

REVIEW OF THE POST-BACCALAUREATE GRADUATE CERTIFICATE FOR TEACHING OF WRITING IN HIGH SCHOOL/MIDDLE SCHOOL

Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code: 23.0101
English Language and Literature, General

OVERVIEW

The Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate for Teaching of Writing in High School/Middle School (hereinafter, the “Teaching of Writing certificate program” or the “certificate program”) at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of English within the College of Arts and Sciences. The department also offers undergraduate minors in English, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and Writing; a B.A. in English; an M.A., M.S. in English; a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Graduate Certificate; and a Ph.D. in English Studies. The last review of the Teaching of Writing certificate program occurred in 2010-2011.

The Teaching of Writing certificate program is designed for in-service language arts teachers at the elementary and secondary levels who seek to improve their writing instruction or the writing programs in their school or district. The program also enrolls teacher leaders seeking to strengthen their writing credentials and mentor their faculty in writing instruction. The certificate program does not lead to licensure or endorsement in Illinois. Certificate program participants concurrently or subsequently admitted to another graduate program offered by the Department of English may apply to have certificate program credit hours accepted toward credit hour requirements of their other graduate program.

Certificate program completers typically remain employed at the middle, junior high, or high school where they were employed during their certificate coursework, but some certificate completers move to other teaching or administrative positions. It is common for completers to offer professional development activities to their school colleagues based on activities developed in certificate program courses.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2011-2018

Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate for Teaching of Writing in High School/Middle School, Illinois State University

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Enrollment, fall census day	2	2	4	1	3	0	1	2
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year	3	2	3	0	0	0	1	0

Table note:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

- To develop and enhance expertise in the teaching of writing for teachers across levels and disciplines.
- To encourage teachers to pursue higher degrees in English.
- To offer graduate English classes amenable to teachers’ schedules.

Students learning outcomes

At this time there are no student learning outcomes for the Teaching of Writing certificate program.

Program curriculum (2018-2019)

Graduation requirements:

18 credit hours earned through successful completion of six specified courses. One of the six courses involves participation in the annual summer Illinois State Writing Project hosted by the Department of English. Writing Project participants identify a problem related to writing instruction at the elementary or secondary level and then spend four weeks writing and working on a teaching activity or set of activities intended to address the problem.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face or blended face-to-face/online instruction.

Department faculty (Fall 2018)

33 tenure track faculty members (18 Professors, 12 Associate Professors, and 3 Assistant Professors)

20 non-tenure track faculty members (8 full-time and 12 part-time, totaling 10.9 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 8.6 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 11.1 to 1

Specialized accreditation

The Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate for Teaching of Writing in High School/Middle School is not affiliated with a specialized accreditation association.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

The Department of English notes a nationwide and statewide trend over the past decade of declining graduate certificate applications and enrollments, exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2008. However, the department is encouraged by positive trends in national news venues touting the need for broad training in the humanities for numerous professions. Indeed, although most Teaching of Writing certificate program students and alumni use their certificates for professional development and career advancement, career opportunities for those who complete the certificate program are more varied than ever before. Thus, the Department of English is considering how it might revisit, revision, and innovate the Teaching of Writing certificate program in light of increasing statewide competition for the same students; student demand for different courses, courses at different times, and courses offered online; and the increase in national and international technical communicators.

Responses to previous program review recommendations

In response to previous program review recommendations, an ad hoc committee of graduate faculty with interest in the teaching of writing drafted an assessment plan for the Teaching of Writing certificate program, although the plan has not yet been implemented; strived to balance curricular offerings with student demands and faculty resources; worked with multiple stakeholders to initiate and sustain more robust recruitment and retention efforts; and expanded the department database of and outreach to middle school and high school teachers in Illinois.

