**Online Assessment Tracking Database** 

Sam Houston State University (SHSU) 2014 - 2015

Creative Writing, Publishing, And Editing MFA

Goal	Develop Skills And Knowledge Base In Creative Writing DRAFT 🖉	
	MFA graduates should develop a background in the area of creative writing to embrace writing, teaching, and publishing.	
Objective (L)	To Offer Challenging Workshops Consistently And Frequently DRAFT	
	In accordance with the Association of Writers & Writing Programs' "Hallmarks of a Successful MFA Program in Creative Writing," we will offer "challenging workshops" each semester in fiction writing. These writing-intensive courses will offer students multiple opportunities for submission and revision of their work. In keeping with the fundamental nature of workshop, the students will provide and receive critical feedback not only from the professor but from fellow students. The range of commentary from close and attentive readers will provide the authors with essential feedback, both objective and subjective, for the revision and completion of their stories.	
Indicator	Nature Of Writing Workshop Experiences DRAFT 🔎	
	We have offered the graduate fiction workshop each semester since the program's inception in the fall of 2012. These writing-intensive courses will offer students multiple opportunities for submission and revision of their work. The range of commentary from close and attentive readers will provide the authors with essential feedback, both objective and subjective, for the revision and completion of their writing.	
Criterion	Submission Of Writing To The Workshops DRAFT	
	Each year, students in enrolled in the graduate writing workshops will submit a sufficient amount of writing to the worksop, as reported on the GSAR. "Sufficient" is defined in prose workshops as 4 stories or novel excerpts (2 per workshop), and sufficent in poetry workshops as 12 poems or pages (6 per workshop).	
Findir	ng Writing In The Workshop DRAFT 🔎	
	The Graduate Student Annual Report (GSAR) will be a new assessment tool that we will implement for the first time beginning in 2015-16. It will provide us with the data we need to make this assessment.	
Criterion	Reading And Critiquing Unpublished Mansucripts DRAFT	
	Each year, 100% of students enrolled in the creative writing workshops will read and critique a sufficient number of unpublished manuscripts, as reported on the GSAR. "Sufficient" for the prose workshops is defined as 36 manuscripts (18 per workshop). "Sufficient" for the poetry workshops is defined as 60 poems/pages (30 per workshop).	
Findir	ng Reading And Critiquing In The Workshop DRAFT	

The Graduate Student Annual Report (GSAR) will be a new assessment tool that we will implement for the first time beginning in 2015-16. It will provide us with the data we need to make this assessment. Action Acquire Worthwhile Data DRAFT P The Graduate Student Annual Report (GSAR) will be a new assessment tool that we will implement for the first time beginning in 2015-16. It will provide us with the data we need to make this assessment. **Objective (L)** To Engage In Extensive Literary Study DRAFT P In accordance with the Association of Writers & Writing Programs' Hallmarks of a Successful MFA Program in Creative Writing, our program will require "extensive literary study," as writers must become "expert and wide-ranging reader(s)" in order to become successful writers. Our curriculum will "balance the practice of the art of writing with the study of literature." Indicator Equivalent Coursework And Successful Completion Of Written Comprehensive Exams DRAFT Students in our MFA Program in Creative Writing, Editing, and Publishing will fulfill the same requirements for the study of literature as the MA students in literature in the Department of English. This includes equivalent coursework (twelve hours of literature classes plus critical theory and narrative and/or poetic theory), as well as the successful completion of the same written comprehensive exams required of the MA students. Criterion Successful Completion Of Comprehensive Exams DRAFT 🎤 100% of MFA students will pass all three areas of the comprehensive exams given by the Department of English. Finding Comprehensive Exam Results DRAFT P We do not yet have a large enough sample to draw any particular conclusions. To date, two MFA students have successfully completed all three areas of the comprehensive exam, and one MFA student has successfully completed two areas and will re-take the third. Acquire More Data DRAFT P Action We will continue to collect data on the MFA students' performances on the comprehensive exams. To Write Literary Short Fiction In A Realist Narrative Mode Objective (L) DRAFT 🎤 Students in the MFA program in creative writing, editing, and publishing will be able to produce quality literary works of short fiction in a realist narrative mode. Indicator Writing Assessment DRAFT P In the graduate fiction workshop, ENG 5331, students will submit, workshop, and revise three complete short stories.

