

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Assessment and Accountability

NO.: AAC 06-05

COMMITTEE DATE: November 10, 2005

BOARD DATE: November 17, 2005

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby approves the Articles of Amendment of **Pine Manor College** to award the **Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing**.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 69, Section 30 et seq.

Contact: Aundrea Kelley, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Policy

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

November 2005

Pine Manor College

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

INTENT

In February 2005, Pine Manor College filed a petition with the Board of Higher Education to seek approval to offer a low-residency Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. The proposed program is designed to serve a range of individuals, from recent college graduates who want to pursue careers in writing to mid-career adults who have family obligations and/or wish to continue in their present professions while continuing to write.

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Pine Manor College was originally established in 1911 by the late Helen Temple Cooke as a post-secondary division of the Dana Hall School in Wellesley. In 1930, the College received a charter as an independent junior college and in 1959 gained the right to confer the degrees of Associate in Arts and Associate in Science. Pine Manor Junior College became a separate corporation in 1962 and in 1965 moved from the Wellesley campus to Chestnut Hill, five miles west of Boston.

In 1977, the Massachusetts Board of Regents authorized the College to expand its mission, confer the Bachelor of Arts degree in the humanities and social sciences, and to change its name to Pine Manor College. In 1994, the charter was further expanded to include the Bachelor of Arts in Biology and the Master of Education. Today, the College offers nine majors at the baccalaureate level. The proposed Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing would constitute the second master's level program approved by the Board of Higher Education, although the Master of Education program stopped accepting students after fall 1999 as a result of a college-wide program review process which recommended that all resources be devoted to rebuilding the undergraduate program.

ACADEMIC AND RELATED MATTERS

Similar to other existing programs nationwide, the proposed low-residency Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program will require the completion of 60 credit-hours of work over four semesters of intensive writing via mail or e-mail and five 10-day residencies when students will be physically on the campus. Residencies will be held in July and January. In collaboration with a faculty mentor, students will design their areas of study in one of the following genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or writing for children and young adults. Students will not receive partial credit for a semester; they must complete all requirements during the semester and during the residency to earn credit for each semester.

Admission

Applicants to the proposed program will be required to submit a completed application, an original manuscript, a personal essay, three letters of recommendation, transcripts from previous educational institutions, and a \$50 application fee. Applications will be evaluated by

the program director and two additional readers (writers on the MFA advisory board and/or faculty members of the MFA).

In addition to the above requirements, each applicant's previous work and life experience will be taken into consideration. PMC will expect students to be able to work independently which is crucial to a successful experience in a low-residency program.

Tuition and Enrollment

Pine Manor College anticipates a minimum enrollment of 30 students in the first semester, 35 in the second, 40 in the third, 45 in the fourth, and a total of 55 in the fifth year. Tuition is slated to be \$5,000 per semester.

Administration and Governance

The MFA Advisory Board, in conjunction with the director of the proposed MFA in Creative Writing, will oversee program policies and procedures, including the hiring of faculty, program and faculty evaluation, and additions or changes to the curriculum. The Advisory Board will comprise at least two full-time PMC faculty members, including a professor of English, two MFA faculty members, a member of the PMC Board of Trustees, and the MFA Director and dean of the College, both of whom will serve ex officio. The director will report to the dean of the College.

Curriculum (Attachment A)

The first four, ten-day residencies will begin each semester with a program of creative writing workshops in which student writing will be discussed and evaluated (Creative Writing I-IV); courses in Craft, Criticism, and Theory; electives; special guest lectures; and readings and one-on-one sessions with faculty mentors. These residencies are intended to provide students with an opportunity for immersion in a community of writers as they sharpen their craft and expand their vision of form, criticism, and theory. The fifth and final residency will require the presentation of a 50-minute lecture or course in the students' specialized area developed in his/her critical essay. In addition, students in their final residency will deliver a 20-minute reading from their creative thesis before members of the MFA program and the general public.

Between residencies, students will work one-on-one on semester-long projects with a faculty mentor. Students are expected to devote at least 25 hours per week to independent study work each semester. Students in their first and second semesters will be required to submit five packets per semester to their faculty mentor with each packet containing a manuscript (approximately 25 pages of fiction or nonfiction or four to five poems) and six to eight annotations based on assigned readings. During the third semester, students will be required to complete a 30-35 page critical essay and may also elect to undertake an internship if concentrating in an applied track (arts administration and community programming, pedagogy and literacy studies, or publishing). During the fourth creative-thesis semester, students will work closely with faculty mentors to revise work created during the proposed program with the goal of producing a book-length manuscript.

RESOURCES

Human Resources

Pine Manor College has already hired a director for the proposed MFA program. PMC projects there will be a need for one full-time faculty member and five core adjunct faculty members for the first year of the program with the number of adjunct faculty increasing as student enrollment rises. With the exception of one full-time tenured faculty member at Pine Manor College, the proposed program faculty members will be considered visiting faculty. The five core faculty will receive two-year contracts and be called upon to counsel the director and the MFA Advisory Board on issues related to recruitment, curriculum, personnel, peer evaluation, advisement of students, and evaluation of the overall program. The length of the contracts of future additional faculty will depend on their experience and evaluation after the first semester of teaching.

