

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
CREATIVE WRITING AT WESTERN STATE COLORADO
UNIVERSITY**

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FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

I. SUMMARY

This item recommends approval for Western State Colorado University (WSCU) to offer a Master of Arts in Creative Writing degree.

II. BACKGROUND

COMMISSION AUTHORITY

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129, which states that:

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education...

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM

The following is summarized from WSCU's proposal:

Faculty propose a low-residency Master of Arts (M.A.) in Creative Writing at Western State Colorado University in concert with the current Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Creative Writing. The proposed M.A. program would use largely the same 30 credits of first-year courses currently offered in Western's M.F.A. and would require an additional course in writing pedagogy. This will allow students to complete the proposed M.A. degree after one year of studies

with a culminating comprehensive exam. Students who choose to continue on and complete the M.F.A. degree will complete an additional 30 credits and a culminating thesis project. Dual options, such as this, have precedence at a number of institutions nationwide with respected graduate creative writing programs. The proposed M.A. in Creative Writing will follow the “low-residency” format used in the current M.F.A. program, requiring students to engage in two ways:

1. By participation in the same on-campus intensive seminars and workshops offered for M.F.A. students for two weeks each summer, but for only two consecutive summers rather than the three used in the M.F.A., and allowing the second residency to focus on pedagogy; and
2. By following the same plan of non-residency study, but requiring only two academic semesters rather than the four used in the M.F.A. and including an elective for in-depth writing pedagogy strategies.

Last, the M.A. in Creative Writing will offer students the same three emphases as the M.F.A. concentrations:

- Popular Genre Fiction/Nonfiction
- Poetry with a Focus on Versecraft
- Screenwriting for Feature Film and Television

Additional information on this proposed degree, unrelated to fit with statutory role and mission, is attached below (Attachment A).

ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT

This degree supports WSCU’s statutory role and mission, which states in part:

...Western state Colorado university shall offer undergraduate liberal arts and sciences, teacher preparation, and business degree programs and a limited number of graduate programs... C.R.S. 23-56-101

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes 23-5-129(6)(b), department staff finds that WSCU’s proposed Master of Arts in Creative Writing degree is consistent with the institution’s statutory role and mission. The WSCU Board of Trustees approved this program on December 13, 2013. This would be the fourth graduate program offered by Western since regaining statutory authority for graduate degrees in 2007.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Western State Colorado University's proposal to offer a Master of Arts in Creative Writing.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs Division and are available upon request.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-5-129 Governing boards - performance contract - authorization – operations

**ATTACHMENT A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION ON WSCU'S PROPOSED
MA IN CREATIVE WRITING**

This supplemental information is unrelated to the proposed degree's fit with the institution's statutory role and mission. The following is summarized from WSCU's proposal:

EVIDENCE OF NEED

This additional graduate program at WSCU responds to four demographic audiences:

1. Students who are already teachers and interested in obtaining a creative writing-specific graduate degree to advance their professional careers in secondary education.
2. Students who wish to obtain a graduate degree with the intent of entering into the arena of community college teaching.
3. Students who wish to earn an additional graduate degree to enhance their marketability in the college teaching market.
4. Students interested in pursuing professional careers in writing but willing or able to pursue only one year of studies (and one year of tuition expenses) in creative writing.

DUPLICATION

The following similar degrees are offered at Colorado public four-year institutions:

- B.A. Creative Writing at Adams State University
- M.F.A. Creative Writing at Colorado State University
- M.F.A. Creative Writing at University of Colorado Boulder