



Title of Report: The Master of Arts in Education, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Option at California State University, San Bernardino

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Organization: [California State University San Bernardino](#)¹ - San Bernardino, California, USA

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1. Identify and describe the Professional Development Opportunity (PDO).

California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), incorporated in the United States, offers a predominately online Master of Arts in Education, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) option through its College of Extended Learning (CEL), in partnership with the on-campus program of the same name in the College of Education (COE). San Bernardino is located about 65 miles directly east of Los Angeles in the “Inland Empire” of Southern California. The TESOL master’s degree program on campus started in 1991, and in 2009 the program received Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Fast Track accreditation so that CSUSB could offer this program online in order to reach students who live further than 120 miles from the campus.

Thirteen faculty members teach in the program and four administrators support it directly, as well as several University administrators who support it indirectly. The program was developed to meet the needs of working professionals as well as pre-service teachers who live far from campus, including in other countries. The program offered through CEL is a Special Sessions program. This means that it is designed to meet the needs of distant populations or is offered in a different format from the program offered on campus.

2. Describe the target audience for the PDO.

The great advantage of this program is that students are able to complete their master’s degree from a US institution while they retain their jobs, especially if they are working abroad. The program was launched in Korea through a partner who was responsible for all recruitment; therefore, the majority of the students in the program are Korean. However, there are increasing numbers of Americans living abroad as well as students from other countries applying to the program. Most students do have some teaching experience, but it is not required. Students range in age from 22-50 years old, with the average being 30 years old. Currently, there are 56 students enrolled in the program. Twenty-three students have graduated from the program since its inception three years ago. The program is attractive to students because the fee per course

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includes their textbooks and all University fees and also because they can finish the program in fifteen months, if they take three courses per quarter.

3. Describe how you recruit students for your PDO.

Until recently, most of the marketing was done through the Seoul-based Korean partner. However, CSUSB faculty members have also traveled to present various CEL TESOL programs, including the master's degree, at different TESOL conferences and agent recruitment fairs in the US and abroad. Brochures, pens, bookmarks, and flash drives with the CSUSB web address and program information printed on them function as enticements at the fairs. Currently, CEL is pursuing online efforts at recruitment with different companies that offer search engine optimization, social networking-type advertising, and advertising through e-blasts and strategically placed web banners. As well as the website, the CEL TESOL department maintains Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts. The focus of the marketing is to promote awareness about the program for recruitment purposes.

The partner in Korea was chosen to carry out initial recruitment on a face-to-face (ftf) basis so that they could explain the benefits of the program orally in Korean to interested clientele. The relationship with this partner had been first established with recruitment to other CEL programs. We felt that Korea was the strongest market in which to launch the master's degree program. Now that the program has gained a positive reputation in the international community, marketing focuses on more web-based international and domestic recruitment, without the assistance of the Korean partner.

4. Describe the curriculum choices made.

The TESOL master's degree has been offered on campus for about 22 years. CEL chose to offer the program in predominantly online format in order to better serve the needs of students who could not conveniently come to campus for the duration of their program. The majority of the curricula was developed by Dr. Lynne Díaz-Rico, originator of the program on campus, who serves as the academic coordinator of the CEL program. Some of this curriculum was adapted for online delivery, while some new courses were developed specifically for online delivery for Special Sessions. CEL/COE had to apply for new WASC accreditation when more than 50% of the courses in the program would be delivered in online format. After obtaining accreditation, the remaining courses were developed for online delivery for a total of fifteen. The two courses for which some ftf interaction is still required are Research Methods in TESOL and Practicum in TESOL. It has been our experience that the foreign teachers benefit greatly from an experience in the US. Moreover, the program administrators believe strongly that participants should be observed teaching before CSUSB can award them a degree that will declare them competent to teach English; therefore, an on-site residency component in the program has been retained. The



short residency period also distinguishes the CEL program from other cyber university programs that may not be as strong academically.

In the on-campus master's degree program, about half of the courses are offered both ftf and online. Most students in the on-campus program choose to take a mix of online and ftf courses each quarter. For the most part, the same faculty members teach in both programs. The main difference between the two programs is that in the Special Sessions program, students take *all* courses online each quarter until they come to campus for their residential quarter.

The curriculum includes courses on all of the skills, with an emphasis on lesson planning, delivery, and assessment. Students also have courses in curriculum development, research methods, and crosscultural communication, the latter of which is a core element in the CSUSB TESOL programs.

