COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE DEAN
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

UMASS
BOSTON

100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393
P: 617.287.7600
F: 617.287.7664
www.cehd.umb.edu

From: Felicia L. Wilczenski, Interim Dean of CEHD and Joan Liem, Dean of Graduate Studies *Felicia Wilczenski*
To: Provost Winston Langley, Associate Provost Peter Langer, and Jack Levy, Chairperson, Curriculum and Instruction Department
CC: Peter Taylor, CCT Program Director and CCT program faculty
Date: June 28, 2011

The University of Massachusetts Boston 1999 policy for academic program review states: "The Academic Quality Assessment and Development (AQUAD) is an external review process for assessing the core academic functions of each department or program at the university, including teaching and learning; research, professional, and creative activity; and public service and academic outreach. The AQUAD review provides a rigorous quality assessment, identifying strengths and targeting areas for growth and development." The self-study report for the Critical and Creative Thinking (CCT) program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) prepared by Professor Peter Taylor and core faculty members highlighted the many strengths of the program, including analysis of a sample of student responses to the program and recommendations for possible futures for the program.

The review team, composed of two external reviewers, Nicholas Michelli (City University of New York) and John Wooding (University of Massachusetts Lowell), and two internal reviewers, John Saltmarsh (College of Education and Human Development) and Bala Sundaram (College of Science and Mathematics), engaged in thoughtful analysis of the self study and a series of onsite interviews with students, CCT faculty, and college and university administrators. The CCT faculty responded to the AQUAD reviewers on June 23, 2011. Our response is consistent with the structure of the reviewers' and faculty comments on CCT's strengths and areas for future development focusing on Students and Student Learning, Faculty Quality and Productivity, Possible Future Directions, and Recommendations.

Students and Student Learning

Through interviews with faculty and students, the reviewers found "...considerable evidence that the knowledge, competencies, and values associated with interdisciplinary, collaborative problem-solving, reflective analysis and practice, and social justice is being well met through the CCT program." The CCT Program serves students looking for professional and personal development who are interested in learning from and with others of diverse backgrounds and interests. It is designed to provide graduate students with an understanding of the processes of critical thinking and creativity, and with ways of helping others develop these processes in a variety of educational, professional, and social situations.

Curriculum content reflects the research interests and expertise of the faculty. The program offers many innovative and flexible course delivery options that were deemed "remarkable" by the review team. Having multiple course delivery options was seen as a very effective way of serving "students with a diversity of learning styles and complex personal circumstances." It is clear that the students interviewed provided strong testimonials regarding the value of the program to them. Program outcomes are assessed in terms of the students' personal achievement of their individual career goals.

Students enroll in CCT directly through a certificate or MA degree programs with two tracks, CCT and Science in a Changing World. Students enrolled in the Learning, Teaching, and Educational Transformation (LTET) master's program also sometimes choose to complete the CCT certificate.

Data provided in the self-study regarding student enrollments are not consistent with institutional data from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP). CCT program applications, enrollment, and graduation numbers for the past 5 years from the OIRP (Retrieved 5-17-11), the official university data are summarized in the table below. These data suggest diminishing interest in the master's degree program and very modest interest in the certificate program during the past 5 years.

CCT Applicants	06	07	08	09	10
Degree	15	15	14	5	6
Certificate	5	2	1	6	4
CCT Enrollment	06	07	08	09	10
Degree	26	30	31	25	26
Certificate	3	3	2	4	4
CCT Graduates	06	07	08	09	10
Degree	11	7	6	8	8
Certificate	5	2	0	2	5
SICW	-	-	-	-	1

CCT has made up for this diminished interest in the master's degree program by making their courses available to students matriculated in other degree programs, such as LTET, and to non-matriculated students and enrollments have remained relatively stable. The program also recently moved to put more of their courses online, hoping to reach a broader audience. They are to be commended for this effort to expand their reach; however, the reviewers raise a legitimate concern about attending to the continued coherence of the curriculum, particularly as the program expands its offerings. They also noted several student concerns - the limited number of electives, the unstructured advising system, the growing reliance on online courses, and the need for support services in research and writing skills – that the faculty will need to attend to and address.

