A Message from the Assistant Director

In his October 6, message, Interim Provost Jay Akridge emphasized the multifaceted efforts on campus to “build a better Purdue,” one that is increasingly diverse and inclusive. I am proud to be part of this effort in my role as an administrator and teacher in the PLaCE program, where we help international students build bridges through language and cultural exchange so that they can more successfully pursue their academic, professional, and personal goals.

The most rewarding part of this work is seeing our students develop, as they make friends with each other and with American students, increase their fluency, and learn new skills. I am constantly amazed and humbled by their stories—the ones they bring with them and the ones they create while at Purdue. And I am regularly reminded about how much we can learn from each other when international exchange happens at the personal level, between individual people. In this—our first newsletter—I am delighted to share some of the projects, people, and experiences in our program. I hope this newsletter gives you a better sense of who we are and what we do, and I encourage you to get in touch.

Matthew Allen

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About the PLaCE Program

Purdue University is a top destination for international students. Purdue Language and Cultural Exchange (PLaCE) supports those international students who learned English as a second language, and who will benefit from language and cultural support as they adjust to life at a U.S. university. PLaCE was established in 2014 and primarily teaches undergraduate students in English 110 and 111, but also supports the broader English language needs of the university through ancillary programs, including Short Courses in specific language areas and short-term, intensive English Language Programs for university partners around the world.

PLaCE takes a holistic approach to language development. Our curriculum and teachers enable students from diverse backgrounds to engage in meaningful language and cultural exchange. In PLaCE courses, students...

- Improve their English proficiency through balanced learning activities across core language strands of communicative interaction, language-focused learning, and fluency development
- Develop intercultural awareness by learning to recognize and understand different perspectives
- Self-regulate their language learning by setting appropriate language-learning goals and monitoring their progress toward those goals under the guidance of teachers and support of peers
- Practice strategies and skills for academic success, including collaboration and team work, citation and source use, presentations, and reflection

Our mission at PLaCE is to provide a strong instructional and assessment program for advanced English language development. We help students develop the academic, linguistic and cultural competencies needed to participate in university life and to compete for graduate school and employment opportunities.

Learn more at our website www.purdue.edu/place or email us at place@purdue.edu
Meet The Staff

Front Row: Matthew Allen, Suzanne Nicolas, Steve Moriarty
Middle Row: Lixia Cheng, Nadya Pimenova, Mary Beth Harris, Deanne Brenneman, Cammy Ronchetto
Back Row: Chelsey Albertson, Hannah Bush, Mariam Alamyar, Nancy Farner, Sarah Fehrman, Ty Climer

Sarah Fehrman
I grew up in Indiana, and graduated from Purdue with a BA in Classics. After I graduated, I moved to Seoul, South Korea and spent three years on faculty teaching English at Korean universities. I currently live in Lafayette, and when I'm not teaching for PLaCE, I like to work on renovating my Victorian home, play piano, volunteer at my church, and try to cook at least one dish from every country in the world.

I will graduate with a Master's Degree in Second Language Studies/ESL this semester, and I am planning to pursue a PhD in curriculum design. I teach three courses and work closely with Matthew Allen, PLaCE Assistant Director, to develop curriculum and textbooks for PLaCE, and to research a variety of topics, including self-regulated language learning, learning theory, and language and cultural exchange program development/administration. I am also interested in developing curriculum to change student’s attitudes, facilitate willingness to communicate, and develop motivated language learners.

I have been working with PLaCE from the very beginning, and I've had students in my classroom from all over the world. I'm always amazed at how bright, hard-working, and motivated these students are, and how brave they are to come halfway around the world to build a new life in a new country while they are students. The best advice that I have for students who want to maximize their time at Purdue is to go to office hours and build relationships with their professors. We want to help you succeed, and coming to our office hours is a great way to facilitate that.

Steve Moriarty
My name is Steve Moriarty, and this is my fourth year in the PLaCE program.

Although I am a West Lafayette native, and proud Lifetime member of the Purdue Alumni Association, I spent 17 years after graduation outside the continental United States. 4 of those years were in the US Navy, and another 10.5 were spent teaching in Seoul, South Korea. Outside of work I can usually be found on my bike, or chasing after my two young children, or both!

Anyone who says West Lafayette is boring has never visited one of my classrooms. Being able to work with such a diverse group of students on a daily basis is one of my life’s great joys. As a Purdue graduate, I can’t think of anything more rewarding than helping this new generation of Boilermakers reach their full potential.

Over 550 students have taken PLaCE Short Courses.

PLaCE instructors have over 140 combined years of teaching experience.
PLaCE Student Profiles

Ayman Aljishi
Home: Saudi Arabia
Major: First year Engineering
Q: Did you learn things in your PLaCE course(s) that helped you in your other courses or experiences at Purdue?
A: Yes. Activities that included working in a team or with a partner were so beneficial in the sense that they gave me some help in matters I needed in other classes.

Shih Yun Yen
Home: Taiwan
Major: Chemistry
Q: What was your favorite part of the courses?
A: My favorite part in the course is the environment. Everyone in course has similar experience, for instance, cultural shock, language barrier, lack of confidence (in general), and so on. However, because of the work of professors, they point us a path to learn and to open our minds to challenges. I really learn a lot from the way professors teach us. It is a critical course for students to understand how to live in different cultures. Instead of only studying and answering questions, it is a course to think critically and reflect to yourself.

