

**PROGRAM IN
PROFESSIONAL
WRITING**

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



**Kay Emmert, Co-Director
Dave Morris, Co-Director
Hilary Selznick, Associate Director
Cassidy Short, Assistant Director**

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A Note from the Co-Directors

Greetings from the Program in Professional Writing! We're excited to tell you about everything our excellent students, experienced instructors, and dedicated staff have accomplished in the 2023-24 academic year. If you're familiar with the PPW, you'll find in this report some news of interest about new courses, revised curricula, and professional development for our instructors. If you're relatively new to the PPW, welcome, and consider this report a primer that introduces you to our courses (pp. 10-12), students (p. 9), instructors (pp. 6-7), and staff (pp. 5-6).

With help from our instructors, the Technical and Professional Communication field, and our students' responsive engagement, we've spent another year innovating accessible, inclusive professional writing pedagogies that meet the needs of contemporary students and professional environments. Unsurprisingly, our instructors with help from each other and in cooperation with CITL have focused much effort on addressing Generative AI through productive pedagogy, teaching students its affordances and constraints as well as how to use it helpfully and ethically. In cooperation with ATLAS, we launched an already popular and successful course to help ATLAS interns get the most out of their internships. In research, led by our longtime instructor Andrew Moss and Carrie James of the Siebel Center for Design, a multidisciplinary team of instructors continue a long-term investigation into the emotional components of student writing in college classes. (See pp. 13-14 for more on these efforts).

Looking ahead to academic year 24-25, we're working on expanding our instructional innovations as we continue to grow the program. We have two professional development sessions planned for our instructors in fall: in September, we're hosting an expert on Generative AI in professional communication to help our instructors continue to adjust to the new technology. In spring 2025, we're holding a disability justice pedagogy workshop for writing instructors. We're also preparing revised and asynchronous versions of our BTW 250 and BTW 380 (formerly 280) courses to launch with the university's online bachelor's in liberal studies (BLS) program next year. See pp. 15-16 for more.

We're excited to continue our work this coming year, and we recognize that excellent TPC education can only happen on a campus full of students and faculty committed to the best education we can offer. Whether you're a student, faculty member, administrator, or general well-wisher, we thank you for joining us in our commitment to quality undergraduate writing education!

In solidarity,
Kay Emmert & Dave Morris

Introduction

Mission Statement

Success in the professional world—from sales management to environmental consulting—hinges on effective and flexible communication. The Program in Professional Writing (PPW) equips students to navigate the daily difficulties of understanding and being understood in the professional workplace. Now entering its thirty-fourth year, the PPW continues to execute this curricular service via pioneering scholarship, rigorous collaboration, and student-centered pedagogies. Ranging from general communication to writing for social media, the program boasts several courses expertly designed to teach students the fundamentals of technical, professional, and business communication.

“The PPW equips students to navigate the daily difficulties of understanding and being understood in the professional workplace.”

Our Values

Adaptable Professional Communication



Our courses prepare students to communicate, cooperate, and contribute in evolving global professional environments. From nonprofit grant writing to technical writing to sales management and everywhere in between, our students learn the flexible communication skills necessary to understand and be understood.

Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion



The Program in Professional Writing is committed to creating a learning environment for students that welcomes and supports diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors all identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, religion, ability, etc.) The PPW practices accessible and inclusive pedagogy that honors and celebrates difference.

Modern, Innovative Writing Pedagogy



Our highly experienced and engaged instructors keep up to date with research in Technical and Professional Communication Pedagogy. Cooperatively and individually, they leverage their own unique experiences and creativity through this field knowledge to implement creative, effective teaching practices for a diverse student body.

Who We Are

Staff

Kay Emmert, *Co-Director*



Kay Emmert (she/her) has been serving as co-director of the PPW since spring 2020, following 3 years as Associate Director. Throughout her tenure, she has dedicated herself to enhancing student retention rates and expanding course offerings to meet the evolving needs of partner programs across campus. In addition to her role in revising established courses, she designs writing curricula tailored to the specific requirements of collaborative partners campus-wide. She has partnered with the ATLAS Internship Program to design an internship success course tailored to enhance the communication skills and career-

readiness of first-time interns in LAS. Launched in fall of 2023, the course exceeded initial projections, with demand more than doubling in less than a year. She co-authored an article for the 2023 edition of *Composition Studies*, highlighting the curriculum revision processes at the intersection of contingent faculty labor, developments in writing studies, and the challenges of designing large-scale multi-section courses. Demonstrating her commitment to advancing writing program administration, Kay addressed the role of non-tenure track faculty in curriculum development at the 2023 MLA Conference as part of a CWPA panel. In 2021, she collaborated with program faculty on a grant examining the role of emotion in business writing, presenting their findings at the Writing and Well-Being Conference in 2022.

