

An Examination of the Creative Writing Program Austin Community College

Statement of Purpose

In an effort to address its part of the key goals of Austin Community College, mainly providing workforce programs, increasing the number of classes that can transfer academically to a four-year college, providing for continuing education opportunities, building foundation skills, providing support services and instructional support to students, and providing contact training, the Creative Writing Department has established the following statement of purpose:

Austin Community College provides a comprehensive program of creative writing instruction so that students may: achieve an Associate Degree in Creative Writing; prepare for transfer and for success in a university Bachelor program, or take classes for personal enrichment or to satisfy a special interest.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Statement of Purpose be amended to the following:

Austin Community College provides a comprehensive program of pedagogical creative writing instruction, which prepares traditional and non-traditional students with the skills necessary to establish writing competency for transfer and success in a university Baccalaureate program, or take classes for personal enrichment, or to satisfy a special interest in the field.

Vision Summary

The Creative Writing Department at ACC envisions being able to address the increasing need for a creative outlet in the community that satisfies the quest for traditional and non-traditional education. According to a yearlong series of articles on the “Cities of Ideas” in the Austin American Statesman, Austin attracts a creative class of workers who are highly educated – with a degree and without a degree. An example of the level of education in one of our classes is the Advanced Screenwriting workshop in fall 2001 which included four students with MFA degrees and five others with BA degrees. While these non-traditional students wanted “college level” instruction, they were not really interested in academic credit. The Creative Writing Department envisions being able to capitalize on the interest in writing as an art form, as a profession, as an academic major, and as an ever-increasing interest in self-expression through the written arts.

The creative writing classes at ACC attract non-degree seeking students every semester, who have tried and do not want continuing education; they want to study with working writers who can give real insight into writing as a profession and as a craft. Outside the college environment, that is not always possible. It is a great gift to our traditional students to work alongside others who have accepted the apprenticeship it takes to improve as a writer. The second semester workshops are best suited for these non-traditional students but are structured to meet the needs of all levels of students where ever they want their talents to take them. Through the many courses offered, students should be able to achieve their goals of receiving training for advancement in their personal, academic, and professional creative writing goals. In an effort to keep up with the increasing number of registrants who want a flexible class schedule, the Creative Writing Department seeks to expand its course offerings through 8-week sequence courses, partnerships with continuing education at ACC, and through mini-learning communities.

Because writing is an outlet for creative instincts and for recording the human experience, general education and continuing education students both seek additional instruction, guidance and mentoring. Students come to creative writing for a myriad of reasons; the least of which is the desire to explore and discover who they are and what their place is in today's unsafe world. Creative writing allows students to test out their dreams of writing poems, a novel or screenplay. In order to fulfill this mentoring role, the Creative Writing Department foresees a need to increase the number and scope of the creative writing classes that partner with the community through early start and continuing education. Catching the interest of a high school student, thinking of dropping out, and being able to give that student a reason to stay in school and eventually come to ACC is priceless. The fall semester 2002 was the first of our early start agreement with Johnston High School students. In addition, because students express the desire to continue writing after the level I class, more advanced classes or multi-semester sequenced classes will be necessary. When first designing the degree we limited the number and genre of the advanced classes in the belief that our student base would be the traditional degree seeker. However, with closer examination, it is evident that both degree seekers and non-degree seekers need to be taken into account. Our population also takes longer to get a degree and bounces into and out of school as their world dictates. With the exception of the advanced screenwriting course, the advanced workshops should be multi-genre in focus so that students do not have to wait so long for an advanced class. Multi-genre classes at the second semester level will also encourage students to repeat more of the first semester classes. These advanced classes will further prepare students for compiling their own bodies of work and provide guidance in choosing the work that is most representative of the students' abilities for publication and production purposes.

The Department envisions a multi-use production lab that would also serve as a computer based instruction classroom. In the fall of 2002, level II screenwriting was held in a lab using industry standard Final Draft software. A dedicated production lab with a small meeting space could also be used as a production office for the Rio Review – the Literary and Arts Journal of ACC. It has always been a goal that the journal would be student produced. Journal production gives students necessary skills to help them find a job as

they practice layout, design, and editing. The department envisions an area where students and faculty could meet to work collaboratively on projects to foster a sense of community that so many writers desire since the craft of writing is a very solitary art.

The Department envisions attracting students, admitting and enrolling them effortlessly in ACC creative writing classes. Revision of the degree plan that includes changing the prefix from ENG to CRW will help students find creative writing classes on the web and in the print schedule. Also changing the titles from beginning creative writing to level I & advanced creative writing to level II, for example, will better align the titles with dance, drama, and journalism. Students are sometimes reluctant to place themselves in an “advanced” class because they think they are not ready. The designation of “advanced” is really a misnomer and all designation should be changed to reflect “levels” of instruction rather than a title that is subjective and left to interpretation. The Department envisions a time in the not too distant future when more than two levels of instruction will be necessary. Changing class titles at this time will facilitate this happening when the need arises.

In addition to the revision of program inventory and course updates of creative writing classes, the Creative Writing Department seeks to increase community ties through Literary Arts festivals and panels, and partnerships with local writing organizations and programs. The Literary Arts Festivals will continue to encourage students to pursue their goals by increasing their awareness of other writers and how they incorporate writing into their everyday lives. The festivals will continue to showcase students, both current and former as they provide a venue for students and faculty to share their work with non-creative writing students and the general community. The partnerships with local writing organizations and programs will, hopefully, provide a “first look” option for especially talented writers and offer them an “in” for continuing writing as a career.

In order to do this the Department envisions that class sizes must remain small and the number of workshop-oriented classes must increase. Small class size is imperative to the creative writing process so that each student can receive the personalized instruction and feedback needed to genuinely improve his or her writing. Creative writing students are in a strange way like the Developmental student in that both require lots of hands-on interaction with the writing mentor/coach. Workshop-oriented classes provide students with the time to write in a supervised setting, as well as, an opportunity to hear their work read aloud by their peers for review and critique. As students become more advanced, the Department envisions that the pedagogy of these classes will have to provide more student-specific instruction based on the student’s writing level and goals. In the future it may be necessary to design independent studies courses for those students with exceptional talent.