Another cornerstone of the program is the Computer Assisted Language Learning pre-requisite course in which participants improve their own technical skills while learning how to apply Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory to technology implementation in the classroom. Students learn how to use technology effectively to teach the 21st -century skills of communication, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, production, and eLearning in ESL and EFL settings. Students deal with issues of universal design, creative commons licensing, digital plagiarism, and website evaluation (information literacy). Finally, they are challenged to creatively produce lessons that use technology to motivate ESL/EFL students to become active participants in language learning rather than passive recipients.

Instructors were paid to develop the new courses for online delivery. Nevertheless, instructors tend to redevelop the courses each time they teach them so that they can keep the courses fresh and interesting by incorporating the latest information and technology. They also learn from past delivery about unsuccessful content and remove it or replace it with new content.

During accreditation, a needs assessment was conducted by Dr. Julie Ciancio, the program administrator for the CEL program in order to establish the need and price point for the program. In addition to bibliographic research, she obtained information from an online survey of potential candidates for such a program.

In the traditional program on-campus, courses are capped at 25; CEL follows the same faculty-to-student ratio for the Special Sessions program. It is especially difficult for instructors to handle more than 25 students in an online environment. In the courses that are heavy on written assignments, the cap is maintained at 20 students if possible.

5. Explain the PDO's over-arching goals and specific objectives.



Central to the goals of the program is an emphasis on pedagogical skills, including subject-matter pedagogy. Curriculum evaluation and innovation, crosscultural teaching, and the design and use of research are also emphasized. The specific objectives are that graduates will be able to:

- (1) demonstrate an understanding of the structure of English and use English skillfully;
- (2) appreciate the history and beauty of the English language;
- (3) apply best practices in educational psychology to promote English learning;
- (4) teach English skillfully, employing a variety of principle-based methods;
- (5) select/develop successful programs and materials in ESL/ EFL;
- (6) relate the importance of the native and target cultures in language learning;
- (7) use research in the field of TESOL to improve teaching and learning; and
- (8) demonstrate professional participation, collegiality, and ethics in TESOL.

At the end of the program, before students are allowed to register for their comprehensive exam, their Candidate Assessment Portfolio (CAP) is checked to make sure that they have met all of the goals and objectives of the program. The online portfolios are created and evaluated using Google Docs. Students must submit required key assignments, completed rubrics, and specific documents to their portfolio as evidence that they have met these goals and objectives.

6. Describe the teaching and learning activities used in the PDO and what online applications are used to support these activities.

Because CSUSB is on a ten-week quarter system, most of the online courses are divided into ten modules. Each module has a similar format: the learning objectives for the module are listed, and a video lecture or PowerPoint lecture with voice delivers content. We have learned from experience that it is very important for students to be able both to see and hear the instructor. This adds a sense of personal care to the program that is important for student retention and success. Moreover, having visual and auditory information, in addition to the information provided in text format, addresses key student learning-style differences.

Students usually need to complete a reading and writing assignment for each module and also participate in a discussion board, an asynchronous forum. Some courses have tests, quizzes, wikis, or group projects. All courses are designed to include rich supplemental content from web sources and videos that can be used to enhance the information provided. Instructors are available for online office hours through Skype or instant messaging, but synchronous activities are infrequent because students are located in various time zones. Most of the students have chosen an online program because they have busy professional lives; therefore, it is almost impossible to get the whole class together online at the same time. When this program was launched, synchronous sessions were attempted, but student turnout was so poor that they have been discontinued.



Instructors use rubrics for each of their assignments so that students are clear about expectations. Instructors are encouraged to provide feedback on students' written work and also to allow students to revise assignments as many times as necessary in order to be able to perform satisfactorily. CSUSB TESOL programs believe strongly in the process as opposed to the product approach to assignments.

The teaching practicum is taught during the residential quarter, which is taken either as a full ten-week residential quarter in the winter or a five-week hybrid quarter (five weeks online followed by five weeks on campus) in the summer. In the practicum course, students visit local elementary schools, our University Intensive English Program (IEP), and the local adult school. A variety of sites are used so participants can have experiences with diverse levels and ages. Students then deconstruct and analyze the lessons they observe at the different sites they visit. Even if a participant has identified a specific target-teaching level, we believe that it is beneficial for them to have a variety of experiences because many of the techniques they learn will need to be modified to meet the needs of the specific context wherever they end up teaching.

