

English Graduate Studies  
Placement & Professionalization  
Annual Report  
Academic Year 2019-2020

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## Document Summary

This document describes the English Graduate Placement & Professionalization Program—coordinated by Dr. Matthew and Dr. Melanie Holm—for the 2019-2020 Academic year. In describing the program, this document reports on efforts and initiatives towards supporting English graduate students with job placement workshops, professionalization, and support.

## About the Job Placement Program

Securing an academic job in higher education, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, is a multi-year process that requires tremendous support and professional development on the part of the program. Throughout the US and beyond, it is now a standard practice for doctoral programs to provide such support for their master's or doctoral students nearing graduation. Without this support, students are ill-prepared and ill-performing on the academic and alt-ac job market, especially when competing with students in other programs who have such support. Further, this program is necessary because most of the professionalizing work for academic job market preparation must take place after coursework has ended and when students are less than a year away from graduation. Establishing this program, then, offers professional development and job search support necessary to successfully place our students in permanent academic careers.

The English department's Job Placement Program focuses on helping graduate students in the Composition and Applied Linguistics (CAL) PhD Program; the Literature and Criticism (L&C) PhD program; the MA in TESOL program; and the MA in Composition and Literature program prepare for successful employment after graduation by examining both the academic and non-academic (alt-ac) job markets. Each of our graduate programs represents separate job markets with separate disciplinary expectations, and has specific requirements for job seekers. The two placement coordinators oversee the job program and provide individual disciplinary support to doctoral candidates as they prepare for the job market or actively search.

AY 2019-2020 is the fourth year of the English Department Job Placement Program. Dr. Todd Thompson served as the inaugural Placement Coordinator in the 2015-2016 Academic Year. Dr. Dana Driscoll and Dr. Melanie Holm served as joint Coordinators from fall 2016 to spring 2019. Dr. Matthew Vetter replaced Dr. Driscoll in the 2019-2020 year and continued to work with Dr. Holm.

The overall goal for the program is to prepare graduate students to secure full-time employment or secure a doctoral position after graduation through:

1. Increasing student's marketability to a wide variety of professional and disciplinary academic positions
2. Familiarizing students with professional documents, procedures, and activities involved in the academic job market
3. Assisting students in crafting professional employment documents

4. Mentoring students in interview and presentation techniques
5. Aiding students in developing scholarly identity and a marketable scholarly brand
6. Enhancing student professionalization at all levels of the programs
7. Enhancing the academic culture of the graduate program
8. Offering and sharing a range of professionalizing opportunities
9. Assisting students in identifying non-academic positions that maximize their doctoral skill-sets.
10. Offer discipline-specific knowledge for job markets in applied linguistics, TESOL, rhetoric and composition, writing centers, and literature

## Workshops

We have implemented a series of workshops that help job seekers prepare for the academic job market, carefully timed for the disciplines within English while also assisting them in developing professional identities that will success across different employment landscapes. Typically, the formal academic job market begins to list positions in the fall with deadlines ranging from late October to early January. Previous and current Placement Coordinators designed and developed all workshops collaboratively.

### 2019-2020 Schedule of Workshops

1. **August 29th – Scholarly Identity and Professionalization, Part I: Understanding the Profession and Your Place in it (Separate)** Developing scholarly identity, understanding the profession, the importance of sub-field and specialization, the link between your dissertation/publications and potential jobs you are interested in, cultivating expertise
2. **September 5th – From Course Papers to Publications Exploring avenues for publication (Separate)** The difference between course papers and articles, managing reviewer feedback, writerly ethos, publication process
3. **September 12th – Making the Most of Your Conference Experience (Joint)** Finding CFPs, writing abstracts, networking, presentation etiquette, informal and formal mentoring, getting involved
4. **Throughout November – Mock Interviews (Individually Scheduled)** We will setup mock interviews with all students who have been regularly attending job group
5. **November 7th – Grantwriting Workshop (Joint)** Offers a crash course in academic grant writing, both for graduate students and also for post-graduation professional academic grants
6. **November 21st – Interview Strategies (Joint)** This workshop will cover how to perform well on any kind of initial interviews: Face to Face MLA/Conference interviews, Video/Skype interviews, and phone interviews. We'll also include a discussion of appropriate attire. This workshop will also cover how to conduct yourself professionally at a campus visit. Since campus visit season will start before

we are back in session, we will also briefly discuss job offers and negotiation strategies