The Creative Writing Department envisions the granting of a half-time position to provide the necessary administrative support to make the vision a reality. As the Department expands, this half-time position should be converted to full-time. With one full-time position and little administrative support there are not enough hours in the day to oversee and develop a new Department. It takes tremendous energy and acumen to

follow through with the department's vision. Struggling with an ever changing adjunct base, creating a supportive environment for faculty and students, producing the journal, producing festivals, coping with the piles of ever increasing administrative paperwork and meetings leaves little time for community outreach and development. Granted this is an ambitious vision, but it is a vision that could happen at ACC with the monetary and administrative support necessary to mentor a new Department. Creative writing at ACC has come a long way in three years, the Department envisions meeting the challenges of new growth as it anticipates and responds to student and community needs.

One vision that the department has that is faculty and department driven is a Creative Writing/Film Institute where students work collaboratively to produce their work. Several scenarios are possible with a multi-use facility: Creative writing students' screenplays are produced by RTF students who are directing acting students from Drama, student poets are filmed and their work archived in the LRS, student produced fiction is adapted for stage and film by the students, produced by students, acted by students. This institute would also serve as a place the community could come for certificates, internships and retooling of skills for the local film industry. Faculty and students will also create many ties with the community with this type of institute as partnerships are formed through internships, screenwriting competitions and festivals. These types of collaborative behaviors are only possible with dedication from faculty, students, and administration to create the space for this to happen through creative thinking, funding, and scheduling.

Finally, in keeping with the desire to dedicate the Rio Grande Campus as the Fine Arts Campus, the Department foresees a need to dedicate time and money to bring community awareness to Rio Grande by promoting the central location. According to data collected by the OIE office, the central Austin corridor contains the highest number of persons who report their occupation as "creative." Additionally, one of the Austin American Statesman creative cities articles dated May 12, 2002 reports that this "creative class" lists their occupations as engineers, musicians, actors, writers, and software writers. ACC needs to plan now for the future of this creative class of student by embracing the idea that the Rio Grande Campus can become the place where the creative class comes to learn.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Creative Writing Department establish a multi-discipline certificate in the Arts.

It is recommended that the Creative Writing Department establish a Field of Study in Creative Writing.

It is recommended that the Fine Arts Area establish a multi-discipline Associate of Arts Degree.

It is recommended that ACC fund a half-time position for creative writing.

It is recommended that ACC establish a Creative Writing/Film Institute.

It is recommended that ACC designate a student centered production lab for teaching and the literary journal at the RGC campus.

It is recommended that the Creative Writing Department and the Drama Department work collaboratively through playwriting, screenwriting, and acting to form a learning community.

It is recommended that the Creative Writing Department, the Drama Department, and the RTF Department work collaboratively through screenwriting, film production, and acting to form a learning community.

It is recommended that the Creative Writing Department and the Journalism Department work collaboratively through the student newspaper.

Identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

Team Members

K. Anoa Monsho (MFA candidate at Goucher)	Former Student/MFA
Kathy Judge (first AA graduate in Creative Writing)	Former Student
Bonnie Orr (Board member – Writers’ League of Texas)	Adjunct Faculty
Sharon Gillespie (Community Rep.)	Writer
Elena Carrillo (Writer/Commercial Film Maker)	Adjunct Faculty
Irwin Tang (Non-fiction writer/screenwriter)	Adjunct Faculty
Cynthia Cone	Dean, Fine Arts & Hum.
Sidney Brammer (Board member – Reel Women – Film Group, Inc.)	Adjunct Faculty
Gary Chason (Actor, Casting Director)	Local Professional
Brad Helgerson (RTF Instructor – Johnston High School, AISD)	Adjunct Faculty
Shelby Brammer	PC, Drama

Steve Kramer	PC, Art
Sara Laas (Former Board member – Writers’ League of Texas)	Writer, Business Person
Paige DeShong	Adjunct Faculty
Dorothy Barnett	PC, Creative Writing

Strengths

- *Faculty*

It is obvious that the Creative Writing department has a strong and dedicated faculty who communicate well with each other. This talented and accomplished group brings a broad base of experience to the students. Because the faculty members are all accomplished professionals, they bring enthusiasm and credibility to the classroom.

- *Curriculum*

The flexible course schedule allows opportunities for both continuing education and general population students to take advantage of the course offerings. The course variety allows students to tailor their classes to meet their specific needs and goals. The curriculum presents the material in a helpful, practical, and exciting way, avoiding busy work and focusing on the fundamentals and application of skills. Because this is a relatively new program, the curriculum benefits from eagerness and innovation that creates a fluid, and ever-refining, classroom experience.

- *Leadership*

The Creative Writing Department head is an understanding leader who is open to communication with the faculty. She has the energy and acumen to follow through with the department’s vision. She creates a supportive environment for faculty and students, alike. Her ambitious vision and hard work lead to an enthusiastic and effective work environment and program.

- *Community and Students*

The school’s open door policy creates a diverse base of students with varying backgrounds and experiences. Because the student population isn’t limited only

to students seeking to “get course credit,” the Creative Writing Department attracts students who show a genuine interest in the subject matter and a proclivity towards project completion for self-betterment. The community’s need to communicate more effectively and the basic human need to create engenders a strong community involvement and interest in the Creative Writing Program. Austin’s large and sophisticated arts community attracts serious writers and encourages the writing program. Since Austin is known as the Third Coast, the film community benefits from our screenwriting student base. The instructors’ strong ties to the film community prove opportunities for the students to experience the film scene for themselves and through first-hand anecdotal accounts. The local four-year universities attract hopeful writers from all over the world who wish to get their start in ACC’s Creative Writing Program before transferring into the world accredited four-year programs.

- *Technology Resources*

The use of the computer lab allows students to have access to and experience using Final Draft for screenwriting and word processing software for other disciplines. VCR and Screen access allow for visual aids for student, for viewing film clips that demonstrate style, tone, and effective writing techniques. The PCM classes provide students with the ability to participate in classes and learn techniques on their own schedule without having to detract for their professional or personal lives.

- *Rio Review*

The Rio Review supplies a publishing opportunity for the students. For many students this is the encouragement they need to continue with their education or follow their dreams of becoming professional writers. The readership of the Rio Review allows the community to see the results of the students’ education and to provide more support for the program and its students. The journal is an often requested example of what our students are doing for promotional use.