Fiscal Resources

Pine Manor College has secured a donation from a non-profit organization to cover the proposed program director's salary during this start-up year. By the end of the first year, the College expects the program to generate a modest surplus (\$3,000), and by the end of the third year, the College projects substantial net revenue of \$48,500.

Library

Since students in the proposed program will complete most of their course work remotely, they will rely heavily on their local libraries for support. However, they will be able to access online PMC's Annenberg Library, which is part of a multi-college consortium. The Library will also carry the books of all of its MFA faculty and guests and will expand its multi-cultural literature selections, consonant with the MFA program's focus on diversity.

Facilities and Equipment

Because students and faculty in the proposed low-residency program will be physically present on campus for only ten days in the summer and winter, Pine Manor College predicts that no additional space or equipment will be necessary.

EVALUATION

Visiting Committee

The proposed program was evaluated by an external visiting committee comprised of Dr. David Fenza (Chair), executive director of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs; Liam Rector, poet and director of MFA in Writing Seminars, Bennington College; and Tara Ison, novelist and co-director of the low-residency creative writing program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. The Visiting Committee reviewed the petition and appendices in preparation for the site visit, which took place July 20-22, 2005. During the visit, the Committee met with administrators, faculty, staff, and students; and toured the facilities.

Findings

The Visiting Committee was overall very satisfied with the proposal and stated that the proposed program incorporated the standard practices of low-residency programs in curriculum,

residencies, requirements, and evaluation of learning outcomes. The Committee also noted that the proposed core faculty are accomplished writers and experienced teachers who are exceptionally well qualified.

The Committee's key recommendations included that the program's philosophy and character emphasize its unique characteristics and goals; that the program initially offer tracks only in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and writing for children and young adults; that faculty partake in formal training before the first residency; and that the College develop student and faculty handbooks specific to the proposed program.

Institutional Response

In response to the Committee's recommendations, PMC developed a written mission statement for the program defining its philosophy which will be used in all informational materials. PMC agreed to focus on the four genres of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and writing for children and young adults during the program's nascent years. PMC is developing a formal training session for new faculty members, which will be implemented with the first MFA residency and continued as a regular component of the program whenever new faculty are brought on board. PMC provided detailed outlines of both the Faculty and Student handbooks.

PUBLIC HEARING

The required public hearing was held on October 18, 2005, at 10 a.m. in the Board of Higher Education's office. No comments were offered in opposition to the proposed program.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

After a thorough evaluation of all documentation submitted, staff is satisfied that the proposed meet the criteria set forth in 610 CMR 2.08(3) in the Degree-Granting Regulations for Independent Institutions of Higher Education accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Recommendation is for approval.

Attachment A: *Curriculum*

Major Core Requirements/Semester

Credit Hours/Semester

First Semester

13

Residency (7 credits):

Creative Writing I (eight 3-hour classes) = 3 credits

Craft, Criticism, & Theory I (three 2-hour classes) = 2 credits

Elective Seminars & Studies I (four 1.5-hour classes) = 2 credits

Independent, semester-long study with faculty mentor (6 credits):

Student must submit five packets (approximately 25 manuscript pages of fiction or nonfiction, or 4 to 5 poems) and six-to-eight pages of annotations (2 or 3 short annotations, or one longer).

Second Semester

13

Residency (7 credits):

Creative Writing II (eight 3-hour classes) = 3 credits

Craft, Criticism, & Theory II (three 2-hour classes) = 2 credits

Elective Seminars & Studies II (four 1.5-hour classes) = 2 total credits

Independent, semester-long study with faculty mentor (6 credits):

Student must submit five packets (approximately 25 manuscript pages of fiction or nonfiction or 4 to 5 poems) and six-to-eight pages of annotations (2 or 3 short annotations or one longer).

Third Semester:

16

Residency (7 credits):

Creative Writing III (eight 3-hour classes) = 3 credits

Craft, Criticism, & Theory III (three 2-hour classes) = 2 credits

Elective Seminars & Studies III (four 1.5 hour classes) = 2 credits

Independent, semester-long study with faculty mentor (9 credits):

Major critical essay (30-35 pages) completed under tutelage of faculty mentor; some students may elect to undertake an internship as part of the research for this semester-long project.

Fourth Semester:

16

Residency (7 credits):

Creative Writing IV (eight 3-hour classes) =3 credits

Craft, Criticism, & Theory IV (three 2-hour classes) =2 credits

Elective Seminars & Studies IV (four 1.5 hour classes) =2 total

Independent, semester-long study with faculty mentor (9 credits):

Completion of major creative thesis (book-length manuscript of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry) under tutelage of faculty mentor.

Student presentation of 50-minute lecture or course, evaluated by a faculty mentor; plus a 20-minute public reading from creative thesis.

A ceremony is held during this fifth semester for graduating students.

The breakdown of 60 credits is as follows:

5 Residencies (4 @ 7 cr; 1 @ 2cr]	=	30 credits
2 semesters [@ 6 credits]	=	12
2 semesters [@ 9 credits]	=	18
[includes critical essay & creative thesis]		
TOTAL		<u>60 credits</u>