A real strength of the CCT program is its responsiveness to individual student needs. Nevertheless, in light of the diversity of student needs, the expanding track options, and the multiple course delivery options, we share the reviewers' concerns about addressing the coherence of the curriculum, clarifying the program's competencies and values, improving the structure of advising services, and collecting more systematic data on student outcomes.

Faculty Quality and Productivity

The CCT faculty research and teaching credentials are unquestionable strengths. Instructors, including tenure stream and part time lecturers, affiliated with the College of Education and Human Development and with the College of Liberal Arts, serve the program with dedication. The trajectory of the CCT program is certainly influenced by its long time director, Professor Peter Taylor, who has creatively responded to changing faculty resources and the increasingly varied nature of student enrollment.

The reviewers were impressed with the dedication of faculty who contribute to the program. They felt that the most significant issue regarding faculty quality and productivity is that CCT lacks adequate faculty resources to sustain the program. We agree that the lack of full time faculty contributes to difficulties in providing adequate student advising, appropriate curriculum development, and academic support services for students.

Possible Future Directions

The reviewers see the program's mission as more relevant today than when it was started in 1979. They suggest that CCT could be a signature activity of the University as a whole. The program reflects the growing importance of interdisciplinary work and the value of critical and creative thinking for a participatory democracy as well as for a wide range of occupations. There are several areas of positive development to highlight. This cross-program approach takes advantage of the intellectual and teaching resources of the University at large. The new Science in a Changing World (SICW) track addresses issues of scientific literacy that are indispensible in today's world. The reviewers seemed very much in favor of expanding the SICW track and more actively involving other faculty from across the institution within it. This would help add to the instructional resources within the program. They saw multiple course delivery options as responsive to student needs and as potentially helping to increase student enrollment. In that regard, continuing to deepen a relationship with the University College (UC) by developing online courses would assist in the financial management of the program and its acquisition of additional faculty resources. However, the reviewers cautioned about the potential quality control issues and marginalization of a program offered entirely online or solely through University College.

Conclusions

The CCT program has a history of small numbers of applicants and relatively low completion rates. Offering the CCT programs online through the University College may help with student recruitment and retention. This is the second AQUAD review conducted of a C&I program with fairly small student numbers, the other being LTET. CCT seems to be the stronger of the two programs. Perhaps combining CCT and the LTET degree program would strengthen the

curriculum and enhance the instructional resources available for both programs. This is an idea for the faculty in these two program and the C&I department to explore.

The reviewers recommended that the CCT program be nurtured as it is one of the few programs across the country specifically focusing on critical and creative thinking. The location of the CCT program within the University is an important consideration so that resources can be leveraged to support its programming efforts and to make its multidisciplinary perspective visible across the institution. C&I will need to discuss its ability to nurture CCT as one of its curriculum and budgetary priorities. CCT faculty suggested alternative locations for the program. Options for consideration include moving CCT to the Honors College, University College, or the Leadership in Education Department. If approved, the new School for Social Development and Inclusion might be another alternative. The Honors College, at present, is proposed as undergraduate only and thus, does not seem like an appropriate home for CCT. University College is already providing some resources to the program and may be willing to provide more if online courses indeed attract more applicants and/or enrollments. UC may be an excellent home for the program. The advantages of C&I vs. LIE as homes for CCT within CEHD need to be discussed and the costs and benefits identified.

If CCT remains in C&I, the reciprocity agreements for faculty who teach outside of C&I or CEHD may need updating to ensure that faculty are not overtaxed with joint teaching commitments and that there is an equitable return of resources to C&I for faculty who teach in other departments or colleges. We look forward to working on the issues raised in the AQUAD review with the CCT faculty, the C&I Department, and other potential homes for CCT.