Weaknesses

- *Budget*

The low budget provides no money for program promotion. All promotion is done through word of mouth. The lack of resources creates an air of insecurity regarding program growth. Recent budget cuts demonstrate a lack of support for the program. Low salaries require instructors, particularly adjunct faculty, to seek out a second job. This division of energy and time can be detrimental when trying to establish a presence in the Creative Writing community. Students and staff also complain of a lack of parking. If students and staff can’t park in a timely manner, they miss out on key instruction. The parking situation could act as an

enrollment deterrent, forcing students to attend classes at other campuses, or worse, not at all.

- *Community Awareness*

The level of community of awareness, while slowly increasing, still isn't high enough. Because of the lack of resources for promotion and publicity, many people still aren't aware of the program's existence. Even though the public would greatly benefit from the program, few people know how. This, in part, is because of the upper management's lack of understanding of the program's importance to the community and students.

- *Faculty Concerns*

The lack of full time faculty and focus on hiring adjunct faculty creates a problem. Because of the low pay with no benefits for adjunct faculty and non-relevant professional "opportunities," faculty retention is low. This high turnover disrupts the flow, coherence, and consistency of the program. The high non-content related busy work for adjuncts also contributes to the frustration and high turnover.

- *Scheduling*

Creative writing classes are not offered at all campuses. Some of the campuses where they are offered supply only a limited selection of sections. While there is some flexibility in the schedule, it is not enough. The large volume of students desiring to take creative writing classes cannot be satisfied because of time constraints and limited course offerings. The limited section offerings and cuts create artificial boundaries for the program's growth. In addition to the problem of not offering enough classes, course canceling creates frustration for the students and faculty. Another problem is that the campuses are too far apart to make creative writing a viable option for students at the non-central campus locations. Because there are a variety of different types of writing, the limitations on the number of sections offered and section type prohibit growth and prevent the program from being able to further address the community's and students' needs.

- *Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Student Community*

In spite of providing screenwriting, acting, and RTF courses, Austin Community College does not provide for a way for these related disciplines to link together. There is no collaboration between any of the programs. And, even though Austin Community College lies in the heart of the Third Coast, there are no internship opportunities for screenwriting students. Students of the Creative Writing Program also receive no scholarships and financial aid. Even students within the

Creative Writing Program suffer from a sense of isolation in that there is no interaction between the classes of different genres.

- *Certification/Curriculum Improvement*

In order to better meet the needs of the ACC Creative Writing student, the department needs ACAP data. For screenwriting students to meet their goals and become more prepared for four-year universities, a two-year screenwriting certification program should be offered.

- *Red Tape*

The red tape and administrative requirements are severely handicapping the Creative writing Department's effectiveness. The constant barrage of news and new requirements keeps the faculty in the office instead of in the classroom. This red tape has caused limitations to the available technology and has blocked the establishment of a production lab. Textbook orders get waylaid and registration problems abound. The lack of administrative support for the program becomes apparent when registering for Creative Writing courses in that these courses have ENGL section designation. This makes the classes difficult to locate in the registration booklet and gives the illusion of the program's semi-permanence.

- *Students Concerns*

The student tracking process beyond ACC has not been formalized, making it difficult to account for students' success in the writing community. It becomes up to the students themselves to keep the college informed of their progress. Also, students seem time constrained and overstressed. Some of this could be alleviated through scholarships, increased parking, access to 24 computer lab space, and additional administrative support.

Opportunities

- *External Opportunities*

There are many opportunities for the students to take advantage of within the community. The Texas Writers' League offers internships and mentor programs for fledgling writers.

The burgeoning film community needs and wants affordable and accessible training. Also, through support and interface with the film community, students could take advantage of the internship positions to learn more about the practical

applications of their craft. All of the local film festivals need volunteers and interns, which would provide invaluable hands-on experiences for students. Also, through faculty ties, there may be opportunities for screenwriting students to intern at Blue Horizon International in Los Angeles. There is also an opportunity to partner with local production companies and publication houses for publication venues for the students' work. Because Austin supports a large number of publishing houses, the opportunities for students to submit their work is available. There are a number of vibrant professional communities needing and wanting qualified workers in film, advertising, software, and games.

There are numerous writing retreats and intensives that students can attend, preferably with ACC support. Locally, there are numerous contests that spotlight the different genres from screenwriting, poetry, and short fiction to publish student works.

With money to build community awareness, the program could gain more recognition as a viable instructional environment. Because of current and potential community enthusiasm, the program could enlist community resources for publicity and events to promote course offerings and benefits. These community resources could also help develop "industry" sponsored awards for writers.

There are also opportunities to help the community as a whole by developing partnerships with area high schools, colleges, and universities. Lead-in program with high schools will help students be better prepared for the changes brought about by collegiate life.

- *Internal Opportunities*

The Drama and RTF wish to collaborate with the Creative Writing Department to form a film institute. This would not only expand the Creative Writing Department's scope, it could also help the Drama and RTF Departments grow, providing realistic experience on a film set; and possibly providing Creative Writing students with the opportunity to write a producible script.

Faculty exchanges could help foster new ideas and keep the program current. This with student and faculty presentations and critique sessions could help develop the Creative Writing Department into a nationally recognized institution for writing instruction.

The ACC visiting writer series breathes new life into the department by providing outside perspectives into the world of creative writing. The students' reading series provides students with the opportunity to have their work read before a live audience and to feel the audience's response to their writing.

- *Faculty*

There is the opportunity for each of the participating campuses to have at least one full time creative writing faculty member. The full time faculty is paid well, but there is room for improvement through Christmas bonuses and comp time. Also, there is the opportunity to increase adjunct faculty retention by increasing their benefits. It would be beneficial to have ACC staff representatives as a noticeable presence at screenwriting conferences and for the college to pay the necessary conference fees.

- *Collaboration and Partnering (internal and external)*

The Creative Writing Department has the opportunity to partner with continuing education. Because the college already has existing programs, organizations and city facilities at their disposal for these classes, taking the Creative Writing Department's taking advantage of them should be facile. RTF, Drama, and Art. They can also join or collaborate with the Journalism Department, since the end goals are relatively similar for both programs. Also, since there is considerable overlap with RTF, Drama, and Art, the Creative Writing Department could also collaborate with those other programs through course pairing (Performance Lab/Dance or Playwriting/Acting.)

