



## THE IOWA WRITERS' WORKSHOP: A NATIONAL LITERARY TREASURE



**“The Iowa Writers’ Workshop isn’t just any creative writing program. It’s the granddaddy of them all, and still the most prestigious . . .”**

*The Wall Street Journal, 2001*

Since its founding in 1936, the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop has played a uniquely important role in American literature. The Workshop claims among its graduates and faculty winners of virtually every major literary award, including 19 winners of the Pulitzer Prize, 3 recent U.S. Poets Laureate, and numerous winners of the National Book Award, MacArthur Fellowships (commonly known as “genius grants”), and other major honors. Its alumni—both teachers and students—are among the most visible members of the international literary community. In 2002, the Workshop received a National Humanities Medal from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the first such medal awarded to a university, and only the second given to an institution rather than an individual.

The University takes great pride in an M.F.A. degree program that has nurtured so many writers, including some of America’s greatest literary figures. Iowa graduates such as novelists Flannery O’Connor, Wallace Stegner, and John Irving, and poets William Stafford, Donald Justice, and Rita Dove, have created some of the most important literature of our time.



**STUDENTS AND FACULTY  
OF THE IOWA WRITERS'  
WORKSHOP WHO HAVE WON  
PULITZER PRIZES**

1945  
*V-Letter and Other Poems*  
**Karl Shapiro**  
POETRY

1960  
*Heart's Needle*  
**W. D. Snodgrass**  
POETRY

1968  
*The Hard Hours*  
**Anthony Hecht**  
POETRY

1972  
*Angle of Repose*  
**Wallace Stegner**  
FICTION

1978  
*Elbow Room*  
**James Alan McPherson**  
FICTION

1980  
*Selected Poems*  
**Donald Justice**  
POETRY

1982  
*The Soul of a New Machine*  
**Tracy Kidder**  
NONFICTION

1987  
*Thomas and Beulah*  
**Rita Dove**  
POETRY

1991  
*Near Changes*  
**Mona Van Duyn**  
POETRY

The University of Iowa Writers' Workshop was the first creative writing program in the nation. As early as 1922, the University had taken the then radical step of granting graduate degree credit for creative work, and the writing program was officially established in 1936. One of the Writers' Workshop's first students, Paul Engle, became its director in 1941 and remained to guide, nurture, and champion the program for 25 years. During this time the number of students grew from a dozen during World War II to approximately 100 (its current enrollment); fiction and poetry sections were created as they exist today; and the Workshop gained a national reputation as the premier program of its kind. The Workshop's prominence has continued through the directorships of George Starbuck (1966-1969), John Leggett (1970-1986), Frank Conroy (1987-2005), and Lan Samantha Chang, the current director.

Thanks to a long tradition of such excellent leadership, the Writers' Workshop, a unit of the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, has been the prototype for the approximately 300 writing programs in existence today, and maintains its standing as the best in the nation. In 2000 (the most recent rankings available), *U.S. News & World Report* and *Writer's Digest* both named the Iowa Writers' Workshop number one among the nation's creative writing programs.

By providing a place where writers can deepen their understanding of the art and craft of writing, the Workshop fosters the development of writers and teachers whose work can change lives and the way we see the world.

**LEADING THE WORKSHOP INTO THE FUTURE**

Lan Samantha Chang, who began her directorship in January 2006, is an alumna and former visiting faculty member in the Workshop. In addition to her M.F.A. degree from the Workshop, she holds a bachelor's degree in East Asian studies from Yale University and a master's in public administration from Harvard University. Prior to coming to the UI to lead the Workshop, she was Briggs-Copeland Lecturer in



**STUDENTS AND FACULTY  
OF THE IOWA WRITERS'  
WORKSHOP WHO HAVE WON  
PULITZER PRIZES**

1992  
*A Thousand Acres*  
**Jane Smiley**  
FICTION

*Selected Poems*  
**James Tate**  
POETRY

1995  
*The Simple Truth*  
**Philip Levine**  
POETRY

1996  
*The Dream of the Unified Field*  
**Jorie Graham**  
POETRY

1998  
*Black Zodiac*  
**Charles Wright**  
POETRY

1999  
*The Hours*  
**Michael Cunningham**  
FICTION

*Blizzard of One*  
**Mark Strand**  
POETRY

2005  
*Gilead*  
**Marilynne Robinson**  
FICTION

2008  
*Time and Materials:  
Poems, 1997-2005*  
**Robert Hass**  
POETRY

*Failure*  
**Philip Schultz**  
POETRY

creative writing at Harvard and fiction editor for the *Harvard Review*, and now holds the position of full professor of creative writing in the UI Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Chang has been honored as the California Book Award Silver Medalist, as a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award, and with a Bay Area Book Award and literary awards from the *Greensboro Review* and the *Transatlantic Review*. Her work has also been nominated for the PEN Center USA West Award and the PEN/Hemingway Literature Prize. At the UI she was the winner of the James Michener-Copernicus Award. She has received fellowships from Stanford University, Princeton University, the Radcliffe Institute, the National Endowment for the Arts, Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, and the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

In addition to her faculty positions at the UI and Harvard, she has taught at Warren Wilson College and Stanford University, as well as at the UI Summer Writing Festival, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, the Napa Valley Writers' Conference, the Sarah Lawrence Summer Writers' Conference, and the Asian American Writers' Workshop.

