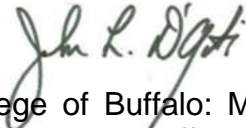




To: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

From: John L. D'Agati 

Subject: Villa Maria College of Buffalo: Master Plan Amendment to authorize the College to offer a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program in Creative Writing and Literature

Date: January 30, 2012

Authorizations:

### **SUMMARY**

#### **Issue for Decision (Consent Agenda)**

Should the Regents approve an amendment to the master plan of Villa Maria College of Buffalo authorizing the College to offer a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program in Creative Writing and Literature? Master plan amendment is required because the proposed program will be the College's first baccalaureate degree program in the disciplinary area of the Humanities.

#### **Reason for Consideration**

Required by State regulation.

#### **Proposed Handling**

The question will come before the full Board at its February 2012 meeting where it will be voted on and action taken.

#### **Background Information**

The current proposal is congruent with the College's mission of offering career-directed associate and baccalaureate programs integrated with the liberal arts. The student body of the proposed program is expected to grow from an initial number of 5 to about 18 within five years of the program's launch. The characteristics of the student body are expected to mirror that of the College as a whole: 82 percent from Erie County and 11 percent from the rest of the Western New York Region; 65 percent women and 27 percent minority. Admission requirements to the proposed program will be the same

as those for admission to the College, except for the additional requirements of submission of a portfolio of work and an interview by an English faculty member.

The proposed program will offer students the opportunity to develop and refine their writing, communication, and analytical skills through intensive study of English language and literature and extensive instruction in writing, research, and creative expression. Students in the proposed program will learn how to write successfully in a variety of genres and within a diverse array of rhetorical contexts, while also developing a writing style that fits their individual needs of self-discovery and expression.

This program will take the distinctive position of focusing on literature and writing as significantly linked processes, building upon the foundational courses that broaden student perspectives through the exploration of people, cultures, and concepts critical for understanding and conveying messages about the human experience. Students will complete a 54-credit core of courses in American, British, and world literature, as well as courses in creating prose and poetry.

A special feature of the proposed program will be a local Writer in Residence from the Western New York literary community; each year such a writer will offer specialized courses and workshops, and mentor students individually. The Writer in Residence program will provide students the unique opportunity to receive personalized feedback on their work from a professional writer as well as to gain first-hand knowledge of the diverse career possibilities available for individuals with strong writing skills. Students in the proposed program will assist in developing and publishing SKALD, Villa Maria's nationally recognized creative arts magazine, participate in a number of student readings throughout each academic year, and attend performances at the College by established authors as part of a regular writers' series.

Courses in the proposed program will be taught by seven full-time instructors and administrators and two part-time instructors, all currently employed by the College. Credentials of full-time instructors include two Ph.D.'s in English; the others hold M.A. or M.S. degrees in relevant disciplines. Credentials of the current part-time faculty include an M.A. in Communications and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing. The College also plans to hire an additional three part-time adjunct instructors and one full-time instructor to teach courses in the proposed program within the first four years of the program's existence; all of these new hires will have M.F.A. or Ph.D. degrees in writing or English.

Graduates of the proposed program may be expected to seek public and private sector careers that require knowledge of communication strategies and writing skills. This may be especially useful to students pursuing careers in teaching, law, business, public advocacy, arts administration, and editing and publishing. Students will also be well prepared for graduate study in English, creative writing, and communication, as well as other fields that require a strong Liberal Arts foundation and significant writing and thinking abilities.

The Department has determined that the proposed program would meet registration standards.

A canvass of all degree-granting institutions in the Western region elicited no responses from the region's institutions.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board of Regents approve a master plan amendment to authorize Villa Maria College of Buffalo to offer a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program in Creative Writing and Literature. The amendment will be effective until February 14, 2013, unless the program is registered prior to that date, in which case master plan amendment shall be without term.