- *Class Offerings (when and where)*

The creative writing Department could increase its enrollment by offering more classes and 8-week classes. Also, since the majority of Creative Writing classes are scheduled at the Rio Grande campus, it could become a Fine Arts campus, focusing on the indicated needs of the students. More students could have their Creative Writing classes count toward their Associate Degree if the college offered a multi-disciplined certificate or degree plan.

- *Student Opportunities*

The students could benefit from a writing competition prize of a scholarship to the program. While at the college, they can participate in a student writing club and take advantage to the ACC centered, active writers community. Since there are numerous writing conferences, students could either attend one in the surrounding area, or they could start one of their own that could draw writers and other interested students. Once students graduate from the program, many go directly to local MFA programs.

- *Promotional Possibilities*

Up until now, ACC has made little use of the promotional possibilities in the community. At the textbook festival, they could sponsor a Creative Writing booth. The Fine Arts Festival could be better advertised to the local population through newspapers and television (who often offer free “spots” as human-interest pieces.) The college could advertise readings and events in the Austin Chronicle in the Literati section. Also, the Marketing Department would be an excellent resource for advertising ideas, methods, and venues.

- *Student Academic Opportunities (career development)*

The Creative Writing Department boasts good attendance of its classes. These students become dedicated writers, creative thinkers and civic-minded citizens. The staff helps the students wishing to attend a four-year college by researching undergraduate programs with strong writing departments. Area colleges want to develop articulations agreements with Creative Writing. And other colleges and universities want to know more about the Creative Writing Program. After students attend the program, they can take advantage of the school’s job placement counseling, or attend the advanced degree opportunities. Participating in the program also helps increase a student’s possibility of becoming a published writer.

- *Community Environment or Support*

Because of the growing film community, there is an increased need for screenwriting training. The local writers community supports the program. The community supports the Fine Arts environment, but the program could use more community involvement. Also, more students may choose to attend ACC because of the perception that it is easier to gain admittance than into universities like UT. Plus, because of Austin’s ever-increasing population, more students are seeking out more programs. This allows for the program’s expansion and increase in course offerings.

- *Resources and Technology*

ACC could increase the students’ exposure to appropriate writing by increasing the number of excellent spec scripts available for check out in the library. Also, because screenwriting software is prohibitively expensive for individuals, ACC could offer the software for checkout or sale at a reduced rate. Live or prerecorded readings could be aired on Austin Access TV, and could be planned and filmed by the RTF department.

Threats

- *Outside Competition Between Disciplines, Other Programs, Schools, or Industries*

One of the biggest problems threatening the program is how to serve the growing number of continuing ed students without edging out the academic students and vice versa. Plus, because of the tight economy and high unemployment rate, students are more inclined to take workforce classes instead of Creative Writing Classes. There is also a considerable amount of outside competition from private organizations and private teachers. Some of them have even started noncredit classes based on film schools in AFI, UCLA, ASA, and NYU. Because of the low adjunct pay, these instructors can often make a better living through independent classes than from teaching through the college.

Another problem is the increasing number of viable and credible online degree programs. With the various onsite programs and disciplines fighting for resources, it's getting harder to compete. The other universities, such as UT, have built up a credible screenwriting program that prepares students for the Los Angeles and New York film markets. Also, while ACC does have a great Creative Writing program, other colleges are developing their own. These programs, combined with the other available groups, classes, and the imminent Writers' Boot Camp have threatened to take students from the program if it is allowed to stagnate.

- *Budget/resources*

One of the key aspects of all programs is money. The population is expected to increase by 500,000 by 2015, with 70% of those people attending community colleges. Since ACC already has a budget deficit, it may not have the resources to accommodate this influx in the student population. That combined with the decreases in assistance from the legislature and the increase in tuition, puts both students and the programs at risk.

The increase in students will also necessitate an increase in budgetary spending for Creative Writing to expand the program. But since the increases in populations also herald an increase in spending, the funds to expand the program could be drained away by the very students whose needs are trying to be addressed. In addition to class-related expenses, there are also administrative and staffing expenses that come with growth.

Also, because of the poor economy less money is coming in from the community as a whole. The students, now more than ever, need scholarships and grants to help with enrollment in classes. However, these funds, too, are shrinking because of government cutbacks of funding through scholarships, grants, and work-study programs.

- *Economy*

The economy is a major factor in any ACC program, but may be more so for those considered “nonessential.” As the recession lengthens, fewer and fewer opportunities are available for student and faculty writers. Plus, just as more students are coming into the school needing additional training for job security and advancement, the economic downturn has limited growth potential.

The weak tax base is already a problem. Property taxes are already discouragingly high. Any attempt to raise taxes could build resentment from the taxpayers and community members that might normally be supportive. There has been strong community resistance to any tax increase, especially in these hard economic times, when people are afraid that they won’t be able to meet their tax obligations and would lose their homes if their taxes increase again. Politics also play a role when politicians use the economy as a platform issue and lower taxes to improve their voter-base.

Students also may be having a tough time economically. In the current economy, one job may not be enough to cover the cost of living and many students have to drop out of school to find work.

- *Lack of Valuing the Arts*

The Arts have always been considered nonessential, a luxury, and by some, a waste of time. With the increased emphasis on technical and computer training, Creative Writing is becoming even more often dismissed by the workforce. Also, because of the common misconception that “everyone can write” there is an increased general-population disrespect shown to Fine Arts students.

There are external factors to consider as well. The number of jobs available to writers is limited. While there are quite a few publishing companies, magazines, newspapers, and e-zines, they tend to hire with experienced writers, leaving little room for new talent. Also, with the addition of screenwriting as a local high-paying option, other disciplines could be left behind. The emphasis on money making, in screenwriting especially, has tainted the value of more artistic work where the end result may be little more than a sense of satisfaction or a live reading.

- *National Issues*

National issues play a role in the program’s future and in the students’ morale. War-mongering politicians tend to de-emphasize the arts and school in favor of defending the country and performing patriotic acts. Students may feel a sense of hopelessness and idleness while there are threats of war. While many politicians have already reached their dreams and are well past their prime, their decisions

regarding wartime actions could adversely affect students who haven't reached their goals yet, making their efforts seem futile.

- *Community Perception*

ACC's failure to connect with community has adversely affected the public's perception of the school. This combined with the announced budget cuts and the continuing bad publicity, have dissociated many otherwise supportive community members. From a Creative Writing standpoint, these bad-publicity moments have overshadowed the very few positive publicity attempts, such as the Fall Arts Festival and the Rio Review.

