



Are You Ready To Write That Book? Enroll This Fall In UNH's New Master Of Fine Arts In Writing

Contact: [Lori Wright](#)
603-862-0574
UNH Media Relations

May 8, 2006

DURHAM, N.H. -- Students seeking a career as professional writers will have a new option this fall when the University of New Hampshire begins offering a Master of Fine Arts in Writing, an expansion of its graduate program that will allow students to complete a book-length project in fiction, poetry or nonfiction in three years.

The 48-credit degree replaces the 32-credit Master of Arts in Writing. The decision to implement a more rigorous graduate writing degree was made to better prepare students who want to be professional writers or teach writing. Students currently enrolled in the 32-credit program can either complete it or transfer their credits to the new program.

UNH made the change for several reasons. Since establishing the 32-credit program in 1972, the worlds of publishing and university teaching have changed dramatically for writers. "Where once a master's was a writer's ticket to a university-level teaching post, in today's market writers looking for employment in academia are expected to have an M.F.A. before they are even eligible to apply for a tenure-track teaching position. Many of our M.A. graduates have enrolled in M.F.A. programs after leaving UNH to qualify for teaching jobs," said Sue Hertz, associate professor of English.

An increasing number of universities have recognized the need for the M.F.A.. in writing; in 10 years, the number of M.F.A. programs has increased from 64 programs nationwide to 109 in 2004. At the same time, the demand for M.A. programs has dwindled.

Emerging writers are experiencing increased pressure to perfect their writing as opportunities to publish in hard copy literary journals and magazines have shrunk. Book publishers have folded or merged, creating fewer houses publishing fewer titles. Editors have less time to nurture new talent and expect more polished manuscripts than in past decades, according to Hertz.

"Providing students with more time to work with faculty and a community of writers will allow them to hone their craft and master the skills that will lead to successful careers. To that end, they will be required to write, in their third year, a collection of short fiction, a novel, a collection of poetry, an essay collection or a book of nonfiction that could serve as their stepping stone into publication. This year provides a crucial span in which students can draft a manuscript that showcases their skills, voice, and thematic concerns at a level that meets the professional demands of publishers," Hertz said.

UNH anticipates the new degree will attract a stronger, larger and more diverse pool of

applicants. After the University of North Carolina-Wilmington offered an M.F.A. in writing in 1999, applications soared from 60 mostly in-state applicants the first year to 250 national and international applicants in 2005. At the beginning of its M.F.A. in Creative Writing program, Georgia College and State University accepted 70 percent or more of its applications to fulfill enrollment. Three years later, applications had risen to the point that only 33 percent were accepted.

The new program at UNH will admit 15 graduate students in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction each year for the first three years, creating a community of 45 writers. M.F.A. students will be required to take five workshops in their major genre, one form and theory course in their major genre, four elective courses, and complete a thesis. M.F.A. students with teaching assistantships also will have to take The Teaching of Writing.

For more information on the M.F.A. in Writing at UNH, contact Sue Hertz at 603-862-3966 or susan.hertz@unh.edu.