7. **January 23rd – Scholarly Identity and Professionalization, Part II: Establishing Your Scholarly Identity and Preparing for the Job Market (Separate)** Focusing on your scholarly identity, selling yourself, letters of recommendation (how to ask), setting up your dossier, and how to use the MLA and other job lists, and how to organize your job search
8. **January 30th – CV Workshop and Intro to the Job Search (Joint)** This workshop offers information on how to craft an effective CV and how to search/use the MLA job list and other job lists
9. **February 6<sup>th</sup> – Letter of Application Workshop (Joint)** This workshop will discuss the letter of application: genre, purpose, content, organization, and tailoring letters for specific jobs
10. **February 13th – Supplementary Documents for Applications (Separate)** This workshop will cover the preparation of the following documents: dissertation abstract/summary, writing sample, teaching philosophy, diversity statements, and administrative philosophies
11. **February 20th – Teaching Demonstrations and Job Talks (Separate)** We will setup mock interviews with all students who have been regularly attending job group
12. **April 2<sup>nd</sup> – Alternatives to Academic Careers (Alt-Ac) (Joint)** Other options and opportunities for professional work, preparing a resume, branding and tailoring skills, building additional skillsets
13. **April 9th – Preparing for the Job Market (Separate)** Timeline for the Fall Job Market, preparing materials, conversation with this year's job seekers
14. **April 23<sup>th</sup> – Your Professional Self in a New Position (Joint)** Negotiating academic politics, being a good colleague, how to integrate into a new department, finding time for writing, attending to work life balance

## Online Accessibility of Workshops and Materials and Google Drive

Building on improvements and changes made in 2017-2018, we continue to offer hybrid participation options for all workshops by making them accessible via online videoconferencing (using the Zoom application). This allows students who are not physically present at IUP's campus to still attend the live workshops. Further, the online recordings can be reviewed at any time by students; this allows those at IUP or elsewhere whose schedules do not permit them to attend to still view the materials. This has been particularly helpful to

students whose schedules do not permit them to attend the workshops, for students who are no longer at IUP, or those who are summers-only students.

In 2016-2017, we established a Google Drive folder of sample materials and presentations; we updated and expanded the use of this folder in 2017-2018, and in 2019-2020. We have no way of tracking access statistics on this folder, but over 96 students in both programs have requested and have been given access. Our online archive contains: multiple high-quality samples of job search materials for both programs (including sample job letters, CVs, teaching portfolios, and statements on diversity and inclusion), PowerPoints of all workshops, and additional readings and other materials.

## Securing Internal Funding

In late spring, Dr. Holm and Dr. Vetter received an ACPAC Technological Innovation and Exploration Fund grant for their proposed project "Meeting Owl Audio/Video Conferencing Tool for Remote and Distributed Meetings in English Graduate Programs' Professionalization."

The ACPAC funds will be used to purchase the OWL Office Starter Pack, which includes three audio-video conferencing hardware tools to facilitate remote, distributed, and hybrid face-to-face conference meetings. The Meeting Owl tool provides an inclusive video conferencing experience with 360-degree video and audio for increased presence and interaction. Furthermore, Meeting OWL can identify and automatically activate mic and camera on a speaker in a conference room, thus facilitating increased vocal and gestural participation in conference meetings. This hardware tool will allow Vetter and Holm to continue their current strategic goal of increasing engagement in online/distance programs by improving the communicative quality of video-conference workshop meetings.

## Attendance at Workshops

Workshop attendance continues to be difficult to quantify, but of the 14 sessions offered, an average of 8-12 students attended each. In addition to synchronous attendance, many students take advantage of Zoom recordings after each session. For the 2020-2021 year, Dr. Holm and Dr. Vetter are working on improving assessment methods for attendance as a strategic goal, as well as improving attendance.

**Average attendance at workshop sessions:** 8-12 students synchronously; 8-12 students asynchronously

## Individual Professional Consultations

Placement coordinators are available for one-on-one consultations each week by appointment, virtually, and during open office hours. Consultations cover a range of professional issues including crafting ambitious and attainable 5-year plans for scholarly advancement, developing a scholarly identity and scholarly branding, offering feedback

concerning strengths and weaknesses as a potential job candidate, preparation and feedback of job search materials (CV, cover letter, teaching philosophy, diversity statement, etc.), discussion of campus visits and negotiation, alternatives to academic careers, and more.

In the 2019-2020 AY, placement coordinators spent a combine average of 100 hours helping individual students with their materials, job searches, and professionalization. Admittedly, these hours are ongoing as they continue into the summer. These included in person meetings, phone or Zoom calls, support while students were on job visits, debriefing after job visits, support for negotiation, and preparation for upcoming searching.

## 2019-2020 Job Placements

We will note that radically different job markets exist for Literature and Criticism and Composition and TESOL, so placement statistics for these programs must be offered individually. We will also note that while some students in both doctoral programs have academic positions already (including many international and summer students), many workshops within the placement program are useful even to those who are not actively searching for positions.

### *Composition and Applied Linguistics*

In the 2019-2020 AY, six CAL doctoral students were engaged in full time academic job searches; all but one are AY program students. Of these six, two secured full-time teaching positions; one was offered a tenure-track position but declined. One is still in the application process. Three are pre-dissertation defense and will continue to search next year.

