

Annual report to CAPS & Graduate Studies, 2014-15

Critical & Creative Thinking Graduate Program

(including Science in a Changing World graduate track)

by Peter Taylor, Program Director, 5 June 2015

Preamble

CCT is a small graduate program with matriculated student numbers hovering in the mid 30s. It has always been able to offer a wide range of electives by enrollments of students from other programs, in recent years, the Learning, Teaching and Educational Transformation (LTET) M.Ed. program and the Honors College. This academic year course enrollments from LTET declined, first with licensure changes for the Applied Behavioral Analysis students within LTET and then with the Chair of Curriculum & Instruction closing admissions to LTET. A new BA-MA (accelerated Masters) program was approved this year, which may eventually expand enrollment of Honors students. CCT research courses will be listed in the offerings for the new Transnational, Cultural and Community Studies graduate programs. A proposed doctoral program in partnership with MassArt was put on hold in the spring, but may be revived in due course. Until these new partnerships bear fruit, the Program is making adjustments, such as lowering the frequency of some courses.

Overarching Goals for '14-15

- A. Support the intellectual, professional, and personal development of CCT and other students, through teaching, advising, mentoring, a coherent program of study, and community building that extends to include alums.
- B. Attract applicants to CCT and advise them through to matriculation.
- C. Establish sustainable, non-exploitative operations and planning.

Numbers

Since the last annual report (i.e., from June '14 – May '15):

The Program has served 36 matriculated students (34 M.A., 2 Certificate), including 6 new M.A. matriculants and 1 readmit. 6 M.A. student graduated; 4 others have completed all course work but not their capstone; 2 graduated with a Certificate (including one student who had been an M.A. student). 3 students lapsed as active students, leaving 32 continuing students.

Through regular, online, other CAPS, and cross-listed sections, CCT instructors served 183 course registrations in CCT and SICW courses, including cross-listings, and a cross-campus Women's Studies course, amounting to a 16% decrease from the previous year.

Notable changes or successes

- A. Because the majority of students now take the Program from a distance, CCT has created an effective mode of instruction that combine a face-to-face group with students joining through google hangout. The capstone class (1 local; 7 from a distance) formed a strong, supportive community. To include all students in the CCT community, the regular monthly evening events (including start-of-semester orientation) continue to allow online participation. The GPD and Assistant Director, Jeremy Szteiter, advised all current and prospective students, which included responding to inquiries, new student interviews, end-of-semester check-ins with online students, and mid-program check-ins.

- B. Discussions among the core faculty led to fine-tuning of the stated “rationale for a distinct Masters and Certificate program of study in Critical & Creative Thinking (CCT) [namely] that an explicit and sustained focus on learning and applying ideas and tools in critical thinking, creative thinking, and reflective practice allows students involved in a wide array of professions and endeavors to develop clarity and confidence to make deep changes in their learning, teaching, work, activism, research, and artistry. CCT instructors introduce diverse ideas and tools, and, at the same time, serve as models of teaching and coaching students in areas beyond the instructors' comfort and competency while building supportive settings for their own cross-disciplinary research and engagement projects. In the same spirit, CCT graduates are able to serve as guides—to their own students, colleagues, community members—and to themselves—in taking the time it takes to change our work, learning and lives.” The revised text, underlined, is intended to emphasize the role of CCT graduate as guide in the ongoing process of personal and professional change.
- C. A search for a 50% faculty member, to cover the teaching of retiring faculty member Carol Smith as well as have an active presence in activities and forums through which attention could be drawn to CCT course offerings and degree tracks, was successful. Orin Davis has been bringing up-to-date research and new perspectives into the courses he is teaching.

Challenges

- A. Continue as indicated under A in *Notable changes or successes*.
- B. Application numbers need to increase in order to reduce the vulnerability to changes in partnerships mentioned in the Preamble. New avenues may emerge through the networks of the new faculty member. Recruitment continues to be challenging in a world where applicants find CCT but not through any systematic routes and the celebration of innovation and virality eclipses the slower, reflective approach to change fostered by the Program (see <http://cct.wikispaces.umb.edu/testimonials>).
- C. Recruitment outreach and cultivating of partnerships is constrained by another sense in which CCT is a small program, namely, administrative resources being limited to the GPD and assistant GPD (a full-time teaching professional staff member) and a ¼ time graduate assistantship. It became evident during the year that the new 50% position needed to be 100% to overcome the very real constraints of this person’s split institutional and geographical locations and allow the apprenticing needed for there to be a meaningful possibility of rotation of the GPD role. This is not to be, so the challenge is to tailor efforts to the resources, protecting 1/3 of the GPD’s work-time for research and writing (especially in the crucial winter and mid-summer periods for grant applications).

Other Program Successes

1. The Inter-college Seminar on Humanities and Sciences continued in the fall, hosted by CCT with support from CAPS, <http://sicw.wikispaces.umb.edu/ISHS>.
2. The GPD chaired an external review for a proposed M.A. in Critical and Creative Thinking at the University of Nebraska and gave a keynote talk on teaching and assessing critical thinking to a meeting of Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment.
3. The first M.A. graduate in the Science in a Changing World graduate track, Rhoda Maurer, was appointed Director of Horticulture at the Cornell University Plantations, in

part because she promoted a collaborative model for leading the Plantations to connect with the public and address environmental change.

4. Orin Davis gave a TEDx talk, Help Yourself to Self Help, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZrw78Qcdek>
5. Peter Taylor assembled the innovations in online education made by him and the Program. These may be grouped under the umbrella of expanding access—expanding the range of influences on the students’ learning and expanding access to the learning materials from courses (<http://wp.me/plgwfa-FQ>).

Additional information requested by Graduate Studies

Enrollment Information

No systematic changes in our acceptance and matriculation numbers over the last three years (see *Numbers* above).

CCT projects growth in matriculants, through the BA-MA program and recruitment of applicants who would have joined the LTET program (see <http://bit.ly/CCTTE>). However, numbers in CCT courses may not increase (see *Preamble*).

Program Information

On orientation and support, see A under *Notable changes or successes*

Intern and practicum experiences are supported through three research and engagement courses—CrCrTh 688, 692, 693—the last two being required pre-capstone courses.

No plans to increase the # of assistantships for our graduate students from external sources.

On administrative support, see C under *Challenges*.

Graduation and Post-Graduation Information

8 students graduated in 2014-2015; see *Numbers*

Post-graduation plans of 2015 graduates:

Masters and Certificate Graduates	Number of Graduates
Are continuing current employment	7 of 8
Have found a new job that makes use of their graduate education	1 of 8

Student and Program Achievements:

Program recognitions, awards, and/or rankings for 2014-2015: --

Significant student achievements in 2014-15: See #3 under *Other Program Successes*.

Program’s 2-3 greatest achievements in 2014-2015: see *Notable changes or successes*

Program’s 2-3 biggest challenges: see *Preamble* and *Challenges*

Program’s 2-3 most important goals for 2015-2016: see *Overarching Goals for '14-15*