

REVIEW OF THE M.S. IN CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 11.0899
Visual and Performing Arts, Other

OVERVIEW

The **M.A., M.S., in Creative Technologies** program at Illinois State University is housed in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts. The Program consists of two degree programs: a B.A., B.S. in Creative Technologies, and M.S in Creative Technologies.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2014-2021

M.S in Creative Technologies, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Enrollments	15	16	16	16	18	18	21	27
Degrees	8	6	8	7	7	9	5	10

Table notes:

Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2019 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Self-study process

This document is the outcome of comprehensive discussions and evaluations among Creative Technologies program faculty, students, administration, and external stakeholders over multiple years. The study commenced in the fall of 2022 with meetings led by the University’s Assessment office and the Academic Planning Committee. Collaboration on the document involved the program's director, assistant director, three faculty members representing each of the College’s Schools, and input from the entire Creative Technologies faculty. The substantive writing process, was initiated at a faculty retreat at the end of Spring 2023 and continued during the summer of 2023, utilizing collaborative online platforms. Meetings throughout the summer and into the fall were conducted to review and then finalize the findings.

Program curriculum

The CTK graduate program reduced its credit hour requirement from thirty-nine to thirty-three to improve degree completion and align with other programs. The program eliminated the 1-credit/semester portfolio development courses, though a public portfolio review is still required each semester and made internships optional as elective credits. It increased independent study opportunities and added a capstone or thesis option.

These changes address student needs for better continuity and relevant vocabulary in their studies. The portfolio course content is now part of the capstone and thesis experiences, supporting professional goals. Increased interest in thesis work and independent study with faculty led to these adjustments, while internships, now elective, are no longer mandatory due to frequent waiver requests.

Program or academic unit faculty

The Creative Technologies Program has nine full-time tenure-track faculty members assigned to deliver its curriculum. Each faculty member has their locus of tenure in one of the three schools in the Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts. Peers in their respective “home” school review faculty members. All tenure-track faculty members in

the program hold either an MFA or a PhD in a fine arts, digital media or technology discipline. Faculty with a strong arts and digital media practice and/or theory-based scholarship are preferred. The program seeks faculty with wide-ranging interests and welcomes those who blur disciplinary boundaries.

Program goals and quality indices

- Promoting the fusion of fine arts and technology through the creation of digital media, interactive installations, VR/XR experiences, music and video production, and game design.
- Encouraging conceptual exploration while fostering the development of essential skills.
- Facilitating research and innovation in collaboration with other units and industry partners.
- Teaching methods of interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Cultivating critical thinking, analytical skills, empathetic and ethical considerations.
- Investigating the cultural and societal impact of art + technology.
- Emphasizing project-based learning, professional development, and active civic engagement.
- Supporting the mental and emotional well-being of our students. Top of Form

Quality indices include quality of student applications, student retention, successes in program assessment, student and faculty success, outward-facing program endeavors, and student job placement rates.

Student learning outcomes assessment plan and process

- **The Creative Technologies Program assesses the following learning goals:**
- **Verbal and Written Articulation.** Ability to communicate work persuasively and coherently to both industry experts and the public. Ability to construct robust arguments that elucidate their decision-making processes and the significance of their work through diverse written formats, including artist statements, essays, and work descriptions.
- **Technical Skills.** This includes basic levels of fluency in standard multimedia software apps such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Audition, and Ableton Live; web development; coding and programming; music and sound design; and video production.
- **Aesthetic Decision-Making.** Ability to make sound compositional judgments when producing multimedia work. Ability to analyze their work and the work of others based on the value of its content and its artistic merit beyond technical proficiency.
- **Cultural and Ethical Discourse.** Ability to use technology to create new forms of expression, to challenge traditional notions of art and culture, and to examine the social and ethical implications of the outcomes (of work and critique).
- **Professional Skills.** Adeptness in collaborating and acknowledging different perspectives, ability to problem-solve, envision the future, and adapt to real-world challenges, ability to consistently produce work that aligns with professional standards and showcase their work in professional settings.

The Creative Technologies Program uses the following assessment indices:

Project critiques and evaluations, quizzes and exams, portfolio and CV/resume reviews, peer review and capstone projects, student self-assessments, participation in student art installations, concerts, publishing and presenting at peer-reviewed regional and international conferences, feedback from internship placements, and alumni success and feedback.