### *Literature and Criticism Job Placement Success*

Of the L&C students engaged in academic job searchers, four secured full-time employment. Two secured a full-time tenure track position, one a full time NTT teaching position, and one an alternate-academic position.

## Overall Assessment

Each year, we assess our program to have a sense of how many students were using the program—and what feedback we had that could improve the program. Twenty one students participating in the Job Placement Program responded.

Overall, the majority of participants (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops prepared them to conduct an academic job search; establish a professional identity (79%); build confidence about the job search (96%). Furthermore, 92% indicated that the workshops were a good use of their time.

Students who met with Dr. Holm and Dr. Vetter for individual consultations both found those meetings to be “extremely helpful.”

## Placement Program Strengths

*Survey participants were also asked to discuss the “overall strengths of the Placement Program.” A few of these responses are shared below:*

*Dr. Holm is AMAZING. When I was interviewing for a full-time instructorship position at my current University she provided me numerous support areas through not only emails (she is extremely timely at returning emails - the best!) but set up a zoom meeting and provided such valuable material for my interview and follow up. I got the job!*

*Gives us a small taste of things that future employers look for and what we need to strengthen in terms of our professional identity and materials to look attractive to employers and be competitive in the job market.*

*Guidance on detailed job app. documents that aren't discussed in classes; walkthroughs on how to search for jobs/applications online*

*I think the overall strengths of the CAL Job Placement Program are its: discussions with those who have been successful on the job market, the sharing of job materials in the CAL google folder, and Dr. Vetter thoughtful responses to questions posed by attendees.*

*I learned a lot about how my CV should be structured and how to include things I didn't originally think were qualifying materials. For example, I gave a faculty training on writing across the disciplines and did not previously list that on my CV.*

*The realistic, practical, and hands-on approach of the workshops and resources. Throughout my interview experience with Thiel College, where I accepted a TT Assistant Professor position, I discovered that from the search committee that previous candidates who were brought to campus for the job were poorly prepared, especially for the teaching demo (unfortunately, one these candidates was from IUP's CAL program). I was the 4th candidate to demonstrate a lesson to a Business & Technical writing course (yes, all candidates did their teaching demo for this one course), and students approached me at the end of my lesson to say that they hoped I would be teaching them in the Fall and that they didn't find the other candidates' lessons interesting or engaging. This is just one example of how the Job Placement Program provides early academics with the skills and tools needed to succeed. A big thank you to the Placement Coordinators and to the Graduate English programs for providing me with this invaluable program.*

*1) It provides workshops themed in line with the job application process from preparation, interview, novice faculty. 2) Provides plenty of resources beneficial to all applicants, including but not limited to: job ad updates and sample application documents. 3) is tailored to students in programs under the English department.*

## Opportunities for Improvement

Survey participants were also to provide suggestions for improving the Jobs Placement Program. Response below represent key feedback in this area.

*Focus on different academic tracks: community college, 4-year college, higher education, etc*



*More workshops addressing the job market at the moment; more workshops encouraging literature teaching (even if one is preparing for time as a TA w/ basic comp courses)...less alt-ac.*

*If possible, make the workshops be different days/times because I could not make the workshops due to work.*

*A suggestion I have is to have mock job talk/campus visit demonstration done by faculty. This demonstration could have faculty literally demonstrate a job talk/campus visit and include examples from their own experiences and what they have witnessed from candidates (good and bad) from their roles on hiring committees.*

*Understandably, the Job Placement Coordinators speak from their experiences on the job market and in navigating a professional life. Therefore, sometimes the recommendations are too narrowly focused on larger institutions like IUP with large English Departments, multiple colleges, and ample resources. I believe the Job Placement Program could be improved by including more varied experiences and advice. I know that this would require extra work, and the Placement Coordinators already do so much, but I'm sure that the numerous alumni from our programs teaching at smaller, private colleges and community colleges would be willing to "zoom in" to a workshop or submit a recording as a resource. I have attended the Placement workshops for several years, and I have always felt that this aspect of the program could be strengthened. But overall, much of the advice and many of the resources apply to all different types of institutions*

## Goals for the 2020-2021 year

1. Continue to improve and build digital resources, such as Google Drive folders with resources and recordings.
2. Improve assessment processes in order to be able to make more accurate counts of attendance and other data, especially asynchronous "views" of recordings.
3. Build "alt-ac" opportunities so that students might explore career options beyond teaching and research posts, especially in light of COVID-19 and resulting economic fall-out in higher education.
4. Invite more successful alumni to participate in Placement programming.
5. Explore options for diversifying the timing of placement sessions, to make these more accessible for students in different time zones or those otherwise unable to meet at a certain time.

## Conclusion

We thank you for your continued support of the English Department's Job Placement Program. We look forward to continuing to serve our students and support their professionalization in the coming year.