

Assessment Report AY 2023-2024

MFA in Writing Program

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MFA Mission Statement:

In its commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion, the MFA in Writing Program seeks to give writers from any background the skills, compassion, and sense of justice to engage in dialogue with the ever-changing world.

PLOs:

Students will:

- Articulate how linguistic, formal, and aesthetic choices create literary effects on the page
- Demonstrate an understanding of the range of literary aesthetics, trends, and sensibilities-nationally and globally, past and present-as well as the political ramifications of craft choices
- Practice critical analysis of their own writing as a process, implementing drafting and revision plans for their creative projects
- Students are prepared for participation in the public life of literature, which may include locating their own work in the context of contemporary professional practice, acquiring skills for writing-related professions, and participating in diverse literary communities.

Curricular Map: (See attached.)

Assessment Schedule since APR:

2016: PLO 1

2017: PLO 4

2018: PLO 3

2019: PLO 2

2020: Reflections Document on Remote Learning

2021: Year of Reflection, Part 1

2022: Year of Reflection, Part 2

2023: PLO 1 (revised)

2024: PLO 4 (revised)

2025: PLO 3 (revised)

2026: PLO 2 (revised)

Assessment Methodology

To assess student learning of PLO 4, we looked at the exit survey the department provided the graduating class of 2024. In these we asked a variety of questions regarding the reading and visiting writer series, if courses prepared them for life after an MFA, the degree to which they were able to engage with the literary community in setting up their writing life, frequency of submissions and publications, and how they navigated writing, publishing and participation in the literary life of San Francisco both during and after the program. These surveys were distributed to all graduating students and answered by 12. They were anonymous and I have included the responses below to help in our assessment of PLO.

Results of the Assessment:

In what ways are you interested in staying connected to the program as an alum?

12 responses

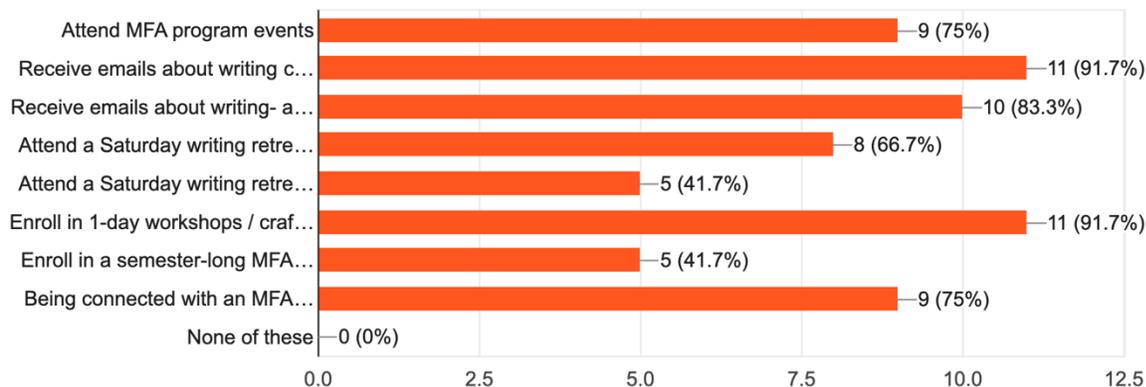


Figure 1

Prompts from the Fig.1

Attend MFA program events

Receive emails about writing contests and publishing opportunities

Receive emails about writing and publishing jobs

Attend a Saturday writing retreat as an student

Attend a Saturday writing retreat as alumnae

Enroll in one day craft workshop

Enroll in semester long MFA course as a non-degree student

Being connected with an MFA alum or alumni group in order to continue writing

During your time in the program, did you submit your writing to literary journals or magazines?

