



Graduate Assistantships

Our low-residency MFA in Creative and Professional Writing is one of the few programs in the country that offer Graduate Assistantships (GA). Vital to our recruitment and retention efforts, these positions provide students with financial assistance and professional experience in such fields as education, public relations, grant writing, copywriting, writing center administration, and multimedia design and production. The recent expansion of our GA program to include remote opportunities has attracted new students from around the country and is in line with the mission of our low-residency model: to foster working professionals on their path from graduate student to educator/published writer.

[Listen to recent Graduate Assistants by clicking here](#) and read the testimonials below to learn more about how our GA program enriches students' coursework and prepares them for their careers.

Testimonials

“Part of my motivation for pursuing an MFA was a hunch that I might enjoy teaching. As an editor, I’ve always enjoyed working with new writers and helping people get their first bylines, and teaching feels like an extension of that. My graduate assistantship has given me the opportunity to teach with a ton of support every step of the way, from help creating a syllabus to weekly check-ins with my cohort.

It’s also been a huge financial help that’s allowed me to avoid taking out any loans. WCSU is one of the more affordable programs that I’ve come across, and the wide availability of graduate assistantships is, I’m sure, making an MFA much more obtainable for a lot of people. This is great for me on a personal, practical level, but it also makes me feel good about being in a program that wants to make it easier for students to finish and get exactly what they need.”

-Layla Schlack, Current MFA Student

“Working with *Poor Yorick* helped me discover my passion for managing the editorial and production process and inspired me to pursue a secondary concentration in independent publishing. Providing this platform to elevate other writers helped me formulate my goal of creating my own indie publishing outlet to support writers from the neurodivergent, LGBTQ+, and other underrepresented communities, which I plan to develop alongside my creative thesis throughout the remainder of my program. With the help of my GA position, I’ve found my purpose in life, and I’m building the skills, knowledge base, and experience to make it a reality.”

-Brianna Paris, Current MFA Student

“Deciding to become a Graduate Assistant was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I worked alongside some fantastic people, and we all genuinely wanted to help each other succeed. I discovered how much I loved teaching, which has now become my career. The experience I gained over two years of being a GA and working in a classroom was invaluable, and I have no doubt I am a better teacher today because of my time as a graduate assistant.

Before my thesis had even been approved, I had interviewed for and been offered a position as an adjunct at WCSU. It was also through connections made during my time as a graduate assistant that I landed my job as Writing Center assistant coordinator. I would not have been half as prepared for either of these positions, or even my work outside of academia, without the knowledge, skills, and experience I gained as a GA.”

-Stephanie Myers, Class of 2017

“The Graduate Assistantship program has not only allowed me to make a financially responsible decision in coming back to school and staying out of significant debt, but it has also provided me with an opportunity to grow as an educator. Teaching at the undergraduate level as I work towards obtaining my MFA is essential to this process of higher learning. This hands-on approach to partnering my own education with that of my students is an experience of a lifetime. This semester has provided me with many moments where the online learning environment has proven to be both difficult and rewarding. My students and I have learned how to navigate these waters together, and this has helped me in turn navigate the waters of the MFA program. If there is one thing that I have learned above all this semester, it is compassion.”

-Jason Bussman, Current MFA Student

“My time as a Graduate Assistant in the Dean’s office revealed the effort and care involved in addressing each student as an individual while furthering the faculty’s pedagogical mission to impart a quality learning experience. The overall message was clear: all individuals are welcomed and encouraged to develop their capabilities and enrich their lives as functioning members of a healthy, informed community.

Choosing the MFA program delivered that message for me. As one seeking a new path in retirement, the program provided an opportunity to develop that creative urge that had been set aside for so many years. Here, the invitation to explore, trip, and try again was part of a creative process, and the support and reassurance provided was unprecedented. This was an experience for all ages, all backgrounds, and the sharing and collaboration that ensued built my confidence, developed my literary comprehension, and formed lasting friendships around the love and joy of filling a blank page. The program literally reinvented my life.”

-John Bonanni, Class of 2019

“I chose the teaching practicum option for my Graduate Assistantship. The experience was invaluable. Prior to entering the MFA program, I had a successful career as a platform speaker and music teacher. The teaching practicum allowed me to build on those skills and prepared me for future teaching positions.

When the pandemic curtailed the traditional classroom role, I gained additional experience teaching in an online, non-traditional environment. Guided by my GA mentor, I learned how to balance the changing needs of students while still keeping the class on schedule and the students accountable.

My Graduate Assistantship has given me the confidence to step into the classroom and know that I’m well prepared to succeed. It’s a great program!”

