literature.

6 Institutional Mission Reference

The MFA in Creative Writing prepares graduates to pursue their artistic and academic interests as well as careers in teaching. Many go directly into teaching at the university level, while others continue their education in PhD programs. Through the efforts of the graduates and the many public readings and lectures scheduled, the MFA program fosters a climate that enhances student learning, enriches the quality of campus life, and expands opportunities for the arts and humanities.

7 Assessment and Benchmark ENGL 671 and 672 Amount of Writing

Assessment: Students will submit a sufficient amount of writing to workshop.

Benchmark: 100% of enrolled students will submit a sufficient amount of writing to workshop.

"Sufficient" is defined in fiction as four stories or excerpts from a novel per year.

"Sufficient" is defined in poetry as 12 poems or pages.

Outcome Links

Creating Art [Program]

Students will create works of art in the forms of poetry or fiction.

7.1 Data

Academic Year	Fiction writers that met the benchmark		Poets that met the benchmark	
	#	%	#	%
2017-2018	11/11	100%	11/11	100%
2018-2019	10/10	100%	9/9	100%
2019-2020	9/9	100%	10/10	100%
2020-2021	8/8	100%	7/7	100%
2021-2022	9/9	100%	8/8	100%
2022-2023	8/8	100%	5.5/5.5	100%
2023-2024	6/8	75%	3/3	100%

7.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

All students met the benchmark this year; however, we've used this criterion to motivate students who have been lagging behind their peers.

2020-2021:

All students met the benchmark this year; however, we've used this criterion to motivate students who have been lagging behind their peers.

2021-2022:

All students met the benchmark this year; however, we've used this criterion to motivate students who have been lagging behind their peers.

2022-2023:

This is one of the benchmarks we should delete or change. It is important in that this level of submission to workshop is essential for their success but since it is tied to the coursework and the grade in the course, most students submit the sufficient amount of work. We can't really change our definition of sufficient because this is the maximum amount that students can sustainably submit to workshop in any given year. Note the .5 is from a student who came in just for the spring semester and just to note we had one student in fiction leave in the fall and one new one come in the spring so their numbers were combined.

2023-2024:

Poetry students were 100%. Fiction students were at 75%; however, one of the fiction students only took one semester of workshop and the question we use in the GAR matrix only talks about stories written for workshop and not stories composed outside of workshop. Perhaps, we want to consider expanding our definition so work is not just connected to workshop. This was an interesting year because two new faculty members took over these classes so big changes could have possibly been expected as philosophies about how much students should write and how many submissions they should make to workshop can vary. Though it was not an issue, I need to make the new faculty more aware of the program review and the data we are looking at as well as discussing our program's philosophy for writing output. As more students write flash fiction we may want to define how many flash stories equal one "regular" story. Students continuing to work and learning how to work on their art during the semesters is essential for what we do. Even though we have no problem meeting the sufficient amount of writing most years this data point is essential for what our program is about.

8 Assessment and Benchmark ENGL 677 TA Training

Assessment: TAs will receive training in ENGL 677: Seminar in Teaching Freshman English (Lec. 3, Cr. 3).

Benchmark: During their first year of teaching, 100% of TAs will receive training in ENGL 677: Seminar in Teaching Freshman English (Lec. 3, Cr. 3).

Outcome Links

Professionalism [Program]

Students will gain foundational knowledge of the publishing industry and creative and scholarly communities.

8.1 Data

Academic Year	First-year teaching GAs enrolled in ENGL 677	
	#	%
2017-2018	—	100%
2018-2019	5/5	100%
2019-2020	4/4	100%
2020-2021	6/6	100%
2021-2022	4/4	100%
2022-2023	4/4	100%
2023-2024	5/5	100%

8.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Continue to provide training for all TAs with enrollment in ENGL 677: Seminar in Teaching Freshman English both fall and spring semesters of the first year of teaching.

2020-2021:

The first-time teachers encountered additional challenges due to COVID and the hurricanes. They did a great job staying connected to their students in a particularly trying time. It is a lot to ask of these student-teachers to maintain an online presence while trying to keep their students motivated during a global pandemic and two major natural disasters. The mentorship and support they receive through the teaching courses prove helpful.

2021-2022:

Continue to provide training for all TAs with enrollment in ENGL 677: Seminar in Teaching Freshman English both fall and spring semesters of the first year of teaching.

2022-2023:

Since they have to take this coursework if they are teaching, I recommend we delete this benchmark.