The community as whole is unaware the ACC has a Creative Writing program. Members of the community who do know are either indifferent or leery of another two-year Liberal Arts degree plan. Also, because there hasn't been a substantive attempt to link the publishing community to the program, there is a distinct lack of "product" to show the general population.

- *Course/program cancellation*

The students find it hard to commit to a program that won't commit to them. When there's a threat of canceling a program, they feel that the college community doesn't support them, and are less likely to start a degree path that might not even be there by the time they graduate. They also feel that cost cuts to the program undermine the viability of the program and point to an inherent disrespect for the Creative Writing degree plan.

Creative Writing classes and the one-on-one attention necessitated by the disciplines, require small class sizes. As a result, cancellation of classes for low enrollment is counterproductive. Cancellation of classes also disrupts the degree path of the students since the likelihood of their finding another Creative Writing class that fits their schedule is slim (due to the restricted course offerings).

- *Morale/Apathy*

Student apathy is at an all time high. The school's blatant disregard for their class needs has caused them not to care. Why should they care, if the school doesn't?

Faculty and community morale is also low. Low paying adjunct positions with minimal benefits coupled with the budgetary and comp time cuts have left many wondering where the college's priorities lie. The community has a hard time defending and supporting a system that is so clearly broken. It's led to a lack of belief in ACC's ability to educate the students and a huge question as to how long the school is going to be able to provide open enrollment at an affordable price.

- *Student Concerns*

In addition to the reduced enrollment due to the economic recession, students are generally ignorant of the Creative Writing Program. There has been little effort to entice the general student population into taking the classes, and few students know that the classes can count toward a Creative Writing two-year degree.

Transferring students also pose a problem in that they may not come from a school that offers a Creative Writing degree plan. As a result, they can either start completely over or they can stick with their original degree path.

Student perception also is a problem. Many students don't see how Creative Writing classes can be relevant to their daily lives or career plan. More of an effort needs to be made to show students how they can use creative writing at work or at home.

- *Leadership/Management (lack of)*

The administrative support for the program is lacking. Because of cancelled classes and decreased comp time for development, the Creative Writing Program faces the risk of stagnating or being phased out. While the faculty and students seek to expand the program, the administration seeks to diminish it.

The program has been mismanaged by the school's administration. The cuts in funding and lack of support, canceled classes and section reduction, give the program an unstable and unreliable base that undermines the integrity of the program.

Another problem is the lack of qualified staff for higher-level classes, especially with regards to the screenwriting classes.

Lastly, the number of available parking spaces, especially for RGC, seems to be shrinking. Valuable class time is wasted on finding parking.

Summary Analysis of the Core Indicators of Effectiveness

Need:

Does the Program address a verifiable need for the student, community, and/or society?

Community Need

Austin is a region center for writers and artists. This can be seen in the large number of publishing houses, magazines, and newspapers in town. Also, there are numerous writers' festivals throughout the year, most notably, the Austin Film Festival, which emphasizes screenwriting and the screenwriter. These conferences and festivals are highly respected and attended by people from all over the world. The major regional colleges and

universities have creative writing programs, live readings, journals, and related opportunities for ACC students to take advantage of. Also, ACC students from the Creative Writing program will be better suited to participate in the events having completed the course load.

The Texas Writers' League is headquartered in Austin and provides numerous prizes and opportunities for writers. They sponsor the Violet Crown and Teddy Bear awards every year for published works by local writers and they also supply grants for programs and individuals who want to complete writing-related projects. This program also sponsors Art Inspires Writing, which is a community outreach program focused on teaching middle school students how to use the art community as inspiration for their creative writing.

Austin is home to many publishing houses, which offer publishing opportunities for the students. It is also home to the infamous coffee house readings, where students can showcase their work and help expose the local community to their writing.

As Austin is a center for writers, there are many opportunities for incorporating writing in related areas. Almost any job requires its employees to write reports, memos, training manuals, press releases, brochures, and articles. A creatively trained writer would be more adept at writing these than someone without writing training. Also, because many of the major textbook companies are located in town, there are opportunities for students to have their work anthologized. But, most of all, the desire to write and record one's ideas is an innate part of the human existence. By taking part in the Creative Writing Program, students can better record their thoughts and ideas and become more effective communicators. The community's need for Creative Writing is great.

Enrollment Trends

	Combined Sections	Enrollments	Contact Hours
FY 1998	14	265	12,720
FY 1999	19	312	14,368
FY 2000	18	210	9,696
FY 2001	19	102	10,544
FY 2002	22	280	13,216

These enrollment numbers may be off. I looked at the email that you got and got a real low number for 2001 and 2002, but the numbers that the booklets provided for 2002 were much higher. Specifically I think the numbers for 2001 are off, based on the email and two booklets.

Because the Creative Writing Department is relatively new, the data can only realistically cover the last two years. However, in that two-year span, with a meager three-section (16%) increase, enrollment saw a 178 student increase (275%). The contact hours increased by 2672, or 25%.

Graduates

Because so many people take Creative Writing courses for personal growth, rather than an academic pursuit, the graduation percentage will always be low. Creative Writing classes offer something for people from all genres so many people who are not interested in pursuing a degree in Creative Writing will take one or more Creative Writing class. In respect to the relative newness of the program, the graduation statistics are unavailable or combined with the data from other programs, specifically the Journalism and Speech Departments.

Outcomes

Since the program is relatively new, there is no hard data on student employment of transfers to four-year universities. Through anecdotal evidence we find that some students have continued writing and participate in local live readings.

Cost:

Within the context of the College’s mission, is the cost of the program justified?

Budget Analysis

The review committee feels that the cost of the program is justified within the context of the college mission. While the program is new, the budget has gone exclusively to the functioning of the program.

The totals below are for the Creative Writing Program Budget for the last two years.

	FY 2001	FY 2002
F-T Faculty	45,892	47,992
Hourly Salaries	758	758
Employee Benefits Pool	1,539	1,463
Supplies Pool	355	2,355
Operating Costs Pool	330	4,230
Duplication	455	455
Telephone	360	360
Non-Capitalized < 500 Pool	320	320
Total	50,009	57,933

Based on the most recent data for FY 2002, the data available shows 13,216 contact hours generated by the Creative Writing Program. This means that it cost ACC only \$4.38 per contact hour to operate the program. The reimbursement rates from the state of Texas got the Fine and Applied Arts of Visual and Performing Arts has been set at between \$5.00 and \$6.00 per hour. The Creative Writing Department falls significantly below that, making it a cost effective program.

