

## Program Review Report Summary

1. **Reporting Institution** Eastern Illinois University
2. **Program Reviewed** Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in the Teaching of Writing
3. **Date** 17 January 2019
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5. **Overview**

The Graduate Certificate in the Teaching of Writing (CTW) was implemented in Fall 2011 and was designed as an 18 credit-hour program for certified middle- and high-school teachers to help augment their professional development in writing pedagogy— professional development that could be used towards required Illinois recertification and/or towards an MA degree. The certificate also offers a professional development opportunity for teachers who wish to meet Illinois' requirements for teaching dual-credit writing courses.

CTW developed from the success of our Eastern Illinois Writing Project Summer Institute (established in 2008), with the primary goal to recognize the expertise area teachers would achieve through their participation in the EIU Writing Project (delivered through English 5585) plus four additional courses. Following the first few years of the EIU Writing Project Summer Institute, a strong majority of participants expressed interest in pursuing a certificate of writing in order to build on their skills and achievement in English 5585. An additional 12 hours of course work was determined as both feasible and in accordance with other certificate programs, with the combined 18-hour CTW designed to be completed in two summers and one academic year.

The CTW develops increased theoretical and practical understanding of writing pedagogies, including National Writing Project (NWP) principles that see all literacies as interconnected. Accordingly, learning goals of the CTW embrace strategic (or framing) goals from the National Writing Project as well as include specific learning objectives from the English Department's MA Program.

Learning objectives for students in the English Department's M.A. Program include:

1. To improve students' abilities to think critically and communicate effectively;
2. To broaden students' knowledge and deepen their understand of literature and language;
3. To prepare students for further graduate education or professional careers;
4. To enhance their credentials for careers in teaching, writing and editing, government, or business.

At this time, only two students have both completed the requirements for the CTW and received it; eight more students are currently enrolled. In addition, in doing the research for this report, we discovered four non-degree graduate students who have fulfilled all the requirements for the program but never applied for admission to the program and thus have not yet been awarded the certificate, along with another eight non-degree graduate students who have completed half or more of the certificate without applying to the program.

## 6. Major Findings and Recommendations

- 6.a. **Description and assessment of any major changes in the program [e.g., (a) changes in the overall discipline of field; (b) student demand; (c) societal need; (d) institutional context for offering the degree; (e) other elements appropriate to the discipline in questions].**

- (a) Changes in the discipline.** Among the effects of the Common Core State Standards Initiative has been an increased emphasis on integrating writing across the curriculum for K-12 students. Many experienced teachers outside English Language Arts lack formal training in the teaching of writing. Even for ELA teachers, Common Core has shifted the emphasis of writing instruction to emphasize writing in a greater diversity of genres than most ELA classrooms traditionally covered.
- (b) Changes in student demand.** In the past year, inquiries from school districts interested in the professional development available through the CTW, including an inquiry from Chicago Public Schools, suggests that we might expect increased enrollment as districts may provide financial support to their teachers who enroll. In addition, we currently have twice as many applicants for the 2019 Summer Institute as we have seats available, again suggesting that we may be able to increase enrollment in the CTW in the coming years.
- (c) Changes in societal need.** Strong writing skills are key to upward mobility in many professional fields; to improve educational outcomes in the state and nation, enhancing the teaching of writing as broadly as possible—especially in underfunded districts and classrooms. As dual credit becomes a more widespread practice in schools, it follows a familiar pattern, becoming widely available to students in better-funded school districts and remaining scarce for less affluent students. The CTW offers high quality training that enables teachers to qualify to teach dual credit at a relatively low cost, since it is roughly half the length (and cost) of a full MA degree. Moreover, unlike a traditional MA in English or a related subject, which technically would qualify students for dual credit, the CTW focuses specifically on writing pedagogy. It is our hope that the program will enable teachers in both rural and urban school districts to qualify to offer dual credit—as well as enhancing their teaching of writing generally. The CTW meets a genuine societal need and is well-positioned to increase economic opportunity for teachers and their students.
- (d) Changes in institutional context.** Beginning this year, the MA in English at Eastern is now available for fully online students. This change may well have led to some additional publicity for the CTW. Enrollment in the online MA has gone up; since the CTW is available both to MA-seeking students and those who seek only the Certificate, we do not believe that the CTW will become redundant.

