English language support for international students

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Benefits of international student enrollment

(1) international students bring an essential diversity of culture to the campus and thus enrich our academic, social, and cultural environments;

(2) international undergrads, by paying a premium for their education, provide much needed financial support for the university.

These benefits cannot be fully realized, however, if there are language barriers between international and domestic students and between international students and their instructors.
International graduate students:

• Make substantial contributions to undergraduate teaching
• Make substantial contributions to research
• create opportunities for internationalization
• enhance our academic profile
International undergraduates:

- provide much-needed revenue
- create opportunities for internationalization
- fill enrollment gaps created by shifting domestic demographics – fewer domestic students are applying because fewer are being born – in fact, the 2015 entering class represents the end of the echo boom
- enhance our academic profile
While Graduate enrollments have increased incrementally.
Undergraduate enrollments have increased explosively
Both graduate and undergraduates need English language support

In the past six years, Purdue has experienced a sea change in terms of the international population, and we now, again, have the opportunity and need to consider best practice in terms of support for all our international students – but particularly for our growing population of international undergrads.
Calls for English language support are not new:
Report on International Education and Research at Purdue University (1979) –

• The proportion of foreign students to American students should be maintained and not increased;

• The university should develop a “coordinated policy” for its international students:
  • more housing for international students;
  • social programs promoting integration and cultural understanding;
  • educational services to meet the international students’ needs.

• Purdue should be prepared to assume more formal responsibility for some of the services for foreign students which are presently being performed only partially or are not being performed at all (p. 62).
Calls for increased support not new:

*Senate Report 85-1 (1986)* —

- A multipurpose English as a Second Language program to serve both undergraduate and graduate applicants who academically admissible but who lack English proficiency;

- Training in English and basic teaching methods for potential graduate teaching assistants (p. 14).
However, past calls for language support for international students have resulted limited provisions:

Oral English Proficiency Program (1987)

- Responsible for oral English assessment of all prospective international teaching assistants
- Instruction only for those who fail the Oral English proficiency test (OEPT)
- Available only to prospective ITAs (about 20% of international grad students)

English 106i (2008-2015)

- From 10/semester in 2008 to 30/semester in 2015
- Need/demand for 50/semester
Best practice:

Peer institutions with comparable international populations require post-entry testing for students who enter with TOEFL scores of 80-102 and up to 18 hours, or six 3-credit required supplemental English language instruction, over 4 semesters (UIUC) or fronted in a single semester (USC)
**Two-pronged solution:** (1) *Increase admission cut scores*

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Two-pronged solution: (2) Develop an English Language Support Center w/ administrative responsibilities for:

Two required courses in English for academic purposes

for undergraduates

- Undergraduate GS 100 and GS 101
- A four semester sequence of support:

  \[ GS 100 \rightarrow GS 101 \rightarrow Engl 106/106i \rightarrow Comm 114 \]

and graduates

- Graduate GS 100 and GS 101
- A three-semester sequence of support:

  \[ GS 100 \rightarrow GS 101 \rightarrow Engl 620 \]
An English Language Support Center with administrative responsibilities for:

- Post-entry language proficiency testing for placement, exit, and tracking development of English language skills over time;
- English for specific purposes workshops for 300- and 400-level undergraduate courses;
- Extended conversation groups/tutoring (for The Writing Center);
- Language/conversation partnerships between international and domestic students (with ISS);
- Extended support for faculty who teach classes with large international enrollments (with the CIE);
References

Purdue University Senate Committee on International Education Programs (1979). *Report on International Education and Research at Purdue University*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.


*Please direct your questions and comments to:*

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