To: The Purdue University Senate
From: The Student Affairs Committee
Subject: English Language Support for International Undergraduate and Graduate Students
Disposition: University Senate for Discussion

WHEREAS: Purdue University benefits greatly from the presence of international undergraduate and graduate students, but these benefits cannot be fully realized when international students experience language and cultural barriers.

WHEREAS: A major concern of the administration, student body and senate is better integration and cultural exchange between our international and domestic students, and the Student Affairs Committee has found that in surveys of international undergraduate students, their perception of their weak English skills is a major barrier to engaging in activities with domestic students.

WHEREAS: Excellent oral and written communication skills are considered foundational learning outcomes of Purdue’s undergraduate education experience (Senate University document 11-7). English language proficiency of graduating international students should be considered an integral part of how student success is measured.

WHEREAS: The current Purdue Language and Cultural Exchange (PLaCE) program (two 3-credit courses, GS 100 and 101: English Language and American Culture for International Students, I & III); Two additional integral components, the PLaCE Language Partner Program (LPP) and the Assessment of College English - International (ACE-In), has demonstrated significant gains in student oral reading fluency and in free-response speaking fluency, a requirement of University Senate Resolution 14-10.

WHEREAS: This program provides a strong English language and cultural support structure to ensure that Purdue remains a desired U.S. destination for international students.

WHEREAS: Faculty who have transformed their courses as part of IMPACT (Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation) are especially concerned with the English language skills of international students. As their redesigned courses anticipate significant group work and interpersonal interaction, English conversational skills are increasingly important to the student-engaged classroom. Thus, PLaCE is critical to the success of IMPACT.

WHEREAS: Many graduate programs require students to be a teaching assistant as part of their curriculum, and all graduate students must be certified for oral English proficiency before being assigned teaching assistantships. However, opportunities for the development of English language skills for graduate students are limited to English 620 (Classroom Communication for Graduate Students) and 621 (Written Communication for International Graduate Students), and these courses are oversubscribed.
WHEREAS: The PLaCE program is currently funded for the 2016-2017 school year to support instruction of approximately 500 International undergraduates with TOEFL Total scores below 100, and less than 25 on the TOEFL Speaking subsection.

WHEREAS: Most universities do not rely solely on TOEFL scores, but rather use an entry level test for the purpose of placing international students in appropriate support courses.

WHEREAS: The administration of PLaCE will move to the College of Liberal Arts, effective July 1, 2016.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The University Senate recommends that the highest priority be given to continued support and development of the PLaCE program for both incoming international undergraduate and graduate students who are admitted with a total score of 100 or less on the TOEFL (or an equivalent) and a speaking score of less than 25, and provide placement testing for them.

Respectfully submitted,
Russell Jones, Chair
Student Affairs Committee

Approve:
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