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## NARRATIVE

### I. Significance

#### a. Project Purpose

I am applying for a Faculty Development grant for Fall Term 2003 (.2 release time) so that I can devote time to the continuation of my short story collection-in-progress, The Economy of Pain and Other Stories. Currently, I have completed working drafts of three new short stories totaling fifty pages.

While still in process, The Economy of Pain and Other Stories is beginning to take shape. The short stories will address an eclectic variety of topics surrounding personal relationships and their attendant emotional costs. One completed story, “A Game of Chess,” examines the possibility of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy from the point-of-view of a man who finds it difficult to articulate how he feels about the woman and the pregnancy; the story examines contemporary gender and social positions and, I think, offers a critique of men who, in our society, often adopt an aloof or cavalier attitude toward what some men view as “the woman’s problem.” This story is currently under consideration for publication at Quarterly West, a well-respected literary journal.

The collection’s title novella, “The Economy of Pain” (which I plan to write this summer, funded by a CSU Research Foundation Summer Scholars Grant), will be a “fictive interaction” with a series of real events. In March, 1889, Winifred Howells,

daughter of esteemed American novelist and critic William Dean Howells, died under mysterious circumstances while under the care of her physician. The story will be told from the point of view of William Dean Howells: an anguished father who, as a bestselling author with a demanding work schedule, chooses to send his daughter away for care. Understandably, Winifred's death while away from the family shatters the father and plunges him into a deep depression. It is this delicate, tragic situation that I intend to examine in my story.

#### **b. Objectives**

The purpose of requesting release time for Fall 2003 is so that I can devote time to the drafting of new stories. Typically, it takes me eight weeks to draft a new short story. A full-length story is generally 15-25 pages in length. Therefore, my objective for this Faculty Development grant during the Fall Term is to write two new short stories that, together, will comprise 30-50 pages of the collection-in-progress.

#### **c. Relevant Background Information**

With the three stories that I currently have in draft form, plus a draft of the novella "The Economy of Pain" that I plan to write during the Summer of 2003, I should begin the Fall Term 2003 with three stories and a novella totaling approximately 150 typewritten pages. A full-length collection of stories typically contains 200-300 pages of fiction.

There is a certain momentum for me as an artist in this process of drafting new stories, and the purpose of my requested Faculty Development grant is to maintain that

artistic momentum. It is important that I continue to write and produce new work while I am in this cycle of artistic creation. I plan to have one-half of The Economy of Pain and Other Stories completed by the start of the Fall Term 2003. The two new stories I plan to write will push me towards the three-quarters mark—an important step forward in the completion of a new book manuscript.

## **II. Proposed Activities and Timeline**

Should I receive a Faculty Development grant for this project, I plan to complete a full draft of a new short story every eight weeks. Assuming I begin work on a new story on the first day of the Fall Term, the projected timeline is to have the first short story written and completed by 21 October. I expect the second story to be completed by 21 December. I intend to submit the completed stories to well-respected literary journals such as The Paris Review, Ploughshares, or Hayden's Ferry Review. The new stories will constitute an important step forward in the development of my new short story collection-in-progress, The Economy of Pain and Other Stories.

I plan to finish a complete draft of The Economy of Pain and Other Stories by August of 2004; the completed manuscript will probably be 200-300 pages in length. I will first submit the completed manuscript to the publisher of my first collection of short stories, the University of Missouri Press. If Missouri declines to buy the book, I will offer it to another well-respected major publisher of serious literary fiction and/or I will hire a literary agent to assist me in this process.

### **III. Additional Benefits**

Currently, I am a first-year, tenure-track assistant professor in the English department, where I teach creative writing and American literature at both the graduate (MA and MFA) and undergraduate level. According to the Department of English's RTP guidelines, "book publication by a quality press" is the best way for candidates for tenure to fulfill their research, creative activities, and publications requirement. The completion of new short stories will be a significant step toward the completion of the manuscript as a whole.

In order for me to complete my short stories, I need solitude and a period of uninterrupted time free from worries and distractions. The Faculty Development grant, with its promise of .2 release time, will allow me to initiate and complete this phase of my current creative writing project. This project is a crucial aspect of my own professional and artistic development—an opportunity to develop and advance into new territory as a creative writer. It is important that I receive this support so that I can continue this work now, while there is building momentum and the book manuscript is beginning to take definitive shape.