12 responses

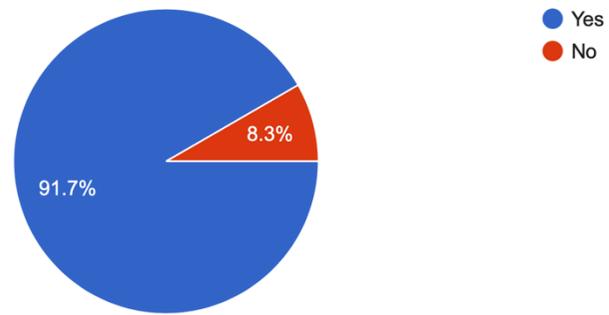


Figure 2

Did your work get published?

12 responses

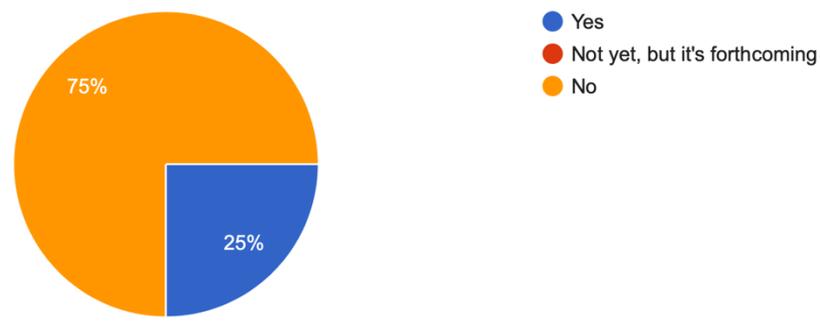


Figure 3

Other findings of the 12 students

	Very/Strongly Agree	Important/Agree	Not That Important/Disagree
Reading Series and Visiting Writers Was Important to my Overall MFA Experience	6	3	3
Courses and Programming Helped Prepare Me for a Life After MFA	5	5	2

Table 1

Findings & Takeaways:

Overall, these are heartening responses. The MFA in Writing is a degree that offers a very broad set of post graduate outcomes. While we hope all our students go on to publish broadly, we also want to set them up with the skills to approach careers in teaching as well as maintain a writing practice and participation in the writing community for the long term. These are difficult goals to achieve for a profession that does not often pay the bills or secure health insurance and the fact that so many of our students exhibited some interest in some level of post graduate literary citizenship tells us that they are invested in their careers as writers, listeners, teachers and readers.

From Fig. 1 you can see there is overwhelming enthusiasm to be ‘kept in the loop’ regarding job and publication opportunities, as well staying connected with the MFA community. Their time here was useful to them in a networking and connective sense and they would like to extend beyond graduation. The interest in a one day craft workshop was interesting and pleasantly surprising and it goes beyond the professionalization aspects of writing and into the craft life, where one is continuously honing their skills for as long as they are writing. This recognition that there is no ‘end’ to becoming a writer, there is always more to learn, to practice, opens the door to us on the possibilities of post graduate curriculum and engagement.

I want to note that the publishing date might be skewed by the fact that last year was the first year students set a GSO that created a journal of student work ‘The Four Leaf Collective’ was established by three students and created its first journal of USF MFA students in the spring of 2024. Most of the publication answers referred to that.

That is a disheartening finding. Our students need to be exposing their work to publishers of magazines, journals, blogs, etc. in a much more consistent way during their time at USF. Submission, without publication, is useful for many reasons – it hones the work, establishes relationships with editors, and the fact that so few students submitted to outside sources was a signal.

In terms of our professionalization track *during* the student’s time at USF, (Table 1), the majority of students found that the program offered them opportunities to see and meet writers and that their courses and programming helped them think about their writing careers after graduating. There are substantial enough responses in the medium and low category of these rankings that I am now aware our current programming is not sufficiently meeting all students' needs to interact with published writers and to have professionalization included in our curricula through presence in syllabi and events. Our offerings of Life After MFA are well attended and well received, but it is clear from these somewhat mixed responses, more can be done to engage the students in meaningful ways.

Next Steps / Closing the Loop:

These results and findings will be shared with the full MFA faculty at our next meeting in Spring 2025, to prompt a discussion about how we can (a) better address PLO 4 in our course design and teaching, and (b) set up systems of post graduate connections and offerings (alumni writing accountability groups for instance) that keep student in touch and writing.

