

*Composition  
& Applied Linguistics*

---

**CAL Teacher Mentoring Program**  
Annual Report  
Academic Year 2019-2020

Prepared by Dr. Matthew Vetter  
Assistant Professor of English  
CAL Mentoring Program Coordinator  
Composition and Applied Linguistics Doctoral Program  
Department of English  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Document Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About the CAL Teacher Mentoring Program</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Goals of the CAL Teacher Mentoring Program</i>	3
<i>Mentoring Program Overview</i>	3
<i>The CAL Teacher Mentoring Program Features</i>	5
<i>Initiatives and Transition Year in 2018-2019</i>	6
<i>Large Group Meetings</i>	7
<b>About the CAL Mentoring Program Participants</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Teaching Associates and Temporary Faculty who are CAL Students</i>	8
<i>About Our Mentors</i>	8
<i>About CAL Mentoring Coordinator</i>	9
<b>Assessment of the 2018-2019 CAL Mentoring Program</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>12</b>

## Document Summary

This document details the efforts, experiences, and program details for the Composition and Applied Linguistics (CAL) Doctoral Program's Teacher Mentoring Program for the 2019-2020 year. The CAL Mentoring Program is designed for Teaching Associates (TAs) and Temporary Faculty (TFs) who are current CAL doctoral students teaching LSE classes (specifically, ENG 100: Basic Writing, ENG 101: Composition I, and ENG 202: Composition II).

This report includes an overview and goals of the program, a description of the components of the mentoring program, a summary of TAs and TFs experiences and development as scholar/teachers, a description of our mentors and their expertise, and an assessment of the mentoring program. This serves as Dr. Vetter's first mentoring program report, as he took over the position from Dr. Dana Driscoll and became head mentor in the fall of 2019.

## About the CAL Teacher Mentoring Program

### *Goals of the CAL Teacher Mentoring Program*

The following are the Goals for the CAL Teacher Mentoring Program:

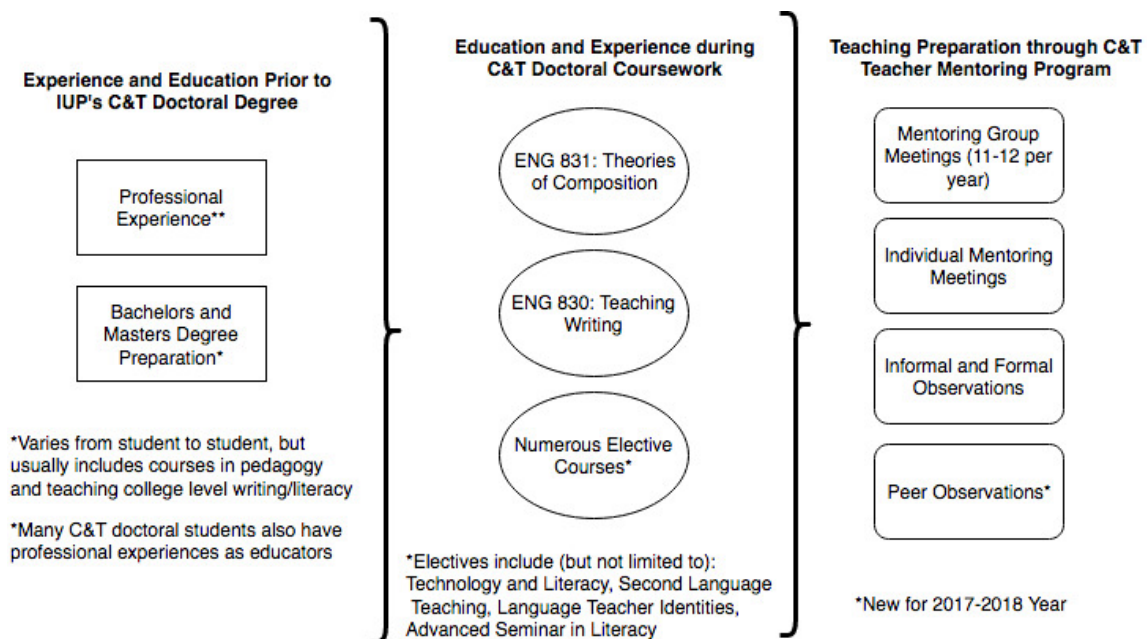
- To prepare high quality teachers of English, composition, and language learning that can adapt their teaching skills to a wide variety of settings
- To support the development of TAs and TFs as effective teacher-scholars through reflective practice
- To support and facilitate one-on-one mentoring relationships between English department faculty, CAL Faculty, and TAs and TFs
- To encourage TAs and TFs to be student-centered, engaged teachers who provide effective instruction to Liberal Studies English students
- To prepare TAs and TFs to be competitive on the job market by offering diverse and meaningful teaching opportunities including through Basic Writing, Composition I, Composition II, and multilingual writer sections
- To build upon CAL coursework to continue to develop teaching persona, teaching philosophy, and apply research-supported best practices to the classroom
- To create a space for conversations and support for immediate teaching challenges and long-term teacher development