Participants also perform teaching and tutoring with a group of elementary, high school, and adult students who are recruited specifically for this purpose through the College of Education's literacy development center. Participants provide whole-class instruction as well as tutoring during the practicum course. This experience provides them with a rich opportunity to work with a group of diverse language learners and receive structured feedback on their lesson planning and delivery.

7. Describe how the PDO helps students understand the local contexts in which they are studying so that they can work together with others in the global context of your online PDO.

In their crosscultural teaching course, participants engage in activities that prepare them to comprehend the specific contexts experienced by their students and use that understanding to make instructional decisions. The course includes activities to help develop respect for the experiences of various groups with whom they are interacting, and make concerted efforts to incorporate knowledge of and sensitivity to those experiences in the professional decisions they make as well as during their interactions with students, colleagues, and members of the broader community.

For example, participants write an ethnographic study of their own culture in order to build the foundation for a deeper understanding of other cultures. Another intercultural communication group project divides the class into an imaginary developed country or an imaginary developing country. Then those groups are further divided into groups of four in order to negotiate a contract between the two countries. This activity is an information gap exercise where each group only knows what they are told; therefore, it is up to them to find the cultural



bias that has been added to the descriptions of each country and work through that in order to reach a successful compromise. Debriefing allows students to see areas of bias that they took as fact without challenge, and helps them see ways both sides could have been more understanding. A third project asks them to create a cultural lesson around a multicultural short story. The final project asks them to teach a cultural workshop on a country or culture of their choice other than their own.

Participants work together in various ways. There are required discussion boards as well as optional discussion boards. On the optional boards, learners find study partners and exchange contact information so that they can help each other. There are some who live near each other in Korea, who gather on a regular basis to study together and work on homework. However, nothing in the courses rewards those who gather ftf over those who are totally online.

CEL has not detected any indication of discrimination among students. On the contrary, for example, on the discussion boards, students who are more tech savvy go out of their way to encourage and support students who express confusion or frustration. This peer support works much better than assurances from the professors.

The PDO uses two of the most popular LMSs (Blackboard and Moodle), so that students will be better prepared to teach via either system if the opportunity arises. Also, all audio and video material is transcribed and captioned. Learners are taught the importance of universal design, so that every type of learner can best benefit from any resources used. Universal design also benefits learners from low-technology areas. Students are taught how to be good digital citizens using Creative Commons licensed graphics or maintaining Internet security for themselves and their students.

Universal design means that audio and video (high-bandwidth) have transcripts (low-bandwidth) so that there is more or less equal access regardless of students' internet speed. Some students prefer to watch the videos, but those who are better readers sometimes prefer to read the transcripts. The newest lessons are being created for access via mobile devices, which means smaller file sizes benefitting low-technology as well as mobile technology contexts.

Those participants with internet access issues are granted extensions to deadlines as needed. They also can download larger lessons and files to their computers for offline viewing and reviewing. They can email responses that they are not able to upload to other websites. Also, they can request to have files emailed directly to them to limit download time from the LMS sites. Some learners use public libraries or other public access areas or work computers.

In order not to discriminate against those needing (or wanting) to save money on software, all students are taught how to use free Web 2.0 sites such as Google Drive, Weebly, and Voicethread.



CEL does not believe in “dumbing-down” the technology to improve access. CEL believes in using all available technology to make the content more interesting and then follow Universal Design principles so that all content is available in one format or another.

8. Describe how the PDO helps prepare students for the local contexts in which they will work.

During their crosscultural teaching course, students learn how to analyze various cultures and are taught to look deeply at their own student population. Even those from mostly homogeneous classrooms have learned to recognize that “mostly” is not the same as “all.” Therefore, they are asked to evaluate teaching materials they use for various types of cultural differences and biases. As they recognize differences, they are able to apply new intercultural communication skills to accept and adapt to those differences. They are taught that saying “everyone is the same” does not demonstrate the value of cultural diversity. At the same time, they learn that merely comparing two cultures can lead to an “us” versus “them” mentality in the classroom, so they learn to do comparative culture studies in groups of at least three. They learn to value customs and traditions from developing countries as well as developed countries.

Instructors in the program are not all native-English speakers, so students have a model for accepting a variety of Englishes, and textbooks and other materials are not written only by white Americans. They learn about the struggles that non-native-English-speaking teachers often face in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) settings and they have opportunities to compare ESL classrooms with English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classrooms in terms of their language-learning needs. They learn ways to adjust lessons for the setting in which they will teach, including those with limited technology and resources as well as those with abundant technology and resources.