Comparison of Program Costs

Tuition and Fees by Semester		
ACC	15 hrs in district	\$648
St. Edwards	12-18 hrs	\$6,364

UT at Austin	15 hrs in state	\$2,285 - \$2,602
SWT	14 hrs in state	\$1,700

Program Effectiveness:

Are the teaching, learning, course, program, student, and student support outcomes of this program of the best possible quality?

(Student Achievement)

Course Completion Rates

The grade distribution data for the two years complete years, 2000 and 2001, and the partial year, 2002, fall within a reasonable range of the average grade distribution data from the college's general student population. The totals from 2001 and Spring 2002 are illustrated at the end of this section.

There appears to be little trend in the withdrawal rate for students. Because the withdrawal rates are not split into the different disciplines, it cannot be told if one discipline has a higher attrition rate than the others. The withdrawal rates range from 31.7% to 41.7%. This is well within the norm for courses that are not part of the core college course load.

The PCM classes seem to show the least amount of attrition, with their withdrawal rates ranging from 0% to 55.5% (the 55.5% would be an outlier in this case, since the norm is usually only one or two students electing to not finish the course). This is well below the average for most distance learning classes, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the Internet based classes.

The grade distribution indicates that the largest percentage of students receive A's and B's, with a few students failing or making lower (C and D) grades. The low student to teacher ration can account for these high grades. Students requiring extra help can get one-on-one attention during class when the student ratio is set appropriately. The student/teacher ratio is lower than that of area colleges and universities. This attention to personalized instruction creates a higher percentage of student success and satisfaction. Although the individualized instruction does help, the classes are not easy. Students faced with failing or low grades may opt to take advantage of the late drop time instead of working harder or taking the lower grade. This could account for the low percentage of C's, D's and F's.

Grade Distribution for FY 2001 by Semester, ENG 0021, 2307, 2308, 2673.

	A	B	C	D	F	W	Total
Spring 2001	42	6	7	1	7	26	91
Summer 2001	17	2	1	0	2	12	34
Fall 2001	45	11	7	0	8	34	107

Total	104	19	15	1	17	72	232
Percentage	44.8%	8.2%	6.5%	0.4%	7.3%	31.0%	

Grade Distribution for Spring 2002 ENG 0021, 2307, 2308

	A	B	C	D	F	W	Total
Spring 2002	77	13	9	0	4	35	145
Percentage	53.1%	9.0%	6.2%	0.0%	2.8%	24.1%	

Number of Students Completing Degree Requirements

Because this is a fledgling program there is no data for this section.

(Student Retention)

Course Retention Rates Within the College Norms

The withdrawal rates for the classes are well within the norms for the college as a whole. While the percentage of withdrawals may look high, it is likely that students would rather withdraw than face a failing grade in a non-core class. The Creative Writing Department has not had enough graduates to adequately track their movement into the workplace or four-year universities. However, for ACC, over 43% of all students successfully transferred into a four-year university, and it is assumed that a coordinating number of Creative Writing students will do so in the future.

(Student Outcomes)

Transfer of Graduates

In the most recent study, ACC students had a transfer rate 0.7% lower than all others statewide. While the Creative Writing Department doesn't track its students separately from the general student population, it is assumed that Creative Writing students fair equally well in a four-year setting.

GPA of Transfer Students at the Transfer Institution

Because the Creative Writing Department doesn't have this information, it must be taken as part of the ACC student community. The information from the Self-Study Notebook indicates that ACC students, in general, fair well in the four-year university setting. In general, 77.7% of ACC transfer students are in "Good Standing" during their first semester at SWT. In their last semester of their first year, this number rises to 78.2%.

In the future, for the Creative Writing Program, ACC must rely on the transfer universities or students to provide this data.

(Access)

Course Availability

From the information in the Need section of the report notebook, it appears that the Creative Writing department could do a better job of making classes more accessible. In general, the afternoon and evening classes at the Rio Grande campus tend to fill up more

than the morning classes or the ones held at the Northridge campus. Since these classes (as well as the PCM classes) tend to be full, it would be beneficial to the student body to offer a wider range of classes at a wider variety of times. I would also make the classes more accessible to increase the number of online classes available. Because the type of class offered online is limited, it would be helpful to expand those course offerings as well. With the increase in technology access and software, students could take advantage of the PCM classes from all over the world.

Screenwriting, in particular would be beneficial if offered as an online class. ACC recently purchased a large number of copies of the Final Draft screenwriting software. PCM students could take advantage of the lab, if they wanted to come in on their own time. However, it would also increase accessibility if this software was available to checkout, rent, or buy at a steep student discount.

Below is the time breakdown of the classes offered by the Creative Writing Program for the two most recent long semesters.

Fall Semester 2001		
Morning Classes	ENGL 2673	1
	ENGL 2307	5
Afternoon Classes	ENGL 2307	2
Evening Classes	ENGL 2308	2
Telecommute		2
Spring 2002		
Morning Classes	ENGL 2307	3
Afternoon Classes	ENGL 0021	1
	ENGL 2307	3
Evening Classes	ENGL 2308	1
	ENGL 2307	2
	ENGL 2308	1
Telecommute		2

This data shows that the majority of classes are offered in the morning and afternoon. However, most of the full classes have been in the afternoon, evening, and over the Internet.

Extent to Which Courses Meet Student Demand

A review of the data in the Need section of the program handbook lists the number of sections taught by location and the number of sections cancelled. This information is listed in the chart below.

Term	NRG	RGC	RVS	Telecommute	Cancelled	Full
Fall 1999	2	2	1		5	2

Spring 2000	3	3	3		1	1
Fall 2000	2	4	0	1		1
Spring 2001	4	3	0	1	2	1
Summer 2001	1	1		1	2	1
Fall 2001	2	6		2	0	4
Spring 2002	4	5		2	0	5

In the last three semesters every PCM (telecommuting) class has been full.