Specialized accreditation

The program will be reaccredited in the next year by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) in conjunction with the Wonsook Kim School of Art, under the academic category, Disciplines in Combination. When the program becomes a School, it may explore other accreditation bodies.

Responses to recommendations resulting from the previous program review

- **Formalize recruitment plan.** Our enrollment is growing steadily due to curricular changes and participation in university recruiting efforts.

- **Increase research output.** Faculty and faculty-student participation in national and international professional conferences has increased. The addition of a research paper requirement in grad-level courses and adding new faculty into the program has helped with this endeavor.
- **Formally track alumni.** We now track alumni through social media and alumni events. Concern regarding the current system of external faculty evaluating CTK faculty. Resolved through greater communication with external colleagues resulting in greater respect paid to CTK faculty. The entire problem will be resolved by CTK becoming a School.
- **Increase representation of underrepresented groups in faculty.** The two CTK hires at the beginning of this cycle were both non-Caucasian, one representing LGBTQIA+ and one female. All faculty members are committed to push for recruiting racial/ethnic diversity in new faculty.
- **The self-study report describes numerous deficiencies in facilities and equipment currently available to the program.** CTK has increased and improved its facilities through internal grants, awards for enrollment increases (RERIP), and use of its general revenue funding.
- **Continue to utilize data collected through student learning outcomes assessments to make program improvements and to document how that has been done.** Student learning outcomes assessments are now collected in our program through faculty discussion and reflection on yearly portfolio reviews, test scores, research published, and evaluation of forward-facing student exhibitions. Extensive changes have been made to our curriculum through these evaluations.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

Over the past review cycle, the following trends have developed.

- Advancements in emerging technologies (VR, AR, AI, machine learning, internet of things)
- Increased accessibility and democratization of media tools
- Rise of creative coding and generative design
- Increased focus on user experience and human-centered design
- Growing awareness of ethical considerations (data privacy, algorithmic bias, digital rights, and the ethical implications of technology use)
- Collaborations with other disciplines and industries (The field is increasingly partnering with sectors such as healthcare, education, entertainment, marketing, and social impact)

Program demand is growing as evidenced by our enrollment increase. We continue to add newly demanded sequences and explore new topics in Creative Technologies.

Major findings of this program review self-study

- CTK needs to determine the correct size for its graduate program, and then align curricular issues pertaining to FTE and student to faculty ratios.
- Becoming a School will solve problems by providing a support staff and a “home” tenure line for our faculty.
- Diversity of faculty could be improved. ASPT requirements and TT requirements might need to be altered to provide a greater pool.
- The program's external visibility could be enhanced.
- Graduate assistant assessment, advisement assessment, program assessment, and student creative and research activity tracking can all be improved.

Initiatives and plans for the next program review cycle

- CTK anticipates becoming a School in the next year or two. We will be spending time developing a proper mission statement, ASPT, by-laws, committees, hiring staff, and all other necessary activities for moving to School status.
- We would like to identify funding sources for student travel to conferences.

- We want to continue to provide opportunities for student and faculty research and continue to develop partnerships with industry.
- Create a lab space as a communal workspace for graduate students
- Explore the possibilities of creating an MFA program
- We hope to develop our Softtecc initiative which will enhance diversity in our program.

We would like to create an incubator and forward-facing operation so students can experience the business side of their creative output.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the M.S. in Creative Technologies to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee congratulates the program on the efforts and activities that led to Creative Technologies becoming a School. The program's self-study report provides insightful information on the job responsibilities of the school's director and assistant director positions. The committee also appreciates the detailed summary of the program's physical resources and breakdown of T/TT and NTT faculty. The self-study report indicates multiple stakeholders were engaged with evidence of collaborative and inclusive practices such as, the faculty retreat and parent breakfast event, being used throughout the self-study process. Ongoing meetings were also held to garner faculty input and feedback on the self-study report.

The committee noted the program's success across various fronts, showcasing its commitment to excellence and innovation. Clear links between the program and university's strategic plans were applauded by the committee. Demonstrating substantial growth, the program has seen enrollment figures rise from 16 in 2017 to 28 in 2022, indicative of its increasing popularity and effectiveness. The committee also recognizes its foresight in introducing an accelerated M.S. track to support academic advancement and student success. The establishment of a graduate faculty committee was also noted. The self-study noted the program's higher ratio of students from historically underrepresented populations and students identifying as female compared to the overall WKCFA graduate population. Overall, the program tracks and appears focused on addressing the needs of diverse student populations through the utilization of data-driven strategies. Additionally, through initiatives like the Unity Academic Alliance program and video testimonials, the program has fostered a strong sense of community and solidarity within its program. A connection to civic engagement was also noted in the self-study report.