2023-2024:

I continue to believe we need to adjust this data point since it will be 100% every year. And if a student does not want to teach then we don't want them to and they shouldn't have to take this series of classes. The question our MFA faculty will have to consider is if teaching training should be on our program assessment (it is a big part of our program), and if so, how we go about assessing their training: a grade in the course? a paper? teaching observation? SEIs? A combined rating of their teaching? And would we want to evaluate this when they are first learning to teach or later? Perhaps from a personal narrative about teaching? It MUST be noted that this year the program shifted so new teachers are now teaching English 101 and its co-requisite course, 100. This gives them two different kinds of student experiences. But perhaps more importantly, in their first year in the program no longer are students just tutors at the writing center, but spend 15 hours a week as embedded tutors in the classroom. Each semester paired with different instructors. This will be important in giving them more experience. It is here that perhaps we should consider focusing the data: how embedded tutoring carries over to their classroom teaching.

9 Assessment and Benchmark ENGL 699 Theses

Assessment: ENGL 699 Theses.

Benchmark: 100% of submitted theses will pass and be successfully defended.

Outcome Links

Artistic Aesthetic [Program]

Students will develop and articulate a mature artistic aesthetic.

9.1 Data

Academic Year	Submitted theses successfully defended	
	#	%
2017-2018	5/5	100%
2018-2019	7/7	100%
2019-2020	6/6	100%
2020-2021	4/4	100%
2021-2022	6/6	100%
2022-2023	3/3	100%
2023-2024	4/4	100%

9.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

All seven of the graduating students submitted their theses and passed their defenses.

2020-2021:

All four students who submitted their theses passed the defenses. One student elected to postpone graduation for a year.

2021-2022:

All six students who submitted their theses passed their defenses. This year it was challenging to shepherd students through the process because of the lack of continuity of fiction professors, but everyone successfully completed the procedures.

2022-2023:

We met the benchmark here. This seems like a benchmark to look at. We do want students to pass this but because the aim of the program is to prepare for this and that most students who are not progressing toward this goal are asked to leave before their third year, I'm not sure if this exact benchmark is helping. Perhaps we must consider how to support students who are not progressing, but often those students have taken a different view on writing and their life goals. When they are still working hard we encourage them to take more time. Since it is the aim of the program it is important to monitor but maybe we need consultation about what we are assessing and why.

2023-2024:

This is another important part of the writing process that goes along with the writing production collected in the previous data about workshops. However, since every student has successfully defended their thesis, maybe it is time to think about this benchmark. Quality of the writing? Something the defense committee could rate after the defense is conducted? Perhaps the idea of having mini-defense either in the middle of their time in the program or at the end of each year would be a better data point? Our program needs to discuss how we should move forward with this one.

10 Assessment and Benchmark Alumni Survey

Assessment: Alumni survey question regarding the extent to which training received at McNeese assisted alumni in their careers.

Benchmark: When asked the extent to which training received at McNeese assisted alumni in their careers, 75% of students will report “sufficient” or higher on the Alumni Survey.

Files: See list of attachments to view. (Requires Adobe Reader or compatible viewer).

McNeese MFA Alumni Survey

Outcome Links

Professionalism [Program]

Students will gain foundational knowledge of the publishing industry and creative and scholarly communities.

10.1 Data

Academic Year	Reported "sufficient" or higher	
	#	%
2017-2018	4/4	100%
2018-2019	4/4	100%
2019-2020	5/5	100%
2020-2021	5/5	100%
2021-2022	4/4	100%
2022-2023	3/3	100%
2023-2024	4/4	100%

10.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

We continue to hear from our alumni about how well prepared McNeese made them for their careers and additional academic endeavors, which they attribute to both the Professional Endeavors class and the mentorship of the faculty during and beyond their time at McNeese.

2020-2021:

We continue to hear from our alumni about how well prepared McNeese made them for their careers and additional academic endeavors, which they attribute to both the Professional Endeavors class and the mentorship of the faculty during and beyond their time at McNeese.

2021-2022:

Our alumni report that they are well prepared for working in academic environments due to their training and instruction received in Professional Endeavors. There is room for improvement for those who pursue editing or other writing careers, which we hope to address in Professional Endeavors in the future. After the 40th anniversary event, a number of alumni have expressed an interest in forming a mentoring group for current students to give advice and guidance on career matters. We hope to begin implementing this beginning in the fall of next year.