	Near the end of the semester, the professor will ask each student to submit one of his or her pieces, written in a realist narrative mode, to be included in the assessment. In the realist mode, writers should be able to create fully imagined and compelling three-dimensional characters; artfully rendered settings, whether of this world or another; surprising and convincing plots and structures; original and texturally rich language, including metaphors and other kinds of figurative language; and, ultimately, stories that either say something new or that find a new way to say something we thought we already knew about the complex human experience.
Criterion	Internal Writing Assessment Tool DRAFT & P 85% of the students will score at least an overall average of 3 (on a 5-point scale).
Finding	Assessment Results DRAFT
	In our initial trial run with this assessment tool, one story from each of the six MFA students enrolled in the spring workshop was evaluated by two members of the Department of English faculty (five faculty members participated in the process). Four of the six stories scored above a 3.0 with a high of 4.0, while the remaining two stories averaged 2.92 and 2.83. As a group, the average score was 3.30.
Action	Acquire More Data DRAFT It is a limited data set. We also intend to revise the tool based on our first attempt with it with clearer guidelines for the scoring system.
Objective (L)	To Prepare Students For Careers In Editing And Publishing DRAFT
	Students in the MFA program in creative writing, editing, and publishing will be able to seek careers not only as writers but as editors, book designers, and publishers.
Indicator	Opportunities For Experience With Literary And Academic Journals And Presses DRAFT
	MFA students will gain hands-on experience with literary and academic journals and presses.
Criterion	Sufficient Opportunities With A Range Of Journals And Presses DRAFT
	We will provide opportunities to acquire skills in editing, design, administration, marketing, and other facets of the publishing industry through Texas Review Press and Texas Review, the Sam Houston State Review, the Hawthorne Review, and the Journal of Finnish Studies.
Finding	Experiences With Publishing 2015 DRAFT 🔎
	Our MFA students, via both the Practicum in Publishing courses (required of all MFA students) and graduate assistantships, assisted in the production of twenty-four books by Texas Review Press, two issues of Texas Review, two issues of

	the Hawthorne Review, two issues of the Journal of Finnish Studies, and the annual online issue of the Sam Houston State Review. Students in the practicum in publishing course logged at least 10 hours per week at Texas Review Press while graduate assistants (depending upon their assignments) logged 10 to 20 hours per week at TRP. Other students assisted Dr. Julie Hall with the Hawthorne Review, Dr. Helena Halmari with the Journal of Finnish Studies, and Prof. Nick Lantz with the Sam Houston State Review.
Action	Future Opportunities DRAFT 🎤
	We will continue to seek additional opportunities for our students, in particular with journals and presses unaffiliated with our own university.
Goal	Student Recruitment DRAFT 🔎
	We are a very new program and have only a handful of students enrolled. Our goal is to recruit qualified students to enroll in the MFA program
Objective (P)	To Recruit Qualified And Exceptional Students DRAFT 🎤
•	We will recruit and accept into the program only those students, ideally between five and ten a year, who can reasonably be expected to complete it.
KPI Performance Indicator	Incoming Graduate Student GPA DRAFT 🔎
	The program will use incoming GPA scores as one indicator of likely student success. We will aim to maintain a minimum 3.00 standard for applications, with an expectation of not more than 15% allowable exemptions.
Result	GPA Results For Admission Year 2015 DRAFT 🎤
Result	We admitted five students in the calendar year 2015. Their undergraduate GPAs ranged from 3.76 to 3.07 with an average of 3.53.
KPI	
Performance Indicator	Incoming Graduate Student GRE DRAFT 🔎
	In its early development, the program will use GRE scores (with emphasis on the Verbal section) as an indicator of likely student success. We will aim to maintain a minimum score of 500 on the verbal portion of the exam and a total score of 1000, with an expectation of not more than 15% allowable exemptions.
Result	<b>GRE Results For Admission Year 2015 DRAFT</b> We admitted five students in the calendar year 2015. Their GRE verbal scores ranged from 450 to 575 with an average of 535. Their GRE overall scores ranged from 860 to 1175 with an average of 1085. Only one student scored under 500 for verbal and under 1000

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for overall. This was a student from our own undergradute program with whom we are quite familiar, and whose overall body of work gained our confidence.