-Ron Farina, Current MFA Student

“I am an established professional who decided to pursue an MFA in my late fifties with the hope of shifting to teaching writing for the latter part of my working life. That made selecting WCSU an easy choice. As a local student in a low-residency program, I was offered the opportunity to do a graduate assistantship as a teaching assistant for an undergraduate writing course. Beyond teaching, I was thrilled to take part in developing the class, creating a syllabus, and evaluating its effectiveness throughout the semester. It has been a tremendous learning opportunity and invaluable to the advancement of my professional goals. I love the energy I get from my students and cherish the camaraderie that has developed within my teaching cohort, from my fellow graduate assistants and our supportive overseeing professor. My MFA experience would be incomplete without this opportunity.”

-Ellen O’Donnell, Current MFA Student

“Working as a Graduate Assistant is a wonderful experience I am grateful to have. Not only do I get to work for awesome advisors, but the work experience is beneficial to me in terms of building my communication and technical skills. I thoroughly enjoy the positions I hold and get to do things I love. As the MFA Program Assistant, I have the opportunity to use my artistic skills to design marketing materials for the MFA Program’s social media, and I communicate with members of the writing community regularly to discuss their exciting accomplishments, which we include in our monthly newsletter.

In my Graduate Assistantship position at the WCSU Writing Center, I get to use my writing skills to help students across a variety of majors craft papers they are proud of. I love helping people, and through writing and my Graduate Assistantships, I am able to let my passion for writing and the arts guide others. I highly recommend being a Graduate Assistant at WCSU because it has been a fulfilling experience where I am led by some truly amazing faculty who care about and are invested in my growth as a student.”

-Michaela Lawlor, Current MFA Student

“My whole life I've wanted to be a writer, but teacher was also high on my list. Teaching undergraduates now allows me to do both, and it is as fulfilling and rewarding as everyone says it is. But it has also been an incredible learning experience for me. I feel as though I'm growing along with and as much as my students, and I'm finding even deeper joy in my writing through being a teacher. And, of course, it's an amazing feeling to watch a student discover their love of writing.

Beyond that, I'm receiving an education in being an effective teacher, something that I hope to continue doing after my MFA. I feel that a door is opening for me that I hadn't previously considered, and I'm recognizing how my skills and experience will be useful in the future. Nothing has validated my decision to return to school as strongly as teaching has, and I'm eager to continue discovering the opportunities that this position will provide.”

-Kristine Donahue, Current MFA Student

“As a Graduate Assistant, I edited *Poor Yorick*, the literary journal of WCSU's MFA program. I not only learned the skills needed to run an online literary journal, but also had the pleasure of curating and raising creative voices, giving writers a platform for the important things they have to say. Doing this work was a joy that gave me perspective on publishing that I would not have had otherwise – about what might catch an editor's eye and why (and, conversely, how impersonal rejection really is); that knowledge will serve me as I submit my own writing to magazines, agents, and editors.”

-Briana McGuckin, Class of 2019

“My time as a Graduate Assistant in the Writing Center has been transforming, to say the least. Through tutoring, I have rediscovered the power of education and community. Even though the Writing Center is online due to COVID-19, the connection between the consultant and aspiring writer transcends any technological barrier. Helping students develop their written voice and become stronger members of their academic community pushes me to achieve my own personal and professional goals.

As a result of my GA position, I have been inspired to pursue a career in teaching. I would like to work with vulnerable and underserved populations because I believe everyone has a right to a quality education. I want students to have the freedom to express who they are through their writing—I want students to know that what they have to say matters.”

-Olivia Geiger, Current MFA Student

“The Graduate Assistant position provided a wonderful experience. As a GA, I taught an Intro to Fiction elective course that met once a week. This course is designed for non-writing majors who have an interest in creative writing. I led a classroom of approximately twenty-five students and was given the full responsibility to design the syllabus, select the required reading, and facilitate the class as I saw fit. In addition, I was responsible for creating all assessments, providing feedback, and grading each student. In this time, I was able to build relationships with

undergraduate students, read some excellent writing, and hone my own craft through reflecting on student work.

As a high school teacher, this position gave me a taste of teaching in higher education and solidified my dream of someday teaching writing at the university level full time. It also gave me a sense of the life of many successful working writers who teach to pay the bills. In addition, it sparked creative lesson plans that I then implemented in my high school classes. I would absolutely recommend the experience to any MFA student who is interested in getting his or her feet wet leading a classroom and anyone who wants to sharpen their writing ability by critiquing college-level writing.”

-Mattea Heller, Class of 2019

“As a Graduate Assistant in the Writing Center, I’ve learned so much about all the different styles of writing, like MLA, APA, and Chicago, which has helped me immensely in my academic career. Professionally, this position has given me an opportunity to explore a field I had never even considered before, but one that I’m now actively applying for jobs in. As a former athlete, the comradery and teamwork of an educational environment feels like home.”

-Walter Frank, Current MFA Student