Major findings

The Teaching of Writing certificate program continues to offer in-service teachers innovative, advanced graduate education in writing studies theory, pedagogy, and assessment. Students enrolling in the program continue to share what they learn with their in-service teacher and teacher leader colleagues. Students and faculty continue to participate in the Illinois Association of Teachers of English conference, the National and Illinois Writing Projects, and other venues to present research developed through their participation in the certificate program. Since the prior program review, the Department of English has expanded its relations with alumni, taken measures to improve the climate of inclusivity in the department, implemented student recruiting campaigns that involve faculty across the department, and created the English Studies Commons, a physical space near the department office intended to foster community-building and intellectual connections among students and faculty. The Teaching of Writing

certificate program continues to demonstrate its commitment to diversity and inclusion. However, the ability of the program to recruit students self-identifying with traditionally underrepresented racial/ethnic groups is negatively impacted by continued reliance on face-to-face instruction, which limits recruitment efforts to teachers and teacher leaders working within driving distance of campus. Since the prior review, faculty members have developed an assessment plan to guide programmatic changes, however, due to faculty turnover, the plan has not yet been implemented.

Low enrollment in the program and responses to student surveys and interviews point to the necessity of forming an ad hoc committee to reassess program goals, curriculum, audience, and sustainability. Faculty is also pursuing numerous initiatives for enhancing recruitment, including online learning.

Initiatives and plans

- Seek ways to increase enrollment in the Teaching of Writing certificate program through innovation, such as exploring the possibility of offering the program online or in hybrid form.
- Continue to diversify the certificate program student population and curriculum.
- Publicize, revise, and sustain the program.
- Connect with more program alumni.
- Expand professional development and career preparation opportunities for students in the program.
- Revise the student learning outcomes assessment plan, particularly with respect to digital, cultural, and global literacies and critical socio-cultural approaches to teaching writing, and implement the plan.
- Revisit program goals and how well current courses meet them.
- Increase the visibility of social justice approaches to teaching in the curriculum design.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that high quality professional development opportunities for in-service teachers in the state are important for maintaining high quality educational programs on the elementary and secondary school levels. The committee also recognizes the integral role Illinois State University has played in providing such professional development opportunities to in-service teachers in Illinois for many years, including the Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate for Teaching of Writing in High School/Middle School program offered by the Department of English. The department created the certificate program in 2001 as an opportunity for in-service teachers to improve their effectiveness as teachers of writing and to develop more robust writing programs in their schools. The program was also designed to meet professional development requirements promulgated by the Illinois State Board of Education and to assist in-service teachers seeking National Board Certification. Since its inception, the program has conferred 20 certificates to in-service teachers completing the program as part-time students, 12 since the 2010-2011 program review.

While recognizing the Teaching of Writing certificate program for its contributions to education in Illinois, the committee is concerned about consistently low enrollment in the program and about faculty turnover. Since its inception, the program at most has had eight students enrolled as of fall census day (in 2009). Fall enrollment in the last five years has ranged from zero to three. Without sufficient enrollment, the courses in the program cannot be offered. Not offering courses in turn inhibits timely completion of the program and may dissuade prospective students from enrolling. Many of the faculty members teaching in the certificate program at the time of its inception have since retired or left the University. Of the five faculty members named in the 2018 self-study report as being affiliated with the certificate program, three still teach in the program: a full professor, an emeritus professor, and a full-time director of another unit at the University. The remaining two faculty members named in the self-study report are no longer affiliated with the certificate program: an emeritus professor and a tenure-line faculty member who has since left the University.

The self-study report is candid in its recognition of the need to further evaluate the certificate program in light of these challenges as well as national and disciplinary trends in education and writing education. The report cites the potential for the program to continue to succeed in its professional development mission. But the report also cites the need to re-energize the program, in part by recruiting faculty members interested in carrying on that mission. The committee concurs.

Therefore, the Academic Planning Committee flags the Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Certificate for Teaching of Writing in High School/Middle School program for further review. The committee requests that the Department of English take the following actions and submit the following reports based on those actions.