### *Mentoring Program Overview*

The Composition and Applied Linguistics Teacher Mentoring Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania has a long history of supporting teachers as they develop comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and research-based understandings of first- and second-language writing instruction. The CAL Mentoring program represents a key feature of our doctoral program in Composition and Applied Linguistics.

Since the time of our program’s founding, graduate studies in CAL focused on developing teacher scholars prepared to teach L1 and L2 writers in diverse settings. After two years of doctoral level coursework that offers TAs and TFs research-supported best practices for teaching writing, TAs and TFs are guided in this work by faculty mentors who are experts in the fields of Composition and Applied Linguistics and supported by the year-long mentoring program led by a Mentoring Coordinator who is a CAL faculty member with expertise in composition pedagogy and writing research. The CAL Teacher Mentoring Program provides TAs and TFs with key professional development in teaching including creating meaningful and engaging classes using research-supported practices, developing their identities as teachers, developing innovative course designs and lesson plans, troubleshooting issues that arise in classes, and having an overall support network for their teaching.

The following is a graphic that details the professional preparation TAs and TFs have prior to their joining the mentoring program:



We offer LSE students high quality, student-centered instruction through supporting TFs and TAs continued education, mentoring, and support. Further, the mentoring program directly addresses the CAL program goal of supporting teacher professional development and supports CAL students’ ability to teach writing in a wide variety of settings.

Finally, our program also provides the critically necessary professional teaching experience for our graduates, allowing them to be marketable to a wide variety of teaching positions. This year, five of our graduating TAs and TFs who were completing their dissertations gained full-time academic jobs (two tenure line, three full time continuing, and one ¾ time), in part, thanks to their experience teaching in this program.

### *The CAL Teacher Mentoring Program Features*

The CAL Mentoring program offers a number of support structures for TAs and TFs. These features include:

**One on One Mentoring with Expert Faculty:** Each TA and TF in the program is paired up with an experienced English Department Faculty member each semester (mentors change from fall to spring semesters to ensure mentees are exposed to a variety of expertise and teaching approaches). Mentoring activities during the term include syllabus and course design feedback and support, formal and informal observations by mentors, small group meetings, and one-on-one meetings. Mentors share teaching materials, teaching strategies, offer constructive feedback, and an open door for TAs and TFs during their time in the program. Review of the LSE Manual and meetings between the Head Mentor and Faculty Mentors ensure consistency in mentoring experiences from semester to semester.

**Pre-Semester Syllabus and Course Feedback:** Prior to the start of each term, faculty mentors work with TAs and TFs to develop their syllabus and course schedules for the upcoming semester. This pre-semester syllabus work includes conversations and direct feedback on course material drafts.

**Group Mentoring Meetings:** TAs, TFs, Mentors, and the CAL Mentoring Coordinator regularly to engage in large and small group discussions about teaching, discuss various research-supported teaching approaches, and talk about teaching as a professional activity. Experienced TAs, TFs, and mentors are asked to lead selected mentoring meetings and select topics for meetings based on direct needs in the classroom.

