

First Choice Executive Summary:

What is the First Choice Graduate Program Designation?

A graduate program that meets the requirements of the First Choice Program meets the highest standards for graduate study at Eastern based on sustained achievements of the criteria specified later in this document. A Program that meets the criteria is entitled to use the designation A First Choice Graduate Program at Eastern Illinois University for a three year period in all correspondence, recruitment and marketing materials, and is entitled access to additional resources from the Graduate School.

Criteria for Achievement of the First Choice Graduate Program Designation:

Programs must meet all of the criteria outlined below to achieve the First Choice Graduate Program designation. (Sustained achievement means three or more years of evidence.)

Criterion 1: The program documents sustained achievements in strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement.

Criterion 2: The program documents sustained achievements in fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics.

Criterion 3: The program documents sustained achievements in expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry.

Criterion 4: The program documents sustained achievements in building and enhancing the excellence of the University's undergraduate majors and options through mutual and reciprocal research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty.

Criterion 5: The program documents a sustained record of developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service.

Benefits of First Choice Graduate Program Designation

1. Currently Available Competitive Award Benefits
 - a. Presidential Assistantships: One Presidential Assistantship will be reserved for each First Choice Program.

- b. Summer Research Assistantships: Two Summer Research Assistantships will be reserved for each First Choice Program.
 - c. Williams Travel Award: One Williams Travel Award will be reserved for each First Choice Program.
 - d. Graduate School Initiative Awards: One \$500 Graduate School Initiative Award will be reserved for each First Choice Program to be applied to the Program's highest priorities.
2. New Award Benefits:
- a. First Choice Designation Assistantship: Each First Choice Program will receive a First Choice Designation Assistantship in addition to the program's regular allocations and may have an opportunity to compete for any additional awards that may be available. Programs will have the flexibility to negotiate distribution of these awards based on their respective program goals and advancements.
 - b. Additional Initiative Resources: Each First Choice Program will receive an additional \$700 Initiative Award to be applied to the Program's highest priorities.
3. Marketing/Recruiting:
- a. The First Choice Program Designation and the data used to support that designation will be used to market and advertise the program by the Department, College, and the Graduate School.

Suspending Program Enrollment

When programs enter a sustained period of three or more years of low enrollments or other evidence of diminished quality, the Council on Graduate Studies will undertake a review of the program. The review may be initiated by program representatives, program administrators, or the Council on Graduate Studies, the Dean of the Graduate School, or the College Dean. The review will be based on criteria established in the Mission of Graduate Education and evidence that the program is not meeting the mission of graduate education. Based on the review, the Dean of the Graduate School will ask the Council to review the data and provide recommendations on the viability of the program. The Dean of the Graduate School, in consultation with the College Dean, will use input from the Council to make a final determination regarding suspending enrollment until the program can provide a clear plan for addressing weaknesses.