Dave Morris, *Co-Director*



Dave Morris (he/him) was co-director of the PPW from 2020-2024. He worked on curriculum assessment, course development, program communication, and long-term program growth. He has helped create and revise five BTW courses, facilitated professional development events for instructors, and co-written researched articles about reviving a professional writing program. With the PPW administration team, he won a College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Impact Award in 2021. Dave has received awards for excellence in teaching from the College of LAS in 2016, the English department in 2015, and the Undergraduate

Rhetoric Program in 2011. He's the author of *Public Religions in the Future World: Postsecularism and Utopia* (University of Georgia Press, 2021).

Hilary Selznick, *Associate Director*



Hilary Selznick (she, her) began her role as the Associate Director of the Professional Writing Program in Spring 2024. As the Associate Director, Hilary mentors and orients new and experienced BTW instructors to PPW’s business communication curriculum. In addition, she coordinates professional development workshops, designs and revises PPW courses, and assists in writing program administration. Her teaching and research focus generally on writing studies and technical communication. She recently presented her work in these areas at the 2023 *Teachers of Technical Communication Conference* and the 2024 *Rhetoric Society of America Conference*. In addition, her teaching is informed by social justice pedagogies, specifically in accessibility, inclusivity, and disability justice which is a lens she brings with her to the Professional Writing Program. She also designs workshop on accessibility and inclusive pedagogy in community and educational settings, her most recent at UIUC’s Office for Access and Equity. She is also a recipient of the 2024 English Department’s Undergraduate Teaching Award.

Cassidy Short, *Assistant Director*



Cassidy Short (she/her) joined the Program in Professional Writing as the Assistant Director in the fall of 2023. In this role, she develops, expand, and strengthens instructor resources via navigable online databases. Furthermore, she recruits, advocates for, and supports graduate instructors, while also assisting the administrative agendas of the Co-Directors. She has collaborated with the BTW program on a grant dedicated to researching alternative assessment approaches in professional writing courses. In the coming academic year, she looks forward to launching a new instructional resource site.

Our Instructors

Dedicated to rigorous collaboration and diverse pedagogical approaches, the Program in Professional Writing welcomes both specialized faculty and graduate employees among their instructional staff. These enterprising and experienced individuals all boast unique research interests, curricular frameworks, and compositional backgrounds—all of which contribute to the program’s constructive evolution. This commitment to instructor autonomy is reflected in the PPW’s orientation sequence. Following instructors’ successful orientation (often through the initial instruction of BTW 250), they then have the opportunity to revise current courses or design entirely new ones in collaboration with program directors.

Instructor Data

	Spring 2024	Fall 2023
Total Instructors	18	16
Specialized Faculty	15	14
Graduate Employees	3	2
Number of Sections	36	33
Total Instructional Units	1836	1520

Instructor Spotlights

The Program in Professional Writing considers its instructors at the center of its mission for innovation and excellent. It is these passionate, growth-minded individuals who guide or program’s development, finding new ways to meet student need while also driving their own professional development.

To reflect this devotion and enthusiasm for our instructors, we’d like to spotlight two instructors who embody our program’s spirit of growth and innovation:

Marilyn Holguin



This fall, while teaching Professional Writing online, Marilyn Holguin is collaborating with the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL) to redesign 250 as a fully asynchronous course for Spring 2025. With fifteen years of teaching experience, Marilyn has taught a variety of courses, including British literature, comedy, film studies, and composition. To encourage self-reflection throughout the revision process, she provides individualized feedback, tracking the patterns in each student's unique writing progress as part of a comprehensive portfolio. She focuses on developing assignments that encourage students to reflect on their own writing habits and rhetorical choices, aiming to build their confidence as writers.

One of Marilyn's most rewarding teaching experiences occurred when she relocated to Haining, China, to join UIUC’s joint-research institute with Zhejiang University. The close-knit academic community there fostered interdisciplinary communication with the engineering department about campus policies and best practices for achieving student learning outcomes. As assistant director of the ZJUI International Rhetoric Program, she worked with

colleagues to create accessible and engaging classes for students earning dual diplomas from both universities.