2022-2023:

Only three of the seven graduates returned the surveys. Two of these talked about how well they were prepared compared to others who graduated from other MFA programs. They also pointed to Professional Endeavors as an essential class in their preparation. It is important to note that at least 4 of the 7 students have jobs in technical writing and that the program needs to consider more preparation for this possibly. We mostly prepare students for academia but the realities of the world suggest we should consider adding a technical writing course as a long term goal and adding some technical writing to Professional Endeavors coursework.

2023-2024:

All four graduates replied to this one. Three rating the question excellently and one sufficiently. We are doing well, but we also have limited resources for what's possible in our classes and preparation. We are best at preparing future teachers and need to work, within our means, to expose students for a variety of career outcomes such as professional writing. We also are pretty good at giving students experience in publishing, but only in smaller venues. MFA faculty will continue to look at what Professional Endeavors focuses on and also consider ways to expose students to different writing careers in other ways during classes, special talks, and perhaps best through advising conversations.

11 Assessment and Benchmark Exit Survey

Assessment: Exit Survey Questions:

1. Question 9A: If you served as a teaching assistant, please rate your experience. How would you rank the training program provided?
2. Question 26: Students report their improvement in the area of world literature
3. Question 35: Students rank their preparation received to compete in the academic job market.

Benchmark 1: 100% of teaching assistants will respond "good" or "excellent" on question 9A.

Benchmark 2: 100% of graduating students will respond "good" or "excellent" on question 35.

Outcome Links

Artistic Aesthetic [Program]

Students will develop and articulate a mature artistic aesthetic.

Professionalism [Program]

Students will gain foundational knowledge of the publishing industry and creative and scholarly communities.

11.1 Data

Academic Year	Reported "sufficient" or higher	
	#	%
2017-2018	3/5	60%
2018-2019	7/7	100%
2019-2020	6/6	100%
2020-2021	4/4	100%
2021-2022	6/6	100%
2022-2023	1/3	33%
2023-2024	4/4	100%

11.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

100% of those graduating felt that teaching support was excellent or good. Results will be passed along to the director of freshman composition.

2020-2021:

100% of those graduating felt that teaching support was excellent or good. Results will be passed along to the director of freshman composition.

2021-2022:

Four out of six of those graduating reported their teaching support to be excellent or good. Two out of the six rated teaching support to be sufficient. In the narrative parts of the exit survey, the students explained that their supervisor was very good at supporting them; however, several noted that they wished that 677 & 679 were taught before they entered the classroom rather than simultaneously. This has been reported for many years. This particular measurement isn't the responsibility of the MFA program but rather the English department.

2022-2023:

We were much lower on the benchmark for this group. Some of this may be the result that the Director of Composition was still new to the job. But these students also were the ones affected by the pandemic and hurricanes in their first year where they missed hands on activities at the writing center that helps with preparation. Also, because of the pandemic, 677 was held mostly online, by student request, and this system probably was not the best. It is understandable that students felt that the lack of preparation was not enough.

There has always been a discussion to get better preparation for teaching by taking the courses before they start teaching. For 677, which is the course they take alongside their first semester teaching, it would not make sense to have this type of course before they teach because students would not have the immediacy of actually having to be in the classroom and learning alongside the course. In short, it seems like it should be a course students take before they teach but students would not take it seriously without the pressure of being in the classroom. It is possible that the 679 course could be moved to the spring to get them to think about teaching composition and teaching in general and this would be a relatively easy switch because the first year graduate students could take it at the same time as the second year graduate students as we transitioned. We will consider this. Also, as we move the MFA students into teaching co-requisite courses, first-year students will be embedded in some of the courses to help out but also be connected to a slightly more experienced teacher. We also have plans to have the first-year students observe very experienced teachers in their first year to get more of a sense of how teaching is done. We do not have a solid plan yet and this is something we will try to formulate in the next year. Though this benchmark has little to do with the MFA, it is a needed benchmark because of the importance of making sure our teachers are helping our first-year students enrolled in the course and because our largest focus, currently, for preparation for life after the degree outside of writing itself is teaching and so even though students don't always understand that teaching can never truly be prepared for until you do it, we can find ways to be more supportive and also messaging the challenges of teaching and our philosophy behind how we do things. So we will consider switching 679 to the spring for students planning to teach and work out a systematic way to prepare first-year graduates to teach in their second year with embedded tutoring and observation hours. These are English Department matters as well as working with the writing center with how tutoring time and observation time can count as part of the GA assistantship.

