AWP 2020 Event Outline

EVENT TITLE: How Program Directors Sleep at Night: The Dilemma of Debt and Creative Writing

EVENT DESCRIPTION: What is our obligation to students who amass debt for a creative writing degree that is not often a fast track to financial success? Directors from geographically and programmatically diverse graduate creative writing programs discuss how they grapple with ethical questions about the pedagogy of the graduate creative writing experience, as well as how their programs attempt to redefine success in the creative economy.

EVENT CATEGORY: Program Development

EVENT ORGANIZER & MODERATOR: Kevin Clouther is the author of We Were Flying to Chicago: Stories. He is an Assistant Professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha Writer’s Workshop, where he is Program Coordinator of the MFA in Writing.

EVENT PARTICIPANTS: Tod Goldberg is the New York Times bestselling author of fifteen books, including Gangster Nation, Gangsterland, and The House of Secrets. He is a professor of creative writing at UC Riverside, where he founded and directs the Low Residency MFA in Creative Writing & Writing for the Performing Arts.

Rebecca Johns is the author of two novels: Icebergs and The Countess. Her work has appeared in StoryQuarterly, The Mississippi Review, and Ploughshares, among others. She is the director of the MFA and MA in Writing and Publishing program at DePaul University in Chicago.

Jen McClanaghan is the author of River Legs. Her work has appeared in The New Yorker, Best American Poetry, The Iowa Review, The Southern Review, and New England Review. She is an associate professor and writer in residence at Salve Regina University, as well as the director of the Newport MFA.

Kiki Petrosino is the former Director of Creative Writing at the University of Louisville, which offers an MA with Creative Writing emphasis. Currently,
Petrosino is Professor of Poetry at the University of Virginia.

Opening remarks and housekeeping announcements

Hello, I am Kevin Clouther, Assistant Professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha Writer’s Workshop and Program Coordinator of the MFA in Writing. Welcome to How Program Directors Sleep at Night: The Dilemma of Debt and Creative Writing. A few reminders before we begin:

• For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let me know and a printed copy of the presentation will be delivered to you.

• Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.

• Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.

• Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing perfume.

• Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

• We realize the lines for the bathrooms may be long, but please refrain from using an accessible stall unless you require such accommodation.

• If you have any questions or concerns regarding conference accessibility, please call or text the Accessibility Hotline (503) 455-4127 or email events@awpwriter.org.

I would like to introduce each of our speakers, starting on my far right: Kiki Petrosino, Professor of Poetry at the University of Virginia; Jen McClanaghan, Associate Professor and Director of the Newport MFA; Rebecca Johns, director of the MFA and MA in Writing and Publishing program at DePaul University; and Tod Goldberg, Professor of Creative Writing at UC-Riverside, where he directs the Low Residency MFA in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts. Each of the participants, starting with Kiki, will offer brief opening remarks.
Moderator questions

1) How does your graduate creative writing program decide whom to admit? To what extent is your program able to fund these students?

2) Once students enroll, how does your program prepare them not only for the academic landscape but also for larger communities of degree-holding writers?

3) What is our obligation to students who amass debt for a creative writing degree?

4) How can graduate creative writing programs help students professionalize in various directions? How can programs attempt to redefine success in the creative economy?

Q&A session

Before leaving, I would like to spend 5-10 minutes taking questions from the audience. Please pass the wireless microphone to the person posing the question or please repeat all questions into one of the wired microphones.