But it was outside the classroom where Marilyn learned the most about her students. During her six years at ZJUI—through activities such as hosting a women’s book club, facilitating TA training workshops, running first-year orientation, and judging a Hangzhou speech competition—each event within the boarding-school atmosphere provided daily opportunities for Marilyn and her colleagues to engage with students about their concerns. One such conversation led to the establishment of a campus writers' workshop that not only helped the instructors but gave students valuable teaching experience as they prepared for graduate school.

When she’s not teaching, Marilyn is active in her creative writing community. She recently ran a fiction workshop for justice-impacted individuals, and one of her short stories was shortlisted for the Henry Dumas Prize. Currently, she is querying literary agents for her first novel.



Lily Dawn



Lily Dawn is in her second year of teaching BTW 250: Principles of Business Communication, and she also works as a teaching assistant for ENGL 209: Early British Literature. Like many graduate students, she previously taught Rhet 105: Introduction to Writing and Research in her first year as an instructor.

Lily’s goal as a writing teacher is to help students build confidence in their writing and empower them to feel that their voice matters. She believes that the binary power dynamic of student/teacher is a structure that cultivates a fear of failing and inhibits students’ creativity. Because of this, she aims for a laid-back community environment in the classroom that utilizes contract grading and brings students into decision-making processes for the course. With business writing specifically, she enjoys teaching effective uses of generative AI such as editing and research.

In her own studies, Lily is a third year PhD student in English literature with a focus on eighteenth century transatlantic ecocriticism. This past summer, she attended the Institute for World Literature in Cyprus. Lily is passionate about her houseplants and her bicycle, and you can often find her at the English Building’s north bike rack.

Our Students

BTW Student Demographic Data

	Fall 2023		Summer 2023		Spring 2024	
BTW Enrollment						
Total	701	100%	68	100%	829	100%
By Region						
Students from the U.S.	564	80%	60	88%	659	79%
International Students	137	20%	8	12%	178	21%
By College						
Liberal Arts and Sciences	266	38%	21	30%	354	43%
Gies College of Business	233	33%	24	35%	241	29%
Grainger Engineering	89	13%	11	16%	90	11%
ACES	47	7%	5	7%	62	7%
Division of General Studies	21	3%	4	6%	22	3%
College of Media	23	3%	1	1%	13	2%
Fine and Applied Arts	16	2%	0	0%	24	3%
Applied Health Sciences	6	.8%	1	1%	9	1%
iSchool	5	.7%	0	0%	8	.9%
Education	1	.1%	0	0%	5	.6%
Graduate College	0	0%	1	1	1	.1%

Significant Populations Served

With several courses that satisfy the University’s Advanced Composition requirement for undergraduate degree programs, the Program in Professional Writing serves students from every college and school on campus.

However, the majority of our students come from the **College of Liberal Arts and Sciences**, the **Gies College of Business**, and the **Grainger College of Engineering**.

Our Courses



BTW 199: Undergraduate Open Seminar (ATLAS Internship Success)

Developed in collaboration with the ATLAS Internship program, BTW 199 aids first-time interns in developing fundamental professional skills necessary for success in their ATLAS internship and beyond. This asynchronous course supports incoming interns in setting goals, being proactive, and communicating effectively in their new workplace. Students also learn to leverage their ATLAS internship experience to support their larger career goals.

BTW 199: Students Served

BTW 199: ATLAS Internship Success supports ATLAS interns, first-time interns with a diverse range of interests, project placements, and class designations. BTW 199 specifically serves students from a wide range of majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, from Philosophy to Physics. Ultimately, BTW 199 supplements the traditional LAS curriculum by helping LAS students develop transferable professional experiences to prepare them to enter the workforce after graduation.



BTW 250: Principles of Business Communication

Serving over 1500 students per year, BTW 250 is our program's most popular advanced composition course. This recently renovated gen ed emphasizes business-related composition skills essential in any field. In this course, students learn how to navigate a host of business genres and contexts while emphasizing flexible, situation-specific communication.

BTW 250: Students Served

BTW 250: Principles of Business Communication attracts students from a wide variety of majors across campus. More specifically, this course was especially popular this past year with students majoring in Accountancy, Communication, Computer Engineering, Economics, Finance, and Psychology. In fact, the Gies College of Business academic advising staff recommend BTW 250 to all Accountancy majors (comprising about 20% of BTW 250 students) to complete the Advanced Composition requirement for potential CPA Exam candidates.