## **6.2 Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement; Assessment.**

**Assessment.** As a curriculum unit within the MA program, the CTW is overseen by the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Studies Committee. For over five years, the Graduate Studies Program has maintained a broad, rich, and comprehensive assessment practice, including, but not limited to: assessment instruments for all phases of students' progress through the two-year program (from required first-semester methods course to oral defense of the thesis); faculty assessment of students and courses (each semester); tracking of student professional activities (such as conference papers or attendance, public or professional readings, and publications); in-house professional workshops; and an annual assessment report to EIU's Assessment Coordinator.

All CTW participation and outcomes, therefore, are routinely assessed in order to measure alignment with the four primary learning objectives for the MA Program in English (see objectives in item #5, above).

However, as the first students begin to complete the CTW, we will need to develop additional assessment plans to differentiate the success of the CTW from that of the MA. Given the professional goals and the common coursework students in the CTW share, additional assessment will likely take the form of assessment of English 5585 in particular as well as a post-graduation survey.

**6.3 Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.**

**Changes in instructional resources and practices.** We have been fortunate to retain through the recent rough budget years the instructors who teach the required courses for the CTW as well as those who teach the most frequently offered electives, and to be able to continue to teach all these courses in a regular rotation. The core 6-credit requirement, English 5585, Writing Project for K-16 Teachers, has transitioned over the past few years from a hybrid online and face-to-face class to a fully online course, enabling us to extend this offering to students at a distance and to provide additional flexibility all CTW students, who are busy working professionals. We have begun planning to expand the offering of 5585 in summer 2020; during summer 2019 the current instructor will work with another faculty member who will prepare to offer the course in future. In addition, although the electives in the program have always been available online, the recent expansion of our MA to offer additional online courses has increased course options for CTW students.

**Changes in curriculum.** Beginning in 2016-17, we added several additional courses (pre-existing in the English MA) that students could apply to the Certificate (while still maintaining the core requirement of participation in the 6-credit summer Writing Project Institute). This added flexibility so that students could enroll in a somewhat broader variety of courses and assisted us in being able to offer sufficient online courses.

**6.4 Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.**

This review has highlighted the need for the following actions:

**Publicity and Marketing.** We are aware that we need to work harder to communicate the value of the program to potential students and increase awareness of the availability of the Certificate across the state.

**Internal Communication.** In addition, we need to streamline our communication with non-degree students so that students who are completing the requirement of the Certificate are aware that they are eligible for the recognition involved in the program.

**Increased availability of Summer Institute (English 5585).** Given the current high demand, we are working on training additional staff to run a second section of the Summer Institute in summer 2020.

**7. Responses to Institution-Assigned Issues**

**7.4 What one unique, noteworthy activity is the department involved in that will enable the IBHE to distinguish it from other programs in the state?**

The fully-online Certificate in the Teaching of Writing allows teachers to improve their awareness of pedagogical strategies for integrating writing across the curriculum, an essential component of improving the education of K-12 students across the state and nation. As a certificate program, it meets the needs of working teachers who wish to teach dual credit without burdening them with the full requirements of an MA degree.

**8. Outcome**

**8.1 Decision:**

Program in Good Standing

\_\_\_\_\_ Program flagged for Priority Review

\_\_\_\_\_ Program Enrollment Suspended

## 8.2 Explanation

On behalf of the office of Academic Affairs, I appreciate the efforts of the faculty and program as they continue to pursue curricular innovation through assessment. Most notably, the department is to be commended for its efforts to increase enrollment in the program, particularly through online program development. Lastly, the report demonstrates genuine interest in the purpose and success of the CTW.

### Dean's Comments

In the age of Common Core, the CTW helps fill a critical need for Illinois teachers needing to pursue greater integration of writing across the curriculum. This program, while still relatively young (2011), is likely to see an upswing in enrollment because of recent interest from Chicago Public Schools and other large districts. The Department's refinement of marketing/recruiting strategies will also likely result in greater numbers. We expect the assessment loop to be more mature by the next review cycle.