The committee appreciates the program's approach to student success. Notably, the program has demonstrated a clear conceptualization of student success and has integrated it into their learning outcomes. The committee also valued the program's responsiveness to changing student interests and trends. The establishment of the 2023 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) committee that underscores the program's commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable academic community was applauded by the committee. Furthermore, initiatives like CTK 481, the Games Showcase, and increased participation in the Illinois State University Research Symposium provide platforms for students to showcase their talents and engage in scholarly discourse. The committee also recognized the program for the addition of capstone and research courses.

The committee appreciated the program's curricular work to align with evolving educational needs and industry demands. Noteworthy achievements outlined in the self-study report included a streamlined shift to a 33-hour MS degree, the emphasis on civic engagement via CTK 481.55, and efforts to optimize efficiency and the establishment of more focused study areas. The committee also acknowledges the program's EDIA growth initiative. The committee also appreciated the program's transparent communication regarding changes and the corresponding rationale behind each modification.

The committee noted the program's efforts to develop a formal assessment plan. The implementation of two new learning goals reflects a proactive approach to enhancing student outcomes and academic rigor. The committee praised the program's assessment work, including the development of curriculum maps and updates to ensure alignment with assessment practices.

The committee applauds the faculty's scholarly and creative productivity and professional development. The self-study report highlights faculty's solid track record of consistent scholarly and creative outputs and demonstrates a commitment to advancing knowledge in the field. The committee commended the faculty's commitment to professional development, as evidenced by the numerous on-and-off-campus workshops completed since the last review.

The program's engagement with alumni was also noted by the committee. The utilization of social media and the Discord server support regular communication with the program's alumni. The committee also recognized the program's efforts to bring in alumni and industry professionals as guest speakers in their classes and used their feedback to guide current initiatives and future planning.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee appreciates the faculty and staff of the M.S. in Creative Technologies in developing this self-study report. Overall, the report was organized, detailed, and a thoughtful narrative of the program's current initiatives and future plans. The committee congratulates the M.S. in Creative Technologies' program on a successful eight years.

In addition to the program's noteworthy efforts and accomplishments, the Academic Planning Committee provided recommendations for consideration. The committee's recommendations outlined below are to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. Details describing the actions and outcomes associated with each of the committee's recommendations should be included in the next program review self-study report that is tentatively due October 1, 2031.

Formalized student recruitment and retention strategies. Enrollment in the program has nearly doubled during the past five years. The committee congratulates the program on achieving and supporting this growth. Related to this growth, the committee recommends the program consider the development of formal recruitment and retention strategies or a plan to efficiently and effectively manage this significant enrollment growth. The establishment of enrollment targets or thresholds is encouraged to further maximize existing resources and strategic planning of these resources.

Degree completion timeline data. The committee recommended the program consider tracking students' degree completion timelines as this information was missing from the report. The committee also noted the limited data on student retention within the report. Tracking students' progress toward their degree could provide the program with additional information such as the identification of possible pinch points or roadblocks within the curriculum and support retention efforts.

Graduate student advising. The committee applauded the graduate coordinator's efforts in advising all graduate theses. Given the enrollment growth, the committee also expressed concern with the sustainability of this approach. As the program becomes a School, the committee recommends the program review other graduate programs across campus for insight into how graduate theses are managed. For instance, many programs have the student's faculty advisor serving as the instructor of record for the thesis experience.

Alumni tracking. With a growing program, the committee recommends working with alumni relations to further improve tracking of alumni. It is clear to the committee that the program deeply values their alumni and has plans to formally integrate these stakeholders into the program via the establishment of an Advisory Council. The committee believes this level of engagement is a point of pride for the program and recognizes the increased workload associated with tracking a growing alumni base. Alumni relations could provide additional support in helping the program remain actively connected with these stakeholders.

New School adjustments. While there is considerable excitement with the new School, the committee expects there will also be a great deal of work required during the early years of its inception. The development and refinement of School policies and procedures will require considerable time and input from faculty and staff. Efforts to accurately develop and track School-level data to support various initiatives will also require an investment of time and planning. The committee recommends the program carefully plan for the impact these new School needs will have across the various resource areas.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue their implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the plan's effectiveness in assessing student learning to identify any changes faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the department and library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.