2023-2024:

We are back to 100% and all students answered "excellent." This may also have to do with a new professor as the Director of Composition. In the three year survey analysis, I talked about the changes into how teaching is done now with the year of embedded tutoring before teaching on their own and also then having an embedded tutor to help when they are instructors. We should consider changing the survey to ask this question but also try to get some information about being an embedded tutor and having one in the classroom.

11.2 Data

Academic Year	Reported "sufficient" or higher	
	#	%
2017-2018	4/4	100%
2018-2019	6 /7	85%
2019-2020	5 /6	83%
2020-2021	4/4	100%
2021-2022	4/5	80%
2022-2023	—	—
2023-2024	1/2	50%

11.2.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Of the graduating students 83% reported good to excellent this year. Not all students are interested in pursuing academic careers. We need to adjust this rubric to account for those aims.

2020-2021:

All graduating students reported good to excellent this year. Everyone of them is actually interested in academic careers.

2021-2022:

Only five out of six graduating students are interested in pursuing a career in academics. Sixty percent of the respondents reported their preparation for academic careers was good to excellent. One rated their preparation sufficient and one rated their preparation somewhat inadequate. This overall assessment is lower than usual. It could partially be attributed to the challenges presented by the pandemic and hurricanes. However, redoubling our efforts in Professional Endeavors and 677, 679, and Research Methods will be a worthwhile goal to improve this.

2022-2023:

Only one student filled this out on the survey because it is listed in the MA section of the survey? The one student said yes. The wording listed in the explanation of the benchmark is different from the wording on the survey too. I'm not sure how this question pertains to the program. Our main goal is to prepare students to be writers. Our professionalization focuses mostly on writing and teaching, but I don't see how having students want to pursue academia is relevant for program assessment?

2023-2024:

Question 35 is listed in the MA section and not the MFA section. I didn't make this note on the survey and will talk to the MA program assessor about how to fix the survey to adjust for this since this question is of interest for the MFA program as well. Professional Endeavors is the only class that focuses on applying to academic jobs and not every student is interested in this. However, as noted elsewhere in the survey, perhaps more effort needs to be made outside of classes and part of the advising or possibly yearly defense process to include more job oriented conversations. It is interesting to note that typically in the 3-year alumni survey students say they are better prepared than others from different programs. The two students who did fill in this survey were brought into the job interviews for the new MFA position and perhaps when they get involved in something like that could be used as a teaching moment. But obviously, this wouldn't work as a data point. Again, the problem is how to assess bringing preparation for the job market and perhaps thinking more about how to tie it to Professional Endeavors instead.

12 Assessment and Benchmark Graduate Activity Report

Assessment: Graduate Activity Report (GAR) Matrix.

Benchmark 1: 100% of students will attend at least six readings.

Benchmark 2: 50% of students will attend a conference.

Benchmark 3: 100% of students will read a sufficient amount of published material (books and journals).

Benchmark 4: 85% of students will have at least two face-to-face manuscript conferences with a published writer each year.

Benchmark 5: 100% of students will write at least four academic papers annually.

Benchmark 6: 100% of students will give at least three oral presentations annually.

Benchmark 7: Annually, 50% of students will give public readings of their creative or academic work. This includes participation at conferences.

Files: See list of attachments to view. (Requires Adobe Reader or compatible viewer).

MFA GAR MATRIX 2016

Outcome Links

Creating Art [Program]

Students will create works of art in the forms of poetry or fiction.

Professionalism [Program]

Students will gain foundational knowledge of the publishing industry and creative and scholarly communities.

12.1 Data

Academic Year	Students meeting the benchmark	
	#	%
2017-2018	22/22	100%
2018-2019	19/19	100%
2019-2020	18/18	100%
2020-2021	4/15	27%
2021-2022	17/17	100%
2022-2023	9/13	69%
2023-2024	4/11	36%

12.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Due to a high attendance at this year's AWP conference in San Antonio, 100% of students were able to meet and exceed reading attendance.

2020-2021:

Due to COVID and the hurricanes, we were only able to host four readings via Zoom this year. Some students were able to attend external Zoom readings, but circumstances prohibited our being able to offer options to our students during this extraordinary year.

2021-2022:

Since we were able to resume in-person readings this year and the student-run reading series has resumed, as well as a high attendance at the AWP conference, this benchmark was easily achieved this year.

2022-2023:

This year we did not meet our benchmark. There are several students who do not come to readings. Part of this involves being sick and for the first time we had two students who started during the spring semester. However, the program will explain to students that going to the readings we have on campus and that other graduate students give is mandatory during orientation and one week before the reading. We spend money to have these writers on campus for the students and they must attend these events.