**Mentor Support and Training:** New faculty mentors are supported by the CAL Mentoring Coordinator, Dr. Matt Vetter, and given additional training and materials for their role. The Mentoring Coordinator meets individually and in groups with mentors, updates and engages in frequent informal check-ins with mentors and mentees about mentoring relationships.

**Mentor Observations:** TAs and TFs are observed a minimum of twice a term by their mentor. Each of these observations concludes with a one-on-one meeting discussing the observation where mentors offer feedback and support. This means, that each year, each TA and TF has multiple opportunities from multiple mentors offering direct feedback on their classroom teaching.

**Participation in the LSE Orientation.** TAs and TFs are required to attend the Liberal Studies English (LSE) Orientation in August each year (organized by LSE Director Dr. Lynn Shelly where they are introduced to the LSE program). At the LSE orientation, CAL has a mentoring meeting where the CAL Mentoring Coordinator covers the program and all attendees set goals collaboratively for the coming year. CAL Mentors and the Mentor Coordinator support the LSE Orientation program by offering workshops on a variety of topics as part of orientation.

**Coordinating Required Departmental Evaluation and Observation.** The CAL Mentoring Coordinator works with mentors and TAs and TFs to coordinate formal contractual observations, department files, and evaluations for all TAs and TFs as per the collective bargaining agreement (CBA). This includes developing timelines, instructions, forms, and working with CAL Teachers to prepare their departmental files for submission to the Dean's office.

**Coordination of Yearly TA/TF Hiring.** The Coordinator of the CAL Mentoring Program has overseen the CAL committee hiring TAs and TFs for the last four years (beginning in 2016-2017). This includes communicating with potential TAs/TFs about guidelines for applications; holding an informational meeting about teaching positions; and answering questions about the positions. In accordance with English Department policy, the hiring committee reviewed all applications. Dr. Vetter, the LSE Director Dr. Lynn Shelly, and the former Head Mentor Dr. Dana Driscoll read all applications and carried out individual interviews with all students applying to the program for the first time.

**Support for Teaching Basic Writing, MLW sections, and Branch Campus Support:** TAs and TFs are regularly asked to teach sections of ENG 100: Basic Writing, Multilingual writer sections of ENG 101 and ENG 202, and teach 100, 101, or 202 at branch campuses. While these teaching experiences represent outstanding opportunities for our CAL instructors and increase their job marketability, they also require additional mentoring support. The CAL Mentoring program has been offering specific support, in the form of optional meetings, handbook material, books and resources, and recruiting faculty mentors with experience teaching these sections that can be paired with TAs and TFs. Further, material on addressing diverse populations is built into ENG 830 to anticipate our students continuing to teach diverse writers in a variety of settings.

**Peer Observations:** Peer mentoring has been part of our program since the 2017-2018 year. Each TA/TF has the opportunity to learn not only from mentors but also from each other through observation and conversation about their teaching. Peer observations took place once a semester, where pairs of peers observe each other's classes, meet, and discuss their observations and offer feedback.

**Other Support as Needed.** Mentors additionally perform a range of roles in the lives of CAL Doctoral students including providing additional teaching support, writing letters of recommendation, and providing feedback and advice for ongoing teaching challenges.

### *Initiatives and Transition Year in 2019-2020*

The 2019-2020 AY marks Dr. Vetter's first year as CAL Mentoring Coordinator. Thus, his goal this year was continue to develop a pool of high-quality mentors and CAL teachers, to diligently serve LSE students, and to become accustomed to the role. Dr. Dana Driscoll's support was essential to this final aspect. In addition to this goal, Dr. Vetter also worked to provide more programming related to language diversity awareness (for both LSE students and TA/TFs), especially given the unique demographic of CAL students – where many of

our graduate student instructors are International and multilingual. Thus, these initiatives included all of the above, as well as the following:

- Developing a robust series of TA/TF led workshops for group meetings on a variety of TA/TF selected topics; working with TAs/TFs in how to do professional development workshops and offering them pre-workshop feedback
- Coordinating with the LSE Committee (and serving as a member on the committee) to better support TAs and TFs with online teaching and other initiatives
- Due to COVID-19 and ensuing transition of all LSE courses to remote delivery, coordinating additional support and resources for TA/TFs in the form of a shared resource document, technical support, and additional large- and small-group mentoring meetings.