CEL has, however, experienced some accessibility issues with students in China, because many online tools, such as Google and YouTube are blocked. For students from China with technology access issues, besides providing open captions on videos, we have also moved videos to our LMS servers, which they can access or have converted videos to very small file sizes for easier access. Sometimes creative solutions are required; for example, some instructors have opened a Skype session and played the video in front of their web cameras in order for the students to view the video through Skype.

9. Explain the characteristics of the teacher educator(s) working in the PDO.

All program instructors have either a master’s or doctorate degree in TESOL or a related field. They all have several years of teaching experience. Most are experts at online delivery. Instructors who are new to online development attend professional development sessions with the Online and Distributed Learning department on campus. Dr. Julie Ciancio also conducts



online training sessions for those faculty members who live at a distance from campus and cannot easily come to campus for professional development. Periodically, short workshops on specific topics are offered, such as how to post Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant video lectures with subtitles or how to work with Google Docs or Wikis.

CSUSB rarely hires tutors or teaching assistants. The instructors need to do the course development, assignment feedback, and grading themselves. This requirement helps them to be aware of their students' strengths and weaknesses. It is also a security measure – by knowing their students well, instructors can be more aware of possible plagiarism or identity fraud. In this way they can better support students' professional growth and maintain an ethical teaching and learning environment.

10. Describe the non-teaching support staff in the PDO.

CEL has a program administrator and two full-time assistants entirely dedicated to the TESOL programs it offers. In addition to the Special Sessions Master's degree program, CEL also offers several online TESOL certificate programs (TESOL for Moms and Dads, TESOL for Teachers of Young Learners, and The Write Course), as well as intensive teacher-training programs on campus. The support staff works with all of these programs simultaneously. In addition to other responsibilities, the administrator oversees all aspects of the TESOL programs.

Specifically in relation to the master's degree program, one member of the support staff is predominantly responsible for working with students on their individual program plans, following up on students who are falling behind, communicating in Korean with partners and students as needed, compiling data for the outcomes assessment portfolios, requesting Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) waivers, processing requests for Leaves of Absence, requesting initial English placement testing, issuing TESOL certificates after students successfully complete the first four courses of their master's, maintaining accurate program budgets, as well as organizing on campus events and logistics during the residential quarter.

The other staff member is responsible for processing new applications, maintaining student files, enrolling students in courses, requesting courses to be built into the University system for each quarter's schedule, sending documents and textbooks to students, ordering textbooks, processing instructor payments, maintaining the student database, maintaining social networking and other advertising sites with updated and accurate content, and organizing events on campus during the residential quarter. There is currently about a 1:20 ratio between support staff and master's candidates.

Both instructors and support staff help students with technical issues in the attempt to avoid problems by checking identification numbers, new account logins, etc. before each quarter



begins. CEL also provides an online TESOL advising course as well as tutorials on how to use Blackboard.

11. Explain the learning assessments used in the PDO.

As discussed in Section 5, participants are required to complete a learning outcomes assessment portfolio before they are allowed to register for their comprehensive exams. The comprehensive exam consists of three essay questions on three of their core courses. Students are given three broad areas of study to help them know what to study to prepare for the exam. The exams are blind-scored on each question by two instructors using a pass/fail index. If there is a discrepancy between the two readers, a third reader is asked to break the tie. If students fail a question, they may retake only those questions they did not pass the following quarter. If they do not pass the second time (which, fortunately, has not yet occurred in the Special Sessions program), they need to get approval from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies to be able to take the exam one more time.

Students in the practicum course are evaluated on their teaching practice as well as their ability to be reflective educators committed to lifelong learning. To assess their teaching practices, participants are provided with authentic teaching moments through their student-teaching experience and are expected to execute two whole group mini-lessons that include objectives, a warm-up, task chains, and an assessment. The expectations for the first lesson are very general, while the second lesson must focus on strategies of differentiation to address the varying grades and language levels of students in the student teaching setting. The expectations for these lessons are provided on detailed rubrics and are scored by the instructor. The rubrics entail components regarding the lesson content, instructional process, and formative assessment. Participants are also expected to provide weekly lesson plans to the course instructor to demonstrate their ability to plan activities and tasks that address their students' needs. The reflective component of the practicum course is evaluated by a detailed rubric that gauges students' abilities to read and respond to academic texts on current theory, research, and pedagogical practices surrounding second language instruction.