**ENSURING THE WORKSHOP'S FUTURE**

As a leader, Chang is deeply committed to ensuring that the Iowa Writers' Workshop maintains its distinction as the top program in the country. To date, the Workshop's distinguished past, renowned faculty, and unique teaching approach have earned it a reputation—and a consistent ranking—as the best in the nation, despite the growing number of competing writing programs. **But the Workshop stands at a critical moment in its history.** Of late, private support has enabled several of those programs to become more aggressively competitive; today more than ever, the Writers' Workshop is facing increased competition for top students and faculty.



**“Our ability to remain a vital writing program depends on continuing to attract the most promising student writers and the most dynamic faculty, and providing the support they need to be creative both in and out of the classroom. Funding for student and faculty support is the key to ensuring our future excellence.”**

—Lan Samantha Chang  
Director  
Iowa Writers' Workshop



As one of the University’s most prominent degree programs—and a training ground for many of America’s finest writers—the Workshop seeks private support to ensure its continued distinction. With the help of generous contributors, the program plans to fund the following key priorities. **Support from individuals and organizations that share a commitment to great writers and exceptional writing will make it possible for Iowa to remain in this leadership role.**

Each of the following funding priorities also represents a naming opportunity that will allow a contributor to name an endowment in his or her honor, or in honor or memory of a family member or friend. Thus, the “Jane Smith Fellowship in Creative Writing” can forever link the donor’s name with the literary legacy of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop.

#### **ENDOWED DIRECTORSHIP**

##### **Endowment of \$2 million**

An endowed directorship for the Writers’ Workshop will provide perpetual support for this crucial leadership role, and help ensure that writer-educators of the highest quality and stature continue to be drawn to the position in perpetuity. Further, since the cash flow generated by this endowment will pay a substantial portion of the director’s salary, the endowment will free up University funds that will enable the director to maintain and increase the excellence of the program. Finally, creating a named directorship would mean that the donor’s name would be forever linked with the leadership of this distinguished program.



## GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS

For each, an endowment of \$500,000

To ensure that all students who meet the high standards for acceptance into the Writers' Workshop can take advantage of this learning opportunity—and that Iowa can compete with other programs for the most promising students—the UI has identified the endowment of named fellowships for Workshop students as a key goal and an essential component of the program's future success. Providing full and equal funding for all Workshop participants is a critical step in ensuring the program's competitive edge.



**“The Workshop has played an important role in the University of Iowa’s history and identity. For this reason, as other writing programs have begun to compete for the best student writers and faculty members, the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has made ensuring the Workshop’s first-place ranking its number one priority.”**

—Linda Maxson  
Dean  
UI Alumni Association  
Dean’s Chair  
College of Liberal Arts  
and Sciences

## POST-GRADUATE AWARDS

### EMERGING WRITERS POST-GRADUATE AWARDS (6)

For each, an endowment of \$300,000; an endowment of \$2 million will fund the entire Emerging Writers Post-Graduate Award Program (6 writers)

Third-year post-graduate fellowships reward and encourage the program's most successful and talented students, usually those who have a book contract and need support to complete a manuscript. In the past, the Workshop has been able to offer generous funding to promising post-graduates, many of whom have gone on to win awards and bring great prestige to the Iowa program. However, the funding for these fellowships was not permanent and has nearly run out. Such fellowships are offered by several of the nation's competing writing programs; they are greatly valued by writing students and are crucial for attracting the best writers to Iowa.



### **DISTINGUISHED WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE**

An endowment of \$1 million

The ability to offer one-year or one-semester teaching positions in the Workshop enables the program to attract notable writers in addition to the Workshop's eminent permanent faculty members to teach and mentor students.

### **DISTINGUISHED POET-IN-RESIDENCE**

An endowment of \$1 million

The ability to offer one-year or one-semester teaching positions enables the Workshop to draw well-known poets in addition to the Workshop's eminent permanent faculty members to teach and mentor students.



**“The fellowship has been immensely freeing—it has allowed me the privilege of approaching the work of writing as my primary job, not something to be squeezed around the needs of everyday life. Having this freedom and time to write is exactly what the Workshop experience should be about for students.”**

—Maggie Shipstead  
Workshop student  
Truman Capote  
Fellowship recipient





### **IOWA WRITERS' WORKSHOP EXCELLENCE FUNDS**

A minimum endowment of \$50,000 for each

Creating an endowed “excellence fund” in the Workshop provides support that that can be used whenever and wherever the need is greatest. Used at the discretion of the director, annual support generated by a named excellence fund can be used to support a reading or seminar by a major writer, enable a student or faculty member to travel or do research, or otherwise enhance the excellence of the Workshop.

### **RECOGNITION FOR CONTRIBUTORS**

For those who lend their support at especially generous leadership levels, the University has identified the named-endowment recognition opportunities mentioned above. In addition, membership in The Presidents Club—which recognizes the University’s most generous contributors—is offered to those who support the Workshop at higher levels. For Presidents Club qualifying guidelines, please visit [www.uiowafoundation.org/pc](http://www.uiowafoundation.org/pc).

We are hopeful that alumni and friends will share our ambitions for the Workshop’s future and will assist us in continuing to be the premier creative writing program in the nation.





---

For more information about supporting the Writers' Workshop campaign goals, contact:

**Jane L. Van Voorhis**

Associate Director of Development, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

The University of Iowa Foundation

P.O. Box 4550

Iowa City, Iowa 52244-4550

Tel.: (319) 335-3305 or (800) 648-6973

E-mail: [jane-van-voorhis@uiowa.edu](mailto:jane-van-voorhis@uiowa.edu)



For more information about the Iowa Writers' Workshop, please visit its web site at [www.uiowa.edu/~iww](http://www.uiowa.edu/~iww).



The University of Iowa acknowledges The University of Iowa Foundation as the preferred channel for private contributions that benefit all areas of the University.