### *Large Group Meetings*

Our mentoring program includes large group meetings, where TAs, TFs, and mentors are able to interact and learn from each other. Meetings last 1.5 hours and happen approximately every 3 weeks during the regular semester. This year's meetings were led by TAs, TFs, and Mentors working together. This year, all 10 of our TAs and TFs were able to offer their expertise in workshop form, gaining additional valuable professional development experience. Here is a list of our meetings and our topics, the majority of which were facilitated by graduate instructors and mentors.

1. **August 27:** Classroom Management and Engagement
2. **October 1:** Incorporating Technology and Working with D2L in LSE Courses
3. **September 6: Identity as Pedagogy:** Deconstructing Language Myths in the Classroom (with Cristina Sanchez-Martin)
4. **September 24:** Special Mentoring Meeting on Title IX (with Elise Glenn)
5. **November 5:** Mental Health and Learning Disabilities
6. **November 19:** Responding and Working with Feedback
7. **December 3:** Course Planning for Spring Semester
8. **January 28:** Teaching Reading Skills and LSE Program Assessment Overview (with Mary Stewart)
9. **February 11:** Understanding Pennsylvania Students; Facilitating Collaborative Learning
10. **March 17:** Restructuring and Revising LSE Courses in Response to COVID-19
11. **March 24:** Moving to Online Instruction Meeting 2
12. **April 28:** Making the Most of Student Conferences; Year-Long Wrap Up; Final Grades Information

Workshops were highly successful and helped our TAs and TFs think deeply and critically about themselves as teachers, allows them to gain direct professional experience in faculty development, and contributes positively to their identity and professionalism as teachers.

## About the CAL Mentoring Program Participants

### *Teaching Associates and Temporary Faculty who are CAL Students*

TAs and TFs contribute much to the life of the English Department, the LSE Program, and the broader University. This section summarizes some of their work here at IUP and beyond.

**Teaching and Service.** Eight TAs and 3 TFs<sup>1</sup> taught approximately IUP students enrolled in ENG 100: Basic Writing, ENG 101: Composition I or ENG 202: Composition II in the 2019-2020AY. These sections included a number of specialized multilingual writer sections, developmental writer sections, and online sections. While TA's and TF's served as instructors for LSE courses, TAs and TFs were active participants in department service, particularly service tied to LSE teaching. Their service to LSE is considerable and includes: Writing Center workshops, LSE Assessment, LSE Committee work, and MA TESOL Assessment Committee work. In addition, TAs and TFs also participated professional academic conferences on topics related to their teaching.

**TAs and TFs as Teacher-Scholars.** One of our primary goals IUP is to embrace the Teacher-Scholar model. Therefore, we are proud to report the efforts of our TAs and TFs this year in cultivating connections between their LSE teaching experiences and their research. 80% of TAs and TFs in 2019-2020 indicated a direct connection between their dissertation and their classroom teaching. Dissertation topics of these students include such areas as “Collaborative Multimodal Composing: College Students’ Perceptions and Writing Processes”; “Translingual Turn in Composition: Instructor and Student Perceptions of Translanguaging in Writing”; “Video Responses: Impacts on MLW Student Writing”; and “The Effect of Second Language Learners’ Identity on Their Behavior Toward Collaborative Learning” among others. Additionally, this year TAs and TFs published two articles on teaching in major journals in the field and won a number of awards related to their teaching and teacher-scholarship: including the CAL Professional Accomplishments in Scholarship Award; CCCC Scholars for the Dream Award; IUP Graduate Research Grant; and CAL Promising Future Research in Literacy Award.