2023-2024:

We were way off the benchmark this year; however, it seems to be more of an issue of reporting. Students who reported know numbers had been at more readings than they reported. Some misunderstand what constitutes a public reading and some may have only reported local readings vs ones they went to at AWP. We may need to revise the question to make it clearer. We are probably closer to 85% off the benchmark, roughly. The other factor this year is that we usually have to major readings in the fall and the spring when our visiting writers come, but this year we hosted a celebration for Frank Granger so there was just one reading with two visiting writers reading the same night. So there were three readings hosted for visiting writers. Two readings done at the Common House set up by the MFA students. Then two smaller readings hosted by one of the faculty members. Finally, students may not have counted the final graduate reading because they complete the survey before that final reading. There was also an offsite reading that we were connected to where most students who were at AWP went to. Again, we need to emphasize students attend all the readings they can.

12.2 Data

Academic Year	Students meeting the benchmark	
	#	%
2017-2018	20/22	90%
2018-2019	12 /19	63%
2019-2020	18/18	100%
2020-2021	1/15	7%
2021-2022	15/17	88%
2022-2023	9/13	69%
2023-2024	8/11	72%

12.2.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Due to the proximity (San Antonio) of this year's AWP conference and the ability for students to drive or be driven there, it made conference attendance much more affordable than the years when air travel is required. One student who was unable to attend AWP attended the SCMLA conference in the fall.

2020-2021:

Again with COVID there weren't many opportunities for students to attend or participate in conferences. One student attend and presented at a virtual conference held by Indiana University. The cost-benefit analysis of many of the other options were not favorable for attendance.

2021-2022:

The majority of the students in the program attended the AWP conference in Philadelphia in March, with the exception of two people who either did not want to attend or were afraid to fly. Additionally three students presented at other conferences and others attended in support of them. We hope to continue using Endowed Professorship funds to support student conference attendance.

2022-2023:

We met the benchmark with most students attending the conference. We were able to support travel to AWP by providing them an allotted amount that covered airfare and with extra money depending on their airfare. Some who flew out of Houston saved enough money to pay for their hotel. The four students who did not attend were signed up for the virtual AWP conference; however, these students did not report to me if they attended any sessions. Next year, we will have a survey for all students about the conference so that we will understand how they are using it whether in person or virtually. We also need to do a better job in providing information about regional conferences that students can submit to and travel to. We will try to build a list of conferences for the year that students can use and post it in the office areas.

2023-2024:

We met the benchmark. Even with the partial funding we provide, one student didn't think he could afford to go, one wasn't interested, and the third had a medical emergency in his family at the last minute. Two students who were at the major AWP conference we go to each year reported they zero for conferences attended! Since I know they were there I changed the number; they must have read the question as asking what conferences they presented at. We should review the wording of the question to make sure it isn't confusing. Two students presented/moderated at conferences and also attended more than one, so we are pleased by that.

12.3 Data

Academic Year	Students meeting the benchmark	
	#	%
2017-2018	22/22	100%
2018-2019	19/19	100%
2019-2020	18/18	100%
2020-2021	15/15	100%
2021-2022	17/17	100%
2022-2023	8/13	61%
2023-2024	7/11	63%

12.3.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

2020-2021:

Graduate students continue to complain about inadequate holdings and subscriptions. Given budgetary restrictions, the library has done little to remedy this problem. We continue to encourage students to use Inter-Library Loan to fill the gaps in McNeese's collection.

2021-2022:

We continue to register complaints from graduate students about access to current journals and books. The budgetary and personnel limitations of the library have become worse in that interlibrary loan used to be able to fill our library's gaps, but the library has no dedicated staff to handle requests. This is a university-wide problem, not restricted to graduate students.

2022-2023:

For my first time with this benchmark, I'm a little unclear what the goal for the number of books and journals students read. Much of this is assuming that students are reading for their academic classes, reading on their own, and looking at journals on their own. But it is unclear what sufficient amount would be. Few students seem to subscribe or have knowledge about specific journals. Having a more extensive collection of current journals at the library would be great. We have not talked to the library. But giving the current climate this seems unlikely. The program is considering whether to develop our own library of journals. We should also change this benchmark to ask about their personal reading of books they are reading outside of class and journals they are reading on their own to help them understand that this is an important activity. This will be added to the list of things to cover in orientation and to discuss during conferences with students.