BTW 261: Principles of Technical Communication

Following its successful pilot during the 2022-2023 academic year, BTW 261: Principles of Technical Communication serves as UIUC's preeminent advanced writing course for multi-genre technical composition. This newly renovated curriculum teaches students how to

cogently, purposefully, and flexibly translate technical information for a variety of specialized and non-specialized readers.

BTW 261: Students Served

BTW 261: Principles of Technical Communication is integral to the professional development of students from any specialized field. However, this course has been singularly beneficial to students from the Grainger College of Engineering; the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences; and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.



BTW 263: Writing in the Disciplines (Game Writing)

One of our newest and most sought-after topics courses, Game Writing & Design teaches students to take their video game concepts from outline to launch in a single semester. In this course, students learn how to design original games using the Unity 3D game engine and apply principles of effective technical writing to compose a diverse array of accompanying material.

BTW 263: Game Writing: Students Served

BTW 263: Game Writing & Design has seen major popularity among students from the Grainger College of Engineering, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the School of Information Sciences. In fact, this course has even been listed among the electives for students in the iSchool’s Game Studies Minor since fall of 2022.



BTW 279: Writing Job Applications

With 1-2 sections run annually, this 1-credit, half-semester online course is foundational to the practical preparation of career-seeking students. BTW 279: Writing Job Applications guides the effective composition and tailoring of job application materials—including cover letters, résumés, and other application-related documents—using principles of audience analysis, investigation, and style.

BTW 279: Students Served

BTW 279: Writing Job Applications offers unparalleled guidance to students approaching the end of their college careers, preparing them to make the transition from academia to employment. Cross-listed with both LAS and the English Department, ENGL 199 is most popular among students from the College of Liberal Arts and Science. Still, a vast array of disciplines also find this course helpful, including students from the College of Fine and Applied Arts and the Grainger College of Engineering.



BTW 280: Global Business Communication

Practical problem-solving, international cultural cognizance, and professional business writing undergird this student-favorite composition course. With a strong emphasis on written communication, BTW 280: Global Business Communication helps students develop insights, plans, and deliverable materials for businesses who want to expand their operations to international markets.

BTW 280: Students Served

BTW 280: Global Business Communication offers a major preparatory advantage to any student seeking a career in international relations. However, this recently certified course is particularly useful to students pursuing international business, students working in international scientific teams, and students planning on studying and/or working abroad.



BTW 285: Writing a Web Presence

Built upon the fundamentals of digital design, effective multimodal communication, and web development techniques, BTW 285: Writing a Web Presence teaches students the analytical process of curating a professional online web presence. Furthermore, this course also teaches students the nuances of social media management and how to navigate an array of digital media genres.

BTW 285: Students Served

BTW 285: Writing a Web Presence provides exceptional support to students with interests in digital communication. Though students across disciplines frequent this course, it has provided significant benefit to those from the College of Media and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Major Projects

Curricular Development

Generative AI Roundtable

Responding to the rapid development of generative AI programs, such as ChatGPT, the PPW hosted a roundtable panel featuring BTW instructors with innovative approaches to incorporating AI writing programs into their professional writing classes. This knowledge-sharing event testifies to the PPW's robust pedagogical community in which instructors generously collaborate and support one another in meeting student needs. Ultimately, the stimulating roundtable equipped PPW instructors to integrate AI into their teaching as they prepare students to communicate effectively, professionally, and ethically in the age of AI.

ATLAS Internship Course Pilot

This year marked the launch of BTW 199: ATLAS Internship Success, a course developed in partnership with the ATLAS Internship program during the 2022-2023 academic year. This 8-week course is tailored to enhance the communication abilities and career readiness of first-time interns within LAS. It equips students with the necessary skills to adeptly navigate technical-professional tasks while emphasizing effective team collaboration, reflective skill evaluation, self-directed goal-setting, and proficient multimodal communication tailored for non-technical audiences—essential skills for long-term professional growth. Since its inception in fall 2023, the course has surpassed expectations, experiencing a demand surge of more than double within less than a year.

CITL Generative AI Module Collaboration

Together with the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning, the Program in Professional Writing developed a Generative AI Canvas Module. The intention of the module is to introduce AI to the program's students and instruct them on how to productively and ethically utilize large language models in professional and technical writing with academic integrity.