As is evidenced by the chart, most of the cancelled classes occurred before the Creative Writing Department had its own degree plan. Since becoming a full program, the Creative Writing classes have both increased in the number of sections offered, but in the number of fill sections as well. There is a huge discrepancy in the number of Creative Writing classes offered at the Rio Grande campus versus the other campuses; so much so, that now there are only two campuses where Creative Writing classes are even offered.

During the summer session more classes were probably canceled because of the decrease in the number of students who attend classes in the summer, and because the number and times of the classes may not have been convenient to students who hold summer jobs or take summer vacations. During the two most recent long semesters, however, no classes were canceled.

Marketing of Program Courses

The Creative Writing Department has joined forces with other Fine Arts programs at ACC to produce the “Spring Festival of Fine Arts.” This month-long event showcases various aspects of the Fine Arts Departments. Each department hosts a series of events designed to generate interest in and awareness of their program. The Creative Writing Department does this through poetry and short essay readings, and screenwriting panels. In each instance, current and perspective students are asked to participate in the events and are encouraged to ask questions about furthering their education. In the screenwriting panel, the focus is placed on what is being taught in the classroom, as well as, real-world applications of the work.

The festival serves as a month-long advertisement for all of the Fine Arts disciplines.

Access By Various Types of Students

The Program Review Committee feels that the data presented for the college as a whole accurately reflects the Creative Writing Department as well.

Barrier to Students

There appear to be no major physical barriers associated with the Creative Writing Program. All campuses have wheelchair accessible ramps and classrooms. The key

barrier is the lack of parking at the Rio Grande campus. Because the majority of Creative Writing classes are offered at a campus where parking is limited, students with mobility impairments may have a difficult time finding parking. One way to make the program even more accessible is to install voice recognition software in the Lab computers so that students with coordination difficulties might be better able to make full use of the facilities.

Currency of Program/Course Content

The course textbooks are constantly changing and being updated to meet each course's specific goal for the students. New texts are routinely added to keep the students up to date with the latest trends in the writing world.

Learning Outcomes Defined for Courses and Program

The Creative Writing Handbook offers the objectives for each course in the program.

Course Syllabi

All Creative Writing faculty members must supply a copy of their course syllabus to the Program Coordinator. These syllabi are reviewed and kept on file for three years after the instructor's departure from the school. A strict policy is in place regarding the acquisition of the syllabi, and faculty members are strongly encouraged to comply.

Assessment of Instructional Resources

The Creative Writing Department has already acquired screenwriting software of the PCM lab and regularly seeks outside consultation on the best resources for the courses. Staff members keep up to date with the latest publications and encourage the library to acquire the most useful of the new material.

Appropriateness of Course Prerequisites and Catalog Content Kept Up-to-date

The Creative Writing Program diligently watches over the prerequisites and their effect on the student preparedness and composition of the classes. Each faculty member has the responsibility to verify that each student in his/her class has met the prerequisites and meet the other requirements for class enrollment. Students who do not have the exact prerequisite classes, but demonstrate a verifiable knowledge of the material can meet with the Program Coordinator to have the requirements waived on a case-by-case basis. This is up to the discretion of the Program Coordinator and the instructor whose class the student wants to attend.

The curriculum is review by the instructors at the end of each year to determine whether any changes need to be made. This review process is left up to the individual instructors, but is review by the Program Coordinator. Student input is also encouraged in order to make the content as relevant as possible.

Integration of International Perspective into the Curriculum

Creative Writing is inherently personal. Students from all different cultures are encouraged to share their experiences and perspectives with other students. A sense of history and connectedness is brought to the classes through example of works by other

writers. These writers' experiences and native cultures vary as widely as the types of writing being studied. This perspective of writing being an expression of culture helps students become aware of their own biases in their writing, and how their tone is affected by their upbringing and surroundings.

Alternative Delivery

Distance learning classes are available every semester over the Internet. In the future it is hoped that more, and a wider variety of online classes will be available to students.

(Technology)

Technology Assessment

The technology available to the students has greatly improved as of late. With the addition of the screenwriting software to the PCM lab, students now have access to some of the same materials that professional writers use. **Is there any more Technology that's been added?**

Faculty uses overhead projectors for their classes. Also, the screenwriting instructors make use of the VCR and televisions to show students example of professional and successful work.

Equipment Assessment

The Creative Writing Department does not rely heavily on equipment. Software and computers make the writing process smoother, but creative writing is inherently low-tech. Most students require only computer access, and a pen and notebook. One thing that would be incredibly useful to the screenwriting students would be the addition of the ACCO #5 brass fasteners to the school store.

Video and equipment checkouts would also be useful for these students.

(Faculty)

Faculty Credentials

All full time faculty within the Creative Writing Program meet the SACS standards and have many successful years of combined experience teaching at the community college level. The faculty is also successful in their chosen field of instruction, with numerous years of experience working in the very industries about which they're teaching.

The adjunct faculty, as well, has many years of creative, real-world experience.

Number of Faculty Adequate to Teach Courses

Below is listed the number of courses taught by full-time or part-time faculty.

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Full #	8	13	7	9
Full %	57.1%	72.2%	38.9%	56.3%
Part #	6	5	11	7
Part %	42.9%	27.8%	61.9%	43.8%

Total	14	18	18	16
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Below is listed the number and percentage of contact hours by full-time and part-time faculty.

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Full #	7,200	10,432	4,128	4,496
Full %	56.6%	75.4%	42.6%	49.6%
Part #	5,520	3,408	5,568	4,560
Part %	43.4%	24.6%	57.4%	50.4%
Total	12,720	13,840	9,696	9,056

Because adjunct faculty teaches roughly half of all classes, it is apparent that more full time faculty should be hired. The amount of effort, energy and resources necessary to find and keep part-time faculty can be detrimental to the students. This past year alone, there was a question as to whether a class that had already made would have an instructor. The poor pay and benefits available to adjunct faculty makes their turnover high and reliability questionable.

Faculty Professional Development

The Creative Writing Program follows the administrative rules pursuant to faculty development activities. The full time faculty members attend conferences, serve on committee boards, and work to improve and maintain their own professionalism through writing their own works.

Adjunct faculty, too, has the opportunity to participate in program-building activities and committees. These adjuncts create their own portfolio of writing for professional growth and development.

Teaching Effectiveness

Student evaluations of instructors reflect an acceptable level of success. Students offer constructive feedback and the scores fall within the acceptable range, as determined by the Faculty Evaluation Office. These evaluations are used as guidelines for future instruction and measuring sticks of instructional effectiveness.