2023-2024:

We didn't meet the benchmark again, but there are many factors here. First, it is unclear what "satisfactory" means and whether we should include things read in their coursework. This year I changed the survey question trying to pinpoint two areas: reading of magazines and journals (the places writers get published with short work) and reading books outside of the ones assigned in the classroom. If the student listed some journals they read and at least three books I see that as satisfactory. I do think this is important to emphasize to help students be active in what is happening in current writing and to help them identify venues that might be good vehicles for their work. But also, to encourage their own curiosity in curating their own reading list of journals and books. This may be an interesting aspect to think about at the beginning and end of each semester and perhaps tied to the idea we are considering of mini-defenses for each year or half year. But whatever the case, it should come up in conversation/conferences we have with students to make it clear reading is essential for their growth. Too many students, students who want to be writers!!!, show too little interest in actually reading! We do have to come up with what satisfactory reading is, however.

12.4 Data

Academic Year	Students meeting the benchmark	
	#	%
2017-2018	22/22	100%
2018-2019	19/19	100%
2019-2020	18/18	100%
2020-2021	0/15	0%
2021-2022	17/17	100%
2022-2023	11/13	85%
2023-2024	11/11	100%

12.4.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

With the procurement of endowed professorships, we have been able to attract writers with strong national reputations to conference with our MFA students and deliver readings on our campus. If we are able to retain these funding sources, we should be able to continue to improve the offerings of visitors and consultants for our students. Since we have an extremely small faculty, these visiting writers have been vital for variety and range of feedback for our students' creative work.

2020-2021:

Due to the hurricanes, it was only possible to host Zoom readings in the spring semester. All students (100%) had one conference with visiting writers. Next year we plan to return to our practice of hosting writers each semester and having them conduct individual conferences with all our graduate writers.

2021-2022:

We were able to resume our usual number of visiting writers this year. In the spring we hosted a 40th anniversary celebration of the program, which included hosting three writers, two of whom conducted individual conferences with students, and Adam Johnson, winner of the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, gave a craft talk to the MFA students. In exit surveys, graduates consistently rate having visiting writers either very important or invaluable as part of their experience in the MFA program. Having such a small faculty, these visiting writers provide needed varied and additional feedback to our students.

2022-2023:

We met our benchmark this semester. This is one benchmark that we may think about getting rid of. We always bring in two writers per semester and always expect students to have conferences. This is very hands on and since students look forward to these, we have no problem meeting this benchmark. The only reason we were not at 100% is because two of the students started the program in the spring so they missed out on the fall conferences.

2023-2024:

We beat the benchmark on this one. Note that two of the students in the survey both put one conference in, but this is incorrect. Students may have only been thinking about this semester and not included the conference from last semester; however, it is a fact that these students had two conferences. As noted last year, I'm not sure if this is worth assessing. It is something we must continue to offer and what makes our program stand out from many others; however, it is an activity that should be 100% each year and there is no way to improve on it since it is something that is automatic. It is possible that some students' work on some years would be deemed unworthy to send to a visiting writer or perhaps as the program gets bigger we will no longer be able to offer conferences to all students, so perhaps it is something we should keep in here to remind us of one of the foundations of our program?

12.5 Data

Academic Year	Students meeting the benchmark	
	#	%
2017-2018	20/22	90%
2018-2019	16 /19	84%
2019-2020	16/18	88%
2020-2021	5/15	33%
2021-2022	15/17	88%
2022-2023	10/13	77%
2023-2024	11/11	100%

12.5.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Students continue to participate in on-campus and local readings and presentations. We hope to continue to provide some funding support for those who seek to present at conferences and festivals.

2020-2021:

Again due to COVID and the hurricanes, it was difficult to hit this benchmark; however one-third of the students did have an opportunity to publicly present their work either virtually or in-person, which is significant considering the obstacles.

2021-2022:

There has been an increase this year in opportunities for students to publicly present their work beyond regular in-class presentations. Some students are not simultaneously enrolled in the MA program, so they aren't interested in presenting papers at conferences. Some do not wish to present their work outside of class. We will continue to encourage people to get that experience, but if it isn't a requirement for a class there is no way to impel them to do so.

2022-2023:

We met the benchmark on this one. We should consider upping the benchmark to 100% because we want students to read once each year in preparation for their final graduate reading after graduation and in preparation for the life as a writer. This year a few students presented at conferences and they only held one reading outside of school at the Common House where any student who wanted to could read. To continuously improve this one, which is important, we should consider starting a student committee who is in charge of hosting a reading each semester. The committee could change each semester so students would get experience hosting an event. I'd also like for students to consider how they read and get feedback about their reading but I would not want to add that to this benchmark however.