12. Explain the mechanisms used to evaluate the PDO.

For quality assurance CEL follows Total Quality Management principles, where the focus is on customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. Student or prospective student emails or phone calls are answered within a 24-hour time frame. Participants are asked to complete two types of feedback forms each quarter. They respond to the University Student Opinion of Teacher Effectiveness (SOTEs) online survey as well as CEL's in-house survey that is posed on Survey Monkey. More useful data and higher response rates are gained from the CEL survey. When students come for their residential quarter, they participate in a focus-group



survey that asks them for feedback on all aspects of the program—instruction, administration, campus experience, timeliness, and so forth.

In response to some early student complaints, the online courses are monitored periodically to make sure instructors are up-to-date on grading, assign an appropriate number of assignments, provide sufficient feedback, and are responsive to student needs. CEL staff members also follow up on students who are not up-to-date on their assignments. Their advisor calls them to inquire about their circumstances and to inform them of deadlines and university policies and procedures.

The M.A in Education is accredited by WASC, and the College of Education is accredited by the [Council on the Accreditation of Educator Preparation](#) (CAEP), formerly the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Reaccreditation takes place every seven years.

13. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this PDO online.

CEL has gone through a learning curve about offering video content for online students. The philosophy of CSUSB's (Online and Distributed Learning (ODL)) department does not emphasize video content, but from our experience, this has proven to be an important component, especially because the majority of participants are Korean and for Koreans, the term "online learning" seems to be synonymous with "video lectures."

Also, CEL has had various technical issues with enrollments, registrations, drops, and changes in student status. The University has several different classifications through which graduate students pass during their academic career: conditionally classified, then classified, and finally, clear admission. This process is confusing internally; moreover, this nomenclature is not entirely clear to all of the departments on campus with which the participants have contact. Therefore, it has proven to be rather difficult to explain to students who probably have no experience with the American university system that they have been "accepted" into the program and are "genuine" CSUSB students when they see that they have only been "conditionally" accepted. This situation created a feeling of distrust and skepticism about the program with the first groups. Now, the advisers explain that this nomenclature is standard University procedure and should not be cause for alarm.

CEL started the program with a cohort model, but quickly learned that not everybody could go through the program at the same accelerated pace. The market seems to be responsive to a master's degree that can be completed in fewer than two years; however, few students are able to do it successfully in practice. Now advisers work with individualized program plans, so participants can work at a pace that is conducive to their lifestyle and skill set.



Another technical issue has been that the University sometimes sends automatic emails to all students, including our Special Sessions participants, about University issues that do not apply to the CEL program. These messages generate confusion and skepticism among students. Occasionally, the University also sends automatic emails that are incorrect. For example, sometimes they inform students, in error, that they have a hold on their account or a balance due. Consequently, sometimes CEL staff members need to put out fires that are started inadvertently. Unfortunately, the participants spread the news about these types of issues quickly.

There have also been some technical difficulties, such as participants being unable to access their official University email accounts when they are in conditional status, and new students not knowing how to use Blackboard. CEL has addressed these issues by providing tutorials and by checking participants' logon information before each quarter begins.

There have also been issues with student and adjunct faculty access to the online resources of the CSUSB Pfau Library. In the past, CEL had to request special permission for the adjunct faculty to be able to access this database. Now, all of CEL's adjunct instructors are in the system, so they no longer have access issues.

As stated before, synchronous content is not a part of the program because it is not convenient to manage for either the students or the faculty. However, some faculty members hold office hours on Skype to provide synchronous advisement.

Participants have access to the non-digital resources when they are on campus for their residential quarter. In this quarter they are doing their research course, so it is the quarter in which they most need access to the library's physical resources, although most students use entirely online resources nowadays. Participants' textbooks are mailed at the beginning of each quarter. The textbooks and the mailing are included in their course fees.

14. Describe the successes of the PDO and explain how they are documented.

As mentioned above, CEL conducts quarterly participant feedback opportunities as well as a participant focus group during the residential quarter. However, keeping in touch with alumni has proven to be a challenge. They do not respond to requests for information regarding current place of employment, awards, or salary. This lack of response is unfortunate because it would be beneficial to be able to use this information for recruitment purposes.

In 2011, Dr. Lynne Diaz-Rico was the recipient of the Outstanding Originators of Online Learning award given by the Office of Online and Distributed Learning at CSUSB. This award attests to the on-campus recognition of the achievement of both on-campus and Special Sessions master's degree programs in sustaining a high level of program quality. We are proud that CSUSB's online efforts contribute to the [TESOL International Association's](#) core mission "to



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advance professional expertise in English language teaching and learning for speakers of other languages worldwide.”