The ultimate completion and success of both these short stories and my collection-in-progress is of vital importance in maintaining the stature of CSU-Chico's MA and MFA programs in creative writing. Successful, working authors attract the highest caliber students, thereby enhancing the reputation of the CSU.

## Qualifications

My first collection of short stories, Field Observations, was published in 2001 by the University of Missouri Press, a well-respected publisher of literary fiction. One of the stories in Field Observations, “Inventory,” won a 1997 Intro Journals Project Award, sponsored by the Associated Writing Programs (the pre-eminent professional organization for teachers of creative writing). Field Observations won a national prize, the 2002 Maria Thomas Fiction Award, given annually to the best work of new fiction written by a returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

Reviews of my first book have been excellent. “Field Observations is a collection of short stories that excel in their lucidity of storytelling,” declares the Sycamore Review. The library journal Choice notes that “Davidson’s story-telling technique is engaging in its descriptive qualities [and] realistic dialogue.” The Republic of Letters praises my “talent for economy of language, the shape of a story, and surprises that spring from character.” And a reviewer from the online journal Peace Corps Writers lauds my “fine debut” and the manner in which I “tell the stories of regular people trying to find satisfaction and maybe even a little happiness in a rough world.” A recent advertisement for my book included this comment by noted novelist Steve Yarbrough (Endowed Professor of Creative Writing, Dept. of English, California State University, Fresno):

Davidson is a wonderful writer, a real find. There are a lot of writers out there who can put a story together and make the surfaces of their work gleam. What is special about Davidson’s stories is something else altogether. He has the ability to make you care deeply about his

characters. They become, for all their occasional quirkiness, as real as the folks next door.

Prior to their publication in Field Observations, many of my short stories appeared in prestigious national literary journals: Hayden's Ferry Review; Another Chicago Magazine; The Bryant Literary Review; Apostrophe; Thin Air; and elsewhere. Recently-completed new fiction is currently under consideration at well-respected, nationally-distributed literary journals. My essays on fiction writing and interviews with practicing fiction writers have appeared in the Associated Writing Programs' Writer's Chronicle; Indiana Review; Sycamore Review; and in Delicious Imaginations: Conversations with Contemporary Writers (Purdue University Press, 1998).

These qualifications suggest that, as an active, publishing fiction writer, I can be expected to complete and publish my current manuscript-in-progress, The Economy of Pain and Other Stories, in a reasonable period of time.

## **Results of Previous Support**

I have received three major sources of support for my work in the past five years:

**CELT Grant, California State University, Chico, Spring 2003.** \$300 for travel support to the 2003 Associated Writing Programs National Convention in Baltimore, Maryland. I delivered a paper entitled “Decentering the Self: Travel, Volunteer Service, and the Practice of Writing.” 1 March 2003.

**Purdue Research Foundation Dissertation Grant, 2000-01.** \$14,000 for support in completing my Ph.D. dissertation at Purdue University. This award released me from teaching responsibilities for one academic year, allowing me to complete a draft of my Ph.D. dissertation, “The Master and the Dean: The Literary Criticism and Aesthetics of Henry James and William Dean Howells, 1859-1897.” I successfully defended the dissertation in May, 2002.

**Purdue Research Foundation Summer Research Grant, Summer 1999.** \$1,200 for support in completing my Ph.D. dissertation at Purdue University. This award paid me a stipend for the Summer of 1999, providing me with valuable time to work on my Ph.D. dissertation, “The Master and the Dean: The Literary Criticism and Aesthetics of Henry James and William Dean Howells, 1859-1897.” I successfully defended the dissertation in May, 2002.

## **Current and Pending Support**

**Summer Scholars Grant, CSU Research Foundation, Summer 2003.** A two-month stipend of \$7968 and \$250 in Operating Expenses for my project The Economy of Pain and Other Stories. I plan to complete draft of the title novella, “The Economy of Pain,” during Summer 2003.

**National Endowment for the Arts Grant, 2004-05.** \$20,000 (pending approval) for my project The Economy of Pain and Other Stories. The completed grant was submitted to the NEA in February, 2003. A decision is expected in December, 2003.

## **Attachments**

I have included no attachments to this document.