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Magazine Ranks UNCG's MFA Program No. 19 in the Nation

GREENSBORO, N.C. – The MFA program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro has been ranked No. 19 in the nation by Poets & Writers magazine, a leading publication in the creative writing field.

The rankings were published in the magazine's November/December 2009 edition.

"Our MFA Writing Program is a jewel among our academic offerings," said Provost David Perrin. "This top 20 ranking by Poets & Writers magazine is affirmation once again of the distinguished faculty and outstanding students engaged in this program."

UNCG's MFA program, the third oldest in the nation, has enjoyed Top 20 rankings before, said program director Jim Clark. But the Poets & Writers ranking method is unique, with heavy emphasis put on the polling responses of more than 500 current and prospective students.

"We're especially pleased that people applying to programs thought of us so highly," Clark said.

"What also impressed us, in the judgment of this poll, is that we outranked such big money schools as Columbia University, the University of Houston and Washington University and prestigious state universities such as the University of Florida, the University of Arizona and Ohio State University," Clark added. "Not only were we very pleased about how high we were in the rankings, we were pleased about the people we outranked."

In addition to the overall ranking, UNCG's MFA fiction concentration ranked 19th in the nation and the MFA poetry concentration ranked 10th in the nation. The program also ranked No. 12 in postgraduate placement, No. 12 in selectivity, No. 33 in total program funding and No. 31 in annual program funding in the magazine's rankings, an exceptional showing according to the publication.

"Because there are 140 full-residency MFA programs in the United States, any school whose numerical ranking is in the top fifty in any of the ranked categories – the overall rankings; rankings in the poetry, fiction, or nonfiction genres; or the rankings by funding, selectivity, and postgraduate placement – should be considered exceptional in that category," according to the article accompanying the ranking.

Overall, UNCG's program was identified as one on the rise by the magazine, something that speaks not only to the hard work of faculty and staff, but also to the success of the program's graduates, Clark said.

He pointed to the alumni reading series, where graduates come back to share from new works, as an example. "One of the things that has been very exciting to students is to see our alumni coming back with their first novel or their first edition of poetry," he said.

The UNCG MFA Program, which dates back more than four decades, is a two-year, studio program designed so that most of the work is done in workshops and tutorials. The program also publishes the literary journal, The Greensboro Review, twice a year. The program is limited to 25 full-time students at any given time. Last year, the program received 253 applications and accepted 12 students.

Notable alumni of the program include Claudia Emerson, the 2006 Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry. #####