### *About Our Mentors*

Six English Department faculty served as CAL mentors for the 2019-2020 AY offered a tremendous body of teaching experience and knowledge to mentees in the program. Mentors were drawn from the faculty of both undergraduate and graduate programs in the English department. Mentor responsibilities include:

- Offering comprehensive feedback for syllabi and major assignments prior to the start of the semester
  - Observing multiple classes for primary and secondary mentees
  - Engaging in pre-and post-observation meetings with TAs/TFs
  - Facilitating department evaluation procedures and helping TAs/TFs navigate departmental evaluation:
-



- Administering course evaluations for primary mentees
- Conducting and writing observation reports for primary and secondary mentees
- Drafting departmental evaluations for primary mentees
- Regular mentoring and support of TAs and TFs, including but not limited to teaching material feedback, lesson plan feedback, and helping TAs/TFs navigate unexpected student situations
- Meeting regularly with TAs/TFs to discuss teaching one-on-one and in small groups
- Attending group mentoring sessions
- Contributing expertise and presentations for individual and group mentoring sessions.

Mentors in the program are active scholars and researchers, regularly presenting and publishing on topics related to the teaching of writing as well as conducting their own classroom research. All of the mentors in the 2019-2020 program have a scholarly interest in teaching, learning, or composition studies and actively present at conferences, write articles, and/or conduct classroom research on writing pedagogy. Further, all of the mentors have a scholarly interest in mentoring and supporting new teachers of writing.

**Fall 2019 Mentors:** Dr. Matt Vetter; Dr. Lynn Shelly, Dr. Dan Weinstein

**Spring 2020 Mentors:** Dr. Matt Vetter; Dr. Lynn Shelly, Dr. Laurel Black

### *About CAL Mentoring Coordinator*

The CAL Mentoring Coordinator oversees all aspects of the CAL mentoring program including:

- Professional preparation of TAs/TFs
- Program assessment and annual reporting
- Pairing mentors and CAL teachers
- Coordinating departmental observation and evaluation procedures for TAs/TFs
- Overseeing initial hiring committee for CAL TAs and TFs
- Developing and revising program manuals
- Program-based communication
- Scheduling and leading group meetings
- Working with mentors to develop mentoring strategies, supporting mentors in mentoring challenges, articulating the role of the mentors in mentoring program
- Serving on the LSE Committee and/or English Leadership Council (split between the CAL and L&C Mentoring directors)

**Dr. Matthew Vetter** joined IUP's Composition and Applied Linguistics Doctoral Program in the Fall of 2016 as an Assistant Professor. A scholar in writing, rhetoric, and digital humanities, his research leverages technology and innovative pedagogy to create meaningful connections between academic and public communities. Vetter has published over a dozen articles and book chapters related to writing studies, information literacy, and composition pedagogy. Dr. Vetter contributes to open-access projects as an associate editor at *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* and senior co-editor of *Writing Spaces*, a peer-

reviewed, OER textbook project for college-level writing studies courses. Dr. Vetter is a veteran instructor with the Wiki Education Program, and has been teaching Wikipedia-based assignments since 2011. With financial support from the Wikimedia Foundation, he has also planned and facilitated numerous Wikipedia Edit-a-thons aimed at tackling the encyclopedia's gender and racial biases. As a researcher, educator, and higher education leader, Vetter is committed to sponsoring open and equitable educational practices that challenge members of the academy to become agents of public advocacy and social change.

## Assessment of the 2018-2019 CAL Mentoring Program

An Assessment survey delivered at the end of the 2019-2020 AY revealed a largely successful program with positive feedback for this year's mentoring program. TAs and TFs found the program helped them improve their teaching (all TAs/TFs agree/strongly agree), all have indicated that they had new strategies and techniques for their classroom, all felt supported by their peers and mentors, and all respondents found mentoring a good use of their time. 100% of respondents chose "Strongly Agree" to the following statements: "I feel supported in my teaching" and "Dr. Vetter was an effective head mentor."