Report 1: Due December 15, 2019

Submit to the Academic Planning Committee via the Office of the Provost

The committee is encouraged to learn from the self-study report that discussions regarding the future of the program are already being planned. The committee asks Department of English faculty members to proceed with those discussions to determine whether there is sufficient student demand and faculty interest to continue offering the program either in its current form or in a modified form or whether program resources should be re-directed to other initiatives of the department. To help inform the faculty decision in this matter, the committee recommends that faculty members conduct the analyses described below, and any others faculty members deem potentially helpful.

Consider input from program stakeholders. The committee suggests that faculty review input already received from program stakeholders or prospective stakeholders for guidance regarding the future of the certificate program and seek additional input as deemed necessary and appropriate. Stakeholders may include, but are not limited to, certificate program graduates, students who have taken courses in the program but have not yet completed it, prospective enrollees, middle or secondary school administrators, regional superintendents of schools, or Illinois State Board of Education staff members. Consistent with principles of program review, the committee asks that all tenure-line and status non-tenure line faculty members in the department be consulted regarding this issue.

Explore trends in post-baccalaureate writing education and their impacts on program demand and offerings. The committee supports the suggestion in the self-study report that faculty explore trends in post-baccalaureate writing education but also recommends that faculty investigate current and emerging licensure, endorsement, and professional development regulations and guidelines promulgated by the Illinois State Board of Education. One trend worth investigating is growing interest on both the secondary and post-secondary education levels in Illinois in dual credit courses (courses taught in high schools by high school teachers for which students earn both high school and college credit). Currently lacking in Illinois are post-secondary programs designed to prepare in-service high school teachers to teach dual credit writing courses, particularly programs offered online and targeted toward high school teachers in downstate districts.

Explore non-traditional delivery of the program to increase enrollment. One recommendation resulting from its 2010-2011 review of the certificate program was for faculty to explore non-traditional means of delivering the program that would be more convenient to in-service teachers. The 2018 self-study report submitted by the department indicates that alternative delivery models have not yet been fully investigated by faculty. The committee recommends that faculty proceed with that investigation, including whether there is interest among prospective students to enroll in the program if it is offered online or is offered face-to-face at an off-campus location, whether faculty members in the department are interested in teaching courses in the program through non-traditional means, and what additional resources or support would be needed by faculty to do so. The committee notes that there are numerous models at the University for delivering graduate-level educator preparation programs through non-traditional means. Among them are programs delivered fully online, programs delivered face-to-face at off-campus locations, and programs with courses that occasionally meet face-to-face but more often involve work online, either asynchronously or synchronously.

Explore use of the full-cost recovery model to fund the program. The Teaching of Writing certificate program is an example of a program designed to serve non-traditional students who otherwise would not enroll in the University. Whether delivered online, face-to-face, or using a hybrid face-to-face/online model, such programs may be funded using the full-cost recovery funding model. That model makes possible hiring existing or additional faculty to teach courses in the program when existing department funds might not be sufficient to support the program.

The committee asks the department to report the status of faculty discussions regarding the certificate program in a follow-up report submitted to the committee via the Office of the Provost by December 15, 2019.

Report 2: Due October 1, 2020

Submit to the Academic Planning Committee via the Office of the Provost

The Academic Planning Committee asks the Department of English to summarize findings of its faculty discussions regarding the certificate program in a report submitted to the committee via the Office of the Provost by October 1, 2020. If faculty members decide to continue offering a certificate program, the committee asks that the report submitted to the Office of the Provost describe any changes faculty intends to make to the program (e.g., in terms of its audience, content, or delivery) and strategies the department intends to deploy to recruit students and support them through instruction and mentoring. If faculty members decide not to continue offering the certificate program, the committee asks that the report submitted to the Office of the Provost describe steps taken or intended to be taken by faculty members to disestablish the program, including provisions for any students still working toward the certificate to complete the program.

Based on the status of the program as reported in the October 1, 2020 report, the committee may request additional annual reports by the department until the program is once again deemed by the committee to be in good standing, unless the program has otherwise been disestablished. If the committee has not determined the program to be good standing by June 30, 2024, and the program has not already been disestablished, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) may rescind the authority it granted to the University to offer the program and request that the University disestablish the program.