Guest lecturers and special guests are routinely brought in to some classes, in particular the screenwriting class. This access to outside voices helps round out the students' instruction.

All faculty is required to turn in their teaching portfolios, as necessitated by the administrative rules and regulations from the Office of Faculty Evaluations.

(Diversity)

Demographics

Data regarding the demographics of the Creative Writing Department are organized in the chart below.

Semester	Average Age	White	Black/ Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian	Am Indian/ Alaska Native	Non-res. Alien	Other	Female	Male	Total
Fall 1999	25.1	48	1	11	1	2	0	0	25	38	63
Spring 2000	26.8	85	4	12	1	3	1	1	51	56	107
Summer 2000	24.7	33	0	3	1	1	0	1	14	25	39
Fall 2000	27.2	73	5	14	1	3	0	0	49	47	96
Spring 2001	26.6	74	7	11	0	1	0	1	43	51	94
Summer 2001	26.3	23	1	8	1	1	0	0	21	13	34
Fall 2001	25.9	84	3	16	0	2	0	2	55	52	107
Spring 2002	29.3	116	3	20	1	1	0	3	74	70	144
Total	Average student age: 26.9	536	24	95	6	14	1	8	332	352	684
Percent		78.4%	3.5%	13.9%	0.9%	2.0%	0.1%	1.2%	48.5%	51.5%	

This shows that over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the students are white, but the male to female ratio is relatively even. A concerted effort should be made to include students from various ethnic backgrounds.

(Student Satisfaction)

Satisfaction of Students with Courses

This information was not available for the Creative Writing Program at this time.

Institutional Effectiveness Measures:

Discuss current institutional effectiveness measures and outcomes. Recommend modifications in the measures and identify at least three new institutional effectiveness measures that will be used.

Institutional Effectiveness Measures

Recommendations

Faculty and Staff

Facilities and Space Allocation

Equipment

Technology

Budget

Diversity

Other

Action Plans (for above recommendations)

Recommendation #1:

Year	Action	Target Date	Responsible
1			
2			
3			
4			

Estimated Cost:

Recommendation #2:

Year	Action	Target Date	Responsible
1			
2			
3			
4			

Estimated Cost:

Recommendation #3:

Year	Action	Target Date	Responsible
1			
2			
3			

4			
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Estimated Cost:

Recommendation #4:

Year	Action	Target Date	Responsible
1			
2			
3			
4			

Estimated Cost:

Recommendation #5:

Year	Action	Target Date	Responsible
1			
2			
3			
4			

Estimated Cost:

Recommendation #6:

Year	Action	Target Date	Responsible
1			
2			
3			
4			

Estimated Cost:

Recommendation #7:

Year	Action	Target Date	Responsible
1			
2			
3			
4			

Estimated Cost:

Comments

Dean's Comments

Field of Study Curriculum for Creative Writing

The field of study curriculum for creative writing is designed to apply to the Bachelor of English with emphasis in Creative Writing degree, but may also be applied to the Bachelor of Arts or other baccalaureate-level liberal arts degrees as deemed appropriate by the awarding institution. The field of study curriculum is furthermore intended to serve as a guide for other community and technical colleges in structuring a transfer curriculum in English or Creative Writing.

Field of Study Courses

The field of study curriculum shall consist of 27 to 35 lower-division semester credit hours that are fully transferable. Transfer of credit shall be on a course-for-course basis.

<u>COURSE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF SEMESTERS</u>	<u>SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS</u>
Poetry I & II	2	6
Short Story I & II	2	6
Essay/Memoir I & II	2	6
Screenwriting I & I	2	6
Playwriting	1	3
Internship	2	2
Literature	4	12

Competency, Proficiency, and Diagnostic Assessment

Transferring students who have completed the field of study curriculum must satisfy the competency and proficiency requirements of the receiving institution. Transferring students shall not be required to repeat courses transferred as part of the field of study curriculum. Diagnostic assessment of transfer students is permissible for placement purposes.

Pedagogical Methods

The course work is designed to teach students the principles and techniques of creative writing. To accomplish this, the course work in creative writing should include practical skills as well as the more traditional creative writing workshop approaches. The development of critical thinking and writing through the examination of a diverse body of literature is crucial in the development of the creative writing pedagogy. Students should be expected to produce a body of work that merits publication, demonstrate an understanding of editing, critical analysis, and the portfolio system, and participate in manuscript submission.

Courses for Specific Degree Programs

Receiving institutions may require additional lower-division courses necessary for specific degree programs.

Full Academic Credit

Full academic credit shall be granted on the basis of comparable courses completed, not on specific numbers of credit hours accrued.

General Education Courses

Students shall complete the general education core curriculum in effect at the institution that will grant the baccalaureate degree.

The Associate's Degree in Creative Writing

The field of study curriculum should serve as the basis for structuring the associate's degree in creative writing. Each two-year college should determine which courses from its approved general education core curriculum to include with the creative writing field of study curriculum in order to constitute a 66-semester credit hour transfer block. In order to receive the baccalaureate degree, a transferring student shall complete the general education core at the receiving institution.

Academic Certificate in Fine & Performing Arts - Specialization

Description: The Academic Certificate in Fine & Performing Arts Principles is not designed to prepare students for employment in specific occupations. The Academic Certificate in Fine & Performing Arts Principles is designed to provide students with an opportunity to examine components of various artistic principles, which, in turn, will enhance students' individual artistic endeavors in the Fine & Performing Arts (drama, creative writing, visual arts, music, dance, and cinema).

Requirements: 21 hours of credit

Program Prerequisites: None

Academic Specialization Core: 9 hours

Students must complete a total of 9 hours from the following list of departments.

Visual Arts

Dance

Creative Writing

Music

Drama

Academic Electives: 12 hours

Visual Arts

Dance

Creative Writing

Music

Drama

Speech

RTF

Journalism

Program Competencies

1. Identify various cultural, aesthetic, and technical components in one area of Fine & Performing Arts.
2. Explain the elements of the creative process that contribute to one's own creation of an original work from an area of the Fine & Performing Arts.
3. Select techniques and approaches appropriate to the creation of a work from an area of the Fine & Performing Arts.
4. Apply artistic principles to an original work of art from one discipline of the Fine & Performing Arts.