2023-2024:

We met my suggested 100% benchmark, with many of the students doing at least two readings and some doing four. This year continued to be a good one because the graduate students again offered two readings that they organized at the Common House. Also, important was a faculty member who wanted to give the graduating students more practice reading from their work and also more time, hosted two readings at his home this spring and wants to host some in the fall as well. This is an important element to emphasize and I still recommend that we expect 100% of our students to do at least one reading. Faculty have to make sure students continue to either form a committee to help the readings each semester continue or at least make sure the leaders one year "train" and pass the mantle to at least two other students to run the next year.

13 Assessment and Benchmark Internal Creative Writing Assessment Tool

Assessment: Internal Creative Writing Assessment Tool.

Benchmark: 100% of students will receive a 3.00 or higher on the internal Creative Writing Assessment Tool, averaged out over the entire academic year.

Files: See list of attachments to view. (Requires Adobe Reader or compatible viewer).

MFA Creative Writing Assessment Tool 2016

Outcome Links

Creating Art [Program]

Students will create works of art in the forms of poetry or fiction.

13.1 Data

Academic Year	Poetry average	Poets that met benchmark		Fiction average	Fiction writers that met benchmark	
		#	%		#	%
2017-2018	3.77	11/11	100%	3.13	9/11	81%
2018-2019	3.66	9 /9	100%	3.95	9/10	90%
2019-2020	3.61	9/9	100%	3.66	9/9	100%
2020-2021	4.07	7/7	100%	4.18	8/8	100%
2021-2022	3.75	8/8	100%	3.5	9/9	100%
2022-2023	3.6	3/5	60%	3.63	8/8	100%
2023-2024	4.3	3/3	100%	4.1	8/9	89%

13.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Continue to evaluate students. Currently all students are meeting the benchmark. No changes are needed at this time.

2020-2021:

Continue to evaluate students. One student who was having trouble completing work in the midst of the pandemic and hurricane aftermath, failed to resolve an incomplete and thus was dismissed from the program. Since the student withdrew during the spring semester, they were not measured in the evaluation.

2021-2022:

All students met the benchmark this year. Generally if someone does not, they are counseled or asked to leave the program.

2022-2023:

The fiction students all meant the benchmark. In poetry, one of the students only just started in the spring and did not yet have the mainstay course Form and Theory of Poetry, did not have at least one semester of workshop, and also had only been in the program for a few weeks before his work was reviewed. We will monitor his progress. The other poet is not progressing and we are talking over plans for finishing up his MA instead of his MFA. The external reviewers marked these students higher than the internal reviewers, so that should be taken into consideration where it seems in the past the external reviewers were harder in their reviews than the internal ones.

2023-2024:

Poetry met the benchmark and fiction had one student score below a three. These were rated by a different instructor this year as well. Now that we have two genre instructors for each genre we might think about both scoring; however only one person does workshop and has a better understanding of the students total output. Next year each instructor will teach one semester of workshop so it might be something to consider as we assess in 2025. The program has started getting end of the semester portfolios from each student to all the MFA faculty and this could possibly one way to assess this area. We'll have to decide if we want to look at the work done for the whole year as this area asks or focus on where the student is by the end of the year based on one sample. The student that rated lower came in with less writing experience and we are confident she will keep growing her skills. We will work closely with her. We should continue to push the students to see the bigger goal of becoming the best writers that they can be rather than getting a story completed before a deadline for workshop. Emphasize the longer term goals and continued growth in class and in individual meetings with students.

14 Assessment and Benchmark External Creative Writing Assessment Tool

Assessment: External Creative Writing Assessment Tool, scored by select visiting writers.

Benchmark: 100% of students who have face-to-face conferences will receive a 3.00 or higher on the external Creative Writing Assessment Tool.

Files: See list of attachments to view. (Requires Adobe Reader or compatible viewer).

MFA Creative Writing Assessment Tool 2016

Outcome Links

Creating Art [Program]

Students will create works of art in the forms of poetry or fiction.