KPI Performance Indicator	Student Recruiting DRAFT 🔎
	Through visits and advertising campaigns to English majors and minors, to undergraduate creative writing classes, in venues such as <i>Poets &amp; Writers</i> and <i>The Writer's Chronicle</i> , and via tables at the annual <i>Association of Writers and</i> <i>Writing Programs Conference and Bookfair</i> , we hope to recruit between five and ten students to begin the MFA at SHSU. Additionally, we expect our annual visiting writers series to contribute to our recruitment efforts.
Result	<b>Results For Admission Year 2015 DRAFT</b> <i>P</i> We admitted five students.
Action	<b>Future Recruitment DRAFT</b> We will continue to monitor our students' performances both as incoming and outgoing students, and to adjust our required scores for GPA and GRE accordingly.

## Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

As we enter our third year as a program, our primary objective remains to recruit students into the program and to recruit the best students possible. We received more completed applications (seven) for the fall this year than in the previous cycle. However, the number of new students actually enrolled this fall (three) will be slightly less than the previous two years, in part because two students we accepted chose to enroll at other institutions, and in part because two other applicants (both from our own undergraduate program) did not meet our minimum standards for the GRE. We continue to encounter the tension between the need to grow the program in terms of numbers and the desire to maintain the minimum standards we expect of any of our graduate students. As one of our goals has been to reach out beyond the traditional recruitment footprint of SHSU, we are pleased to note, as an example, that we've enrolled one student from Wyoming this year, and that we had accepted (though she declined) a student from Central Arkansas.

The most significant development for the program this past year was the beginning of our partnership with the National Book Foundation and its National Book Awards at Sam Houston program (just the second such program in the nation). The program has already brought increased attention to the MFA program, both regionally and nationally. We expect the collaboration to continue to reap benefits for the MFA program, the Department of English, the university, and the community.

Last year we launched a new website, and it has served as a useful tool not only for our currently enrolled students but for prospective students. It is regularly updated and provides ease of access to information and forms for students and prospective students. We continue to maintain an active Facebook presence and have even ventured into Twitter, though the latter doesn't generate much activity for us.

To build a career as a writer requires more than "simply" the ability to write compelling stories or to create powerful poetry. It requires an understanding of the profession and its mechanisms, and the ability to navigate those waters, whether as a teacher of creative writing, a member of an arts council, an applicant for a fellowship, a judge of a creative writing contest, an organizer of a reading series, or a publicist for a small publishing house. In order to assist the professionalization of our graduate students, we will diligently seek to incorporate our students into the para-professional aspects of our own MFA program. For example, in the first year of the National Book Awards at Sam Houston event, held in March of 2013, we made extensive use of the members of Sigma Tau Delta, the Department of English honorary, as volunteers to prepare for events, serve as hosts at receptions, and to assist with the logistics of the visiting writers and their schedules. Though some MFA students were involved through that channel and others, we'd like more MFA students to be involved in the process from beginning to end. We'd also like to involve more graduate students in the production of our annual reading series, including administration, publicity, and hosting. We'd also like to make a stronger effort to encourage our students to submit their work for publication in literary journals and for presentation at creative writing conferences. To assist us in these efforts, we plan to hold professionalization workshops, which will include attention to the elements necessary for either job applications or the submission of creative works to presses, journals, and conferences. In the day-to-day grind of academic life (classes, research, writing, exams), these facets of the professional life of the writer are often overlooked.

As with any graduate program, we need to continue to seek to improve the funding available to support our students, both in terms of the number of students funded and the amount of funding available to each student. We currently share graduate assistantships with the MA program in the Department of English, which at this time provides us with funding for seven MFA students.

We will be seeking additional funding as well for the annual reading series so that we might continue to bring to campus both emerging and established writers. We believe that this is an integral aspect of our students' education, exposing them to a wider range of writers and instruction than just our core faculty. Currently, the reading series depends upon \$3,000 from the Friends of English fund within the Department of English. We would like to pursue at least \$5,000 more annually from another source. This funding is separate from the monies dedicated to the National Book Awards at Sam Houston program.

## Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

A continued early goal of the program has been growth coupled with the maintenance of standards for admission. In the fall of 2014, thirteen students were enrolled in the MFA program; in the spring of 2015, fourteen students were enrolled. For the fall of 2015, we anticipate an enrollment of nineteen students. Between applications for admission to begin in the spring of 2015 and in the fall of 2015, we received ten completed applications. We have accepted six and rejected four, and five of the six accepted have joined our program. The five admitted students had an average GPA of 3.53, and average GRE scores of 535 (verbal) and 1085 (overall). This is above our preferred minimum standards of 3.0 for GPA and 500 (verbal) and 1000 (overall) for the GRE.

It's worth noting that we've been short-handed this past year as a creative writing faculty, in part because of the mid-year departure of a tenured member. Currently, we have just three tenured or tenure-track members. This fall, we've added a visiting assistant professor in creative writing (a two-year position), and we have been approved to advertise for two tenure-track positions, one in prose and one in poetry. These hires, once in place, should enable us to offer a broader spectrum of approaches to creative writing, and should assist us in matters ranging from course offerings to recruitment to administration.

## Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

As we enter our fourth year as a program, we celebrate the graduation of our first student, the first person to hold an MFA in creative writing, editing, and publishing from Sam Houston State University. We anticipate the graduation of a handful of students (likely six) in the forthcoming year. To truly assess the quality of our program, it will be necessary to track the careers of

these graduates as writers and teachers and active participants in the literary community.

To this end, we have sought to identify and develop assessment tools appropriate to our program. As a relatively new program and as the only fine arts program in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Sam Houston State, we've reached out to both peer and aspirational institutions with established MFA programs in creative writing, and as we move forward, we will be in dialogue with them about the best assessment practices for our discipline. We will also be in conversation with our fine arts peers in SHSU's College of Fine Arts and Mass Communication.

During this cycle, we've developed drafts of the following: a Graduate Student Activity Report (GSAR), an Exit Survey, and an Alumni Survey. The GSAR will be conducted annually with the current graduate students; the Exit Survey will be distributed shortly after each student completes the degree; and the Alumni Survey will be conducted every 3 to 5 years. In each case, we will seek to assess our students' and graduates' successful engagement in the literary, academic, and professional arenas. It is our expectation that these materials will give us a clear picture not only of what we hope our program provides for our students but of what it actually does provide.

We have also begun to develop tools both for internal assessments of our students' creative writing and external assessments. We conducted a trial run of a tool for internal assessment and will make adjustments to that tool for the next cycle. As the number of completed MFA theses grows, we will also seek to develop an assessment tool for outsider reviewers to use.

In addition to our core faculty, we continue to bring visiting writers to campus. Our current MFA students benefit from the presence of these nationally recognized writers and the diversity of work and perspectives that they add to the MFA experience. For potential students, the presence of a strong visiting writers series functions as a powerful recruitment tool. During the 2014-15 academic year, we brought to campus seven visiting writers and one nationally prominent editor. Most notable among our visiting writers events is our continued association with the National Book Foundation and the National Book Awards at Sam Houston. For a second consecutive year, we welcomed National Book Award finalists to campus and the community for a series of events. Our partnership has been strengthened by the hiring in the Department of English of a clinical assistant professor whose responsibilities include this partnership and this event. Additionally, this past year, for the first time, an MFA student was assigned as a research assistant (10 hours per week) to assist the event's coordinator. The program itself will continue to benefit regionally and nationally from the exposure our partnership brings. University funding for the National Book Awards event rose from \$25,000 to \$30,000 from 2014 to 215; our departmental budget for the other visiting writer events will double from \$3,000 in 2014-15 to \$6,000 in 2015-16.

As our first cohort of MFA students moves toward completion of the degree, we've been encouraging them to become active in submitting to publications and presenting at conferences. In the past academic year, our students published two short stories and presented at four academic conferences. Six students participated in public readings of their creative work.

The Texas Review Press continues to provide extensive hands-on experience in publishing for our students. The press published twenty-four titles in 2014 and will publish another twentyfour titles in 2015. These include novels, short-story collections, and novellas; full-length poetry books and chapbooks; essays and memoirs; a departmental history and even a cookbook (with recipes from poets). The MFA students, through both the practicum in publishing class and research assistantships, partake in every aspect of the publishing process.