

WARREN WILSON COLLEGE
Position Description

POSITION TITLE: Assistant to the Director

DEPARTMENT: MFA Program for Writers

REPORTS TO: Programs Director

POSITION SUMMARY:

The assistant to the Director is a full-time staff member responsible for organizing and running the MFA Office, anticipating and responding to the needs of graduate students, faculty, prospective students, and alumni, as well as recognizing those needs that require the attention of the Program Director. The Assistant to the Director works in close consultation with the Program Director and the MFA Academic Board Chair, directly all office staff, including student crew members, short-term and residency assistants, volunteers, etc. while the Assistant to the Director is not an academic officer of the program, the position includes the kind of advising/counseling usually provided by an Associate Dean of Students, and the maintenance of academic records usually expected of a Registrar.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Communicating with graduate students, faculty, alumni, and prospective students and faculty by phone, e-mail, and mail.
2. Establishing and maintaining the Program deadline schedule.
3. Responding to phone and e-mail inquiries from applicants and prospective applicants.
4. Regularly updating, in consultation with the Program Director, Program forms, including guidelines and the Program Handbook.
5. Maintaining student records from application through graduation and transcript including narrative evaluations for each residency and each semester project.
6. Over seeing advertising and public relations.
7. Bookkeeping, including the preparation and/or recording of monthly and annual budgets, check requests, funds disbursements, and donor contributions.
8. Supervising the Office Assistant and generally ensuring that the office staff is working effectively, meeting all of their responsibilities in a timely manner.
9. Handling private and confidential information appropriately and with discretion, keeping in mind the responsibilities of the program and the college as well as the concerns of faculty and students.
10. Attending and taking minutes of Graduate Council meetings.
11. Managing an archive of previous residency schedules, course descriptions, faculty biographies and resumes, and list of graduates by genre (and with current address).
12. Serving as liaison between the Program and Friends of Writers (alumni fund-raising arm), especially during reunion Alumni Conferences on campus (2 out of every 5 years), usually attended by 75-80 participants.

Additional responsibilities pertinent to the **semi-annual residencies on campus** include:

13. Working closely with college offices, staff, and crew leaders, including the Director of Housing and Conferences, the offices of the Registrar and Financial Aid, Building Services, and the physical plant.
14. Hiring van drivers and residency assistants, selecting Alumni Residency Fellows, volunteers (when available), and any other office workers.
15. Preparing residency materials overseeing their duplication and distribution.
16. Coordinating travel, lodging and meal arrangements for approximately 125 participants.
17. Overseeing the preparation of dorms, classrooms, faculty offices, lecture halls, and all other facilities.
18. Organizing the work schedules of and overseeing all residency staff (Office Assistant, Alumni Residency Fellow, student workers, van drivers, etc.).
19. Disseminating information about events open to the public.
20. Planning the graduation celebration (ceremony, reception and dinner).
21. Responding to a wide variety of student and faculty needs, with 15-hour-a-day availability.

WORKING CONDITIONS:

The position of Assistant to the Director is primarily a desk job between residencies. It includes a great deal of typing, communicating by phone and e-mail, and work with databases and spreadsheets.

The MFA Program Office is a 3-person department which serves a core constituency of approximately 75 students and 25-30 faculty who are actively engaged in semester projects; another 20-35 students and 20-25 faculty who will join or return to the Program the following semester; over 700 alumni; and an average of 1000 inquirers and 250 applicants a year.

During the semester, hours are spent primarily in the office, using the computer, accessing files, responding to e-mail and fax, talking to prospective applicants in person, working with the Program Director, responding to students and faculty by phone, submitting purchase orders, preparing budget updates, and arranging/inspecting/assigning residency housing. Moving files, office supplies, and residency supplies requires occasional heavy lifting and occasional driving on and off campus.

In compensation for the long residency hours, program staff receive two weeks of vacation time annually in addition to the two weeks' vacation allotted to all college staff. This vacation time must be scheduled in consultation with the Program Director.

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. At least a B.A. degree, preferably in English. Some knowledge of and interest in contemporary writers and writing is strongly preferred.
2. Excellent communication and computer skills; fluency with Microsoft Word and Excel and database software.

3. Office management experience.
4. Exemplary organizational skills
5. Maturity and discretion. The Assistant to the Director is entrusted daily with highly confidential information, including details of the students' and faculty's professional, and sometimes personal lives.
6. Flexibility, and even temper, and a sense of humor. During the residency periods, the Assistant to the Director must often respond to a wide range of crises administrative, psychological and janitorial.
7. Experience (preferred) or proven ability in bookkeeping.
8. A driver's license and good driving record.

The Assistant to the Director is hired according to College personnel guidelines, as overseen by the Graduate Council, and is evaluated annually by the Director.