

WARREN WILSON COLLEGE
Position Description

POSITION TITLE: Program Director

DEPARTMENT: MFA Program for Writers

REPORTS TO: VP for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College

POSITION SUMMARY:

The Director of the MFA Program for Writers is the chief academic and administrative officer of the Program, who serves as the liaison among the non-residency groups (faculty, students and Board) that comprise the Program, and between the Program and the rest of the college.

The position is a full-time administrative appointment equivalent within a college structure to Division Head. The position carries a concurrent faculty appointment in the Department of English. The Director sits on the Graduate Council as well as the MFA Academic. S/he will also serve on such councils and committees at the College as are appropriate for representation of the Program and its effective integration into, and influence on, the College's overall objective. The Director also has the option of supervising two MFA students each year.

The Director is appointed by the President, upon the joint recommendation of the Academic Board and the Graduate Council. The College does not have a tenure system but operates with a series of short and then long-term contracts, following review and confirmation of superior performance. Evaluation will be conducted by the Academic Board in conjunction with the Graduate Council, and will include assessment by MFA students, faculty and staff.

STUDENT-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES

As chief academic officer, the Director executes the Board responsibility for consistently high quality of graduate study in writing. It is particularly important that s/he be familiar with each student's record and, simultaneously, the range and variety of work being done throughout the Program each semester. On all academic matters, s/he is expected to work closely with the MFA Academic Board and Board Chair.

Specifically, the Director is responsible for the following:

1. Oversees admission decisions and financial aid awards.
2. Contacts and recruits accepted students.
3. Reviews every completed semester project –including creative writing sample, annotations, and narrative evaluations.
4. Consults with the Board in regard to projects which fail to meet minimum standards for credit.

5. Prepares a letter to each student affirming or denying academic credit, noting any areas below standards, requiring additional documentation, and/or making recommendations for further study.
6. Reads all Degree Essays and both supervisors' and second readers' evaluation of them.
7. Consults with the Board in regard to essays which fail to meet minimum standards for credit.
8. Prepares a substantive letter to each student articulating the Board decision in regard to approval of the essay.
9. Reviews all "Petitions to Graduate," in coordination with outside-reader reports.
10. Reviews the student file, and consults with the Board, for any semester projects which fail to meet minimum standards for approval.
11. Prepares a substantive letter to each student articulating the Board decision in regard to rejection of the Petition to Graduate.
12. Participates in workshops, Thesis Interviews and/or classes during the residency periods.
13. Meets with students in group counseling sessions to explain Program policy, expectations and standards.
14. Meets individually with students beginning the essay or thesis semester to approve the student project and advise them on completion of the degree requirement.
15. Meets with other students individually as necessary.
16. Reads student and faculty midterm reports, consults the Board about students whose projects are at risk, notifies students of Board concern, and mediates when necessary between student and faculty supervisor.
17. Solicits and forwards to the Board student requests for changes in policy or waivers.
18. Articulates policy and supports students in their studies in the Program.

FACULTY-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Director is responsible for supplying appropriate faculty resources of the highest quality. Toward that end, the Director:

19. Solicits and responds to faculty applications, makes hiring decisions, conducts reviews of faculty performance, and arrange staffing for each semester, all with the advice of the Board.
20. Solicits and approves faculty lectures and courses and graduate student courses for the residency.
21. Provides orientation for new faculty before and during residency.
22. With the Chair prepares agendas for Board meetings.
23. Guides the faculty in pairing supervisors and students for the semester.
24. Chairs the faculty meeting to approve student essay topics.
25. Collects and reviews all student evaluations of faculty performance.
26. Mediates between student and supervisor whenever necessary.
27. Notifies the Board about any policy violation or substandard performance by faculty.
28. Collects and reviews faculty evaluations of student work.

RESIDENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

As chief administrative officer, the Director coordinates the planning and execution of two residency periods each year on campus, and oversees the on-going operation of the Program. In both areas, the Director delegates duties to the Assistant to the Director in regard to publicity, program documents, maintenance of record (from inquiry through transcript) and budget accounts, residency materials and facility use. The director retains responsibility for:

29. Overseeing students' progress toward the degree, including project plans and evaluations, receipt and approval of essays and petitions, as well as thesis and class preparation.
30. Reviewing residency evaluations and proposing changes in schedule and services accordingly.
31. Developing and applying policies and procedures.
32. Preparing agendas for meetings of the Graduate Council.
33. Representing the MFA Program within the councils, committees and other offices of the College.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Director should work to maintain both a supportive tone and high standards of excellence within the Program community, and, within the College, cordiality towards the Program. While each director will have his or her own style of leadership, general expectations include:

33. Carrying out the promise of individual attention to each student by being available, during residency and throughout the semester, to counsel, advise or console about non-academic as well as academic issues.
34. Advising, supporting and directing faculty during the residencies and, by phone, email and letter, non-residency semesters.
35. Consulting with the Academic Board Chair in regard to any violation of or exception to Program policy, and, as necessary, polling or convening the Academic Board for appropriate action.
36. Maintaining, during residencies and in exchanges with students and faculty throughout the semester, a climate of serious but non-competitive learning and teaching.
37. Participating in the life of the Warren Wilson community.

WORKING CONDITIONS:

Office environment.

QUALIFICATIONS:

It is expected that the Director will be a writer with appropriate credentials in the field; will be a skillful teacher particularly committed to the individualized instruction that the Program provides; will demonstrate organizational and administrative talent; and will have the personal qualities necessary to provide leadership within the Program and to work cooperatively with other members of the Warren Wilson community.