Feng Tian
Home: China
Major: Biology
Q: What did you learn in the course that helped you deal with challenges you faced, such as academic issues or culture shock?
A: I always remember the sentences we learned in this course at the beginning of the semester: Go out of your comfort zone. In this way, one can make improvement.

Shen Li
Home: China
Major: Economics
Q: Did you learn things in your course(s) that helped you in your other courses or experiences at Purdue?
A: The course is a solid foundation for my later courses. I build confidence in the course which helps me a lot during my later courses when I need to speak in front of public.

Yu Hao “Ben” Hu
Home: China
Major: First year Engineering
Q: What were your favorite parts of the classes?
A: When we entered English courses, we started with a time table, like how we can manage our own time. I found that method very helpful to me. Like, for now I am still keeping using this method, but in a different way. I take notes in my computer. After I started using this method, I find my time is been organized, and I am not like when I used to be – stay at night like do not know what to do and then open websites to look videos and make no sense, just wasting time. Now I organize my time. I know what I need to do. It helps me to keep a very good GPA.

Tianyi “Helen” Chen
Home: China
Major: Economics
Q: What advice do you have for incoming international students?
A: Don’t feel afraid and nervous when you meet professors or classmates. Actually, they are all friendly and are willing to talk to you. You can try starting the topic just by weather.

Siddharth Dhar
Home: India
Major: Computer Science
Q: What did you learn in the class that helped you deal with challenges you faced, such as academic issues or culture shock?
A: The class helped me in not misunderstanding my American friends since their gestures are very different from mine or someone from my country. It also made my transition to Purdue very smooth. I’m now very comfortable at interacting with my American friends.

“ENGL 110 is a course that gives all international students an opportunity to get to know the American culture and know more about the way American people think, so we can communicate in a way that they prefer.”

“The courses were completely different from my other courses in the sense that the relationship between the instructor and the students was more personal.”

“This course was an unforgettable experience.”

“The 2017 PLaCE students come from 49 different countries.”
OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

Colombia

The Colombia-Purdue Initiative (CPI) and PLaCE partnered to design a four-week intensive summer English Language Program, which would fulfill specific requirements for faculty and administrators from Colombian institutions. “A main goal of our program is to enable the faculty to improve their ability to use English in their work as researchers and professors,” explains Matthew Allen, Assistant Director of PLaCE.

PLaCE classes focused on improving speaking, listening, academic writing, and reading skills through networking, oral presentations, and evaluation of peer-reviewed journal articles—all activities that professors and researchers conduct daily as part of their jobs. Colombian faculty members also had the opportunity to practice the English lessons learned in the classroom by exploring professional connections with academics at Purdue. Thus, this program is both an opportunity for Colombian faculty to improve their English proficiency and to network with Purdue scholars and explore potential collaborations. “We really value the PLaCE program, because it combines English classes with an academic agenda,” explains María Cristina Valderrama, Director of the Office of International Relations and program facilitator at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira.

“Moreover, Purdue has been our partner in several projects and we wanted to strengthen this academic cooperation between both institutions by sending some of our faculty to participate in PLaCE.”

Haiti

In May 2017, a team of four English as a Second Language (ESL) educators from Purdue spent a week in Haiti training nearly 80 local teachers. The Purdue team included Matthew Allen and Nancy Farner from PLaCE and Nancy Kauper and Mark Haugen from the Oral English Proficiency Program. Project leader Michael Brzezinski, Dean of International Programs at Purdue, coordinated the trip with House of Hope, a non-profit that works with local partners on orphan care, education, and community development.

The Purdue team delivered two three-day workshops entitled “ESL Teaching Methodology Seminar.” The first workshop was at LIFE school in Montrouis, a small town on the west coast about 40 miles west of Port-au-Prince, and the second workshop was at KIPES Academy in St. Marc, a larger town several miles north of Montrouis. In the workshops, the Purdue educators taught local teachers about a learner-centered pedagogy, and they worked on activities that teachers could use with their students.

Reflecting upon the experience, Nancy Farner said: “Our seminar participants were hardworking, spiritual people who were eager to learn and hopeful about sharpening their teaching skills. They had a strong desire to better themselves as teachers so they, in turn, could better the lives of their students. It was a pleasure to be there and a life changing experience for me both professionally and personally.”

Saudi Arabia

PLaCE was critical for meeting the needs of the inaugural Purdue Academy of Global Engineering (PAGE), a customizable non-degree summer training program which ensures its Scholars can work effectively across cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries. For King Khalid University (KKU), the six-week program required 30+ hours of structured English Language training. PLaCE exceeded expectations by integrating themes of culture, business, engineering, and entrepreneurship; offering individual tutoring; conducting assessments; and addressing cultural frictions in the program. Scholars rated PLaCE 4.1 out of 5.0, and comments included “...brilliant teacher. She knows what and how to teach.” “We talked about job interviews, and I think that's very important for us,” and “Priceless advice and an easy guide to improve language skills.”

— Alexander J. Moseson, Ph.D., Managing Director of Global Engineering Programs