## Challenges and Concerns

While previous assessments conducted by Dr. Dana Driscoll noted challenges related to building supportive relationships between mentors and mentees, this year's assessment did not reveal this as an issue. However, graduate instructors did share other challenges and areas for improvement, including the following:

- Need for sharing of more pedagogical materials such as lesson plans, assignments, and schedules.
- Need for more exposure to teaching demonstrations.
- Large-group meetings tended to try to cover too much materials and didn't allow for focused, in-depth discussions.
- Room for more collaboration with Literature & Criticism Program.
- The desire to work with the same mentor for both semesters (as opposed to alternating).

An additional concern, and one that is a hold-over from Dr. Driscoll's time as head mentor, is the need to make more connections between the Teacher Mentoring Program and CAL's Placement & Professionalization Program. As noted by Dr. Driscoll in previous reports, the job market for our graduates is becoming extremely competitive (notwithstanding concerns over COVID-19's effects on higher education). Furthermore, available positions are increasingly teaching-oriented rather than research/teaching/service. To help make connections between placement, Dr. Vetter proposed a Teacher-Scholar Presentation Series at the beginning of this academic year. The concept of this program was simple: give CAL mentees an opportunity to professionally present scholarship-informed teaching practices to an audience of their peers. However, due to a lack of interest from TAs and TFs, this program did not succeed in the 2019-2020 AY. Given this, other programs will need to be

explored to help student-teachers continue to professionalize in terms of their scholar-teacher identity and experience.

### *Positive Feedback*

TAs and TFs shared a lot of positive feedback about the mentoring program in the assessment survey. The quotes below are a representative sample.

“I loved the mentoring program and feel that I've made the most gains in my teaching effectiveness by being part of this program. I met with my mentor this spring about once a month. During those meetings we informally chatted about different issues we saw in our classes. Those meetings lasted about 1 hour to 1.5 hours. Honestly, I think those meetings could've been shortened or more focused. Sometimes it did turn into one on one discussion between the instructor and mentor while everyone listened.”

“In the past academic year, besides the large CAL program mentoring meetings, I also joined in a small meeting with my own mentor, Dr. Weinstein last semester and Dr. Shelly this semester, about once every 2-3 weeks. When necessary, I requested a one-on-one meet with my mentor for new issues. In our meetings, we discussed everything that came up from our classrooms, including but not limited to, class management, absence or no response from students, grading etc. The small meeting each lasted around one hour, and the length of the personal meeting took 10-30 minutes, contingent upon the nature of the things to be discussed. All the meetings provided great support for my teaching. Despite my many years of university-level experiences, I have always felt these mentoring meetings are resourceful and productive. Thanks to the contributions of Drs. Vetter, Shelly, and Black!”

“Those meetings were very productive and helpful. On average we met twice a semester. Usually our meeting starts with the mentor checking in with each one of her/his mentees. Then the mentor discussed any issues or questions that any of the mentees have. The mentor also provides any updates from the department or the university and help us be informed about the latest. The meetings took about an hour on average.”

“I participated in the large-group mentoring meeting once a month, and I met with my assigned mentor (Dr. Vetter) and another graduate instructor at least once a month. After Dr. Vetter observed my teaching, he met with me to discuss my observed class for 30-60 minutes. I really appreciate these large-group, small-group, and individual meetings. Personally, I enjoyed the individual meetings most, because these meetings focused on the lessons that Dr. Vetter had observed, so we could pinpoint specific things that I myself might not have noticed, or something that I had done on purpose and wanted to gain feedback on. In short, I enjoyed the customized nature of such meetings. I also like the small-group meetings when we discussed general challenges and trouble-shoot specific concerns, such as particular students at risk. Thank you, Dr. Vetter!”

## Conclusion

Despite the disruptive impact of COVID-19 during the spring term, 2019-2020 was successful year for the CAL Mentoring program. It is clear that this program offers incalculable outcomes for all stakeholders involved: LSE students are exposed to diverse, energetic, and innovative teachers; CAL doctoral students gain professional experience and community support; and CAL Mentors share their experience and learn from a professionalization community. Thank you for your support of this program.