Research

Writing & Emotions Grant

In an exciting interdisciplinary collaboration, Dr. Andrew Moss from the Program in Professional Writing further built on his previous work in emotion and writing by partnering with Dr. Carrie James from the Siebel Center for Design to explore the relationship between emotions and learning. The result was a two-part workshop series that delved into student emotions and provided instructors with tools to create empathetic learning experiences. The sessions aimed to demystify this connection, delving into the intersection of empathetic teaching, emotion, and learning. Instructors practiced perspective-taking and explored ways to respond to students' emotions to enhance the learning process. This joint effort showcased

the power of interdisciplinary initiatives in education. As the workshops concluded, participants gained valuable insights and tools to create classrooms where emotions are not just acknowledged but leveraged to elevate the learning experience for all.

BTW 250 Course Design Scholarship

Following the PPW's successful curricular revision of BTW 250: Principles of Business Communication, the course revision team recently published an article outlining their innovative course design and approach to collaborative curricular development. In this article, co-authors Kay Emmert, Andrew Moss, David Morris, and Andrew Bowman posit a social justice-oriented approach to curricular revision of interest to a wide range of college writing instructors and program administrators. Ultimately, the team demonstrates the success of their cutting-edge approach in preparing students as adaptable professional communicators, increasing student investment in the learning process, and encouraging a lively culture of professional exchange and collaboration amongst instructors. Featured in the fall 2023 issue of *Composition Studies*, this publication underscores the PPW's commitment to pioneering pedagogy and scholarship.

Looking Ahead

Curricular Development

BTW 280 Curricular Revision

Applying foundational professional communication skills to increasingly complex situations, BTW 280: Global Business Communication serves as the Program in Professional Writing's global communications course. Not only does this course prepare students to navigate global business problems with compositional effectiveness, but it also broadens students' concept of the complex interactions between culture and communication. The PPW is currently updating the course's anti-racist ethos, inclusive pedagogy, and CMS accessibility. These changes, in turn, will enhance both students' and instructors' ability to develop critical understanding of global communication in flexible, effective, and situationally aware terms. The curriculum revisions will also work to increase the course's rigor. It will accordingly be renumbered as a 300-level course and will meet the advanced composition general education requirement. In Fall 2024, BTW 280 is collaborating with LAS's Global Classrooms program and Professor Jaime Enrique Bolaños of ITESO, Universidad Jesuita de Guadalajara. In this collaboration, over a three-week period, students in Illinois and ITESO courses will partner to develop and present insights about conventions of US and Mexican professional communication.

Writing in Healthcare Professions

This advanced writing course investigates rhetorical studies of health and medical practices involving communication. Students will analyze social elements of medical discourse in order to better understand medicine as a discipline and culture. Students will also learn how to produce a range of medical texts to fit the needs of different medical discourse communities in public and professional arenas.

BLS Course Development

The Program in Professional Writing is partnering with the College of LAS to develop BTW courses specially designed for the College's new online Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) degree complete program. This fully online degree program will primarily serve non-traditional students, looking to complete a previously begun four-year bachelor's degree. With the needs of this historically marginalized student population in mind, the PPW plans to develop asynchronous versions of two courses: BTW 250: Principles of Business Communication and BTW 280: Global Business Communication. Serving the inaugural cohort of BLS students, these courses will pilot in fall 2025.

 Professional Development

Generative AI Guest Speaker

Jason Tham, Texas Tech University: Assistant Chair of the English Department, Associate Professor of Technical Communication and Rhetoric, specializes in design thinking approaches to technical and professional writing, generative AI, digital literacy, multimodal design, and collaborative learning. As the Fall 2024 professional development speaker, Dr. Tham will lead a workshop on generative AI in the field of professional and technical communication, with an emphasis on writing practices with AI from invention to delivery; building heuristics for using AI in teaching and learning; and talking with students concerning the implications of AI.

Accessible Pedagogy Workshop

In this professional development workshop series, the PPW will lead a series of hands-on-learning opportunities on designing accessible course materials including syllabi, assignment sheets, presentations, and multimedia compositions based on disability justice pedagogy.

 PPW Teaching Award

Few of the PPW initiatives are as important to us as supporting our instructors. We orient our program around team-building, professional development, and pedagogical identity such that each individual can hone their unique abilities for the benefit of the University community. It is out of this devotion to our instructors that we plan to introduce an exciting new initiative: an annual PPW Teaching Award, given to instructors whose pedagogical innovations, instructive abilities, and departmental contributions go above and beyond. With generous funding through a partnership with the Rhetoric program, we plan to award individuals with this prize to recognize instructors' contributions to the BTW field, their professional growth, and exceptional student support. We hope to pilot this award in the spring of 2025.