14.1 Data

Academic Year	Poetry average	Poets that met benchmark		Fiction average	Fiction writers that met benchmark	
		#	%		#	%
2017-2018	3.00	8/11	72%	3.10	8/11	72%
2018-2019	3.72	9 /9	100%	3.55	9 /10	90%
2019-2020	3.8	9 /9	100%	3.5	9 /9	100%
2020-2021	3.6	7/7	100%	3.5	8/8	100%
2021-2022	3.75	8/8	100%	3.61	9/9	100%
2022-2023	3.7	4/5	80%	3.86	7/7*	100%
2023-2024	4.3	3/3	100%	3.3	7/9	78%

*No data on the score of one fiction writer.

14.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Continue to evaluate students. Currently all students are meeting the benchmark. No changes are needed at this time.

2020-2021:

Continue to evaluate students. One poetry student fell below the mark, but withdrew from classes before the end of the academic year, so we did not include them in the sample.

2021-2022:

All students met the benchmark this year. It is useful to have visiting writers evaluate the quality of work since our faculty is so small and deeply invested in the students.

2022-2023:

One poet was below the benchmark. This student only came in this spring and the evaluation was done with less than three weeks actually in the program. This student did not have a semester of workshop in the fall and the benefit of the mainstay course of Form and Theory so this student will be monitored but his evaluations make sense since he was brand new to the program. There was disagreement on the other student between internal and external reviewers.

2023-2024:

Poetry students met the benchmark. Fiction students did not meet the benchmark. Two students scored a 2.5. And four in the three range. The outside assessor could possibly have been tougher on students than some assessors, though their assessments do not feel off the mark. Part of the issue for this assessment is that we ask students to send works that are drafts and not final polished pieces. Perhaps that should be mentioned in the questionnaire. However, this probably would not dramatically change the results. The caliber of our students may not be quite as high this year either. However, maybe some of the students who are not performing as well need to be pushed a bit more to work on their craft. Perhaps more individual attention is needed to help the students build confidence and craft. I wonder how much having goals tied to becoming a better writer and increasing the quality of the work. This is also a good one to check back on next year to see if we don't meet the benchmark two years in a row for fiction.

15 Assessment and Benchmark Graduates Publish Work

Assessments: Graduates Publish Work.

Benchmark: 75% of MFA graduates will have published their work within three years of graduation.

Outcome Links

Creating Art [Program]

Students will create works of art in the forms of poetry or fiction.

15.1 Data

Academic Year	Students meeting the benchmark	
	#	%
2017-2018	6/7	83%
2018-2019	5/7	71%
2019-2020	4/6	66%
2020-2021	4/4	100%
2021-2022	5/6	80%
2022-2023	3/4	75%
2023-2024	4/4	100%

15.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

Continue mentoring beyond graduation. Faculty continue to read manuscripts, suggest publishing venues, and write blurbs and recommendations for the students who remain in contact.

2020-2021:

Continue mentoring beyond graduation. Faculty continue to read manuscripts, suggest publishing venues, and write blurbs and recommendations for the students who remain in contact.

2021-2022:

Faculty continues mentoring graduates beyond matriculation by writing recommendations, providing book blurbs, passing along publishing and employment opportunities. Not all students remain in contact, though most do. Faculty support remains the highest quality of our program.

2022-2023:

We are meeting the benchmark based on the number of students who we could reach and filled in the survey three-years after graduation. With some web-searching though it seems like five out of the seven have become published. Again, better communication channels, more emphasis on being a helpful alum while in the program, and nurturing alumni connections to the program through virtual connections to incoming classes and current graduate students could help students feel better about the program. As far as publishing, we have a pretty good record. Though we meet this benchmark often, it is something the program still needs to nurture and consider because this is our biggest aim.

2023-2024:

The program met this benchmark. One student had only published one work since she graduated; one had more than 12 works published; another had a book of poems published (that was originally her thesis) as well as publishing several shorter works; and the other had published at least six poems. Our students continue to publish consistently after they graduate and this is an important benchmark to track. Still more can be done to get students in the habit of submitting work for publication. For example this year, current students started a contest to see who could get to 100 rejections first. At least half the students participated with a total of 130 rejections by the end of the semester and 10 works published. This is tricky because students should also not send works out that aren't ready to send out; how to balance sending work for publication but also working toward understanding when it is ready to send out may be something the program needs to address more. This is something that again is addressed in Professional Endeavors but based on exit surveys students in the past have not felt prepared for publishing; perhaps connecting what they know based on working on our in-house journals and their experience trying to submit their work, there is a way to emphasize during workshop and in individual conferences more. Consider tracking submissions and not just publications as another data point tied to the information we receive in the GAR Matrix. This way we can help assure that students are making a habit of sending their work out before they leave the program.

End of report