

Action Committee on International Student Academic Integration and Success:
Findings and Recommendations
May 28, 2015

COMMITTEE CHARGE

Below is the charge from Sarah Hansen, Assistant Vice President for Student Life, to the Action Committee on International Student Academic Integration and Success.

Using the Climate Subcommittee report as a foundation, the action committee will be complete the following:

1. Identify a process (and perhaps incentives) to encourage the creation of new First-Year Seminars and General Education (GE) courses that emphasize oral conversation and shared cultural experiences, providing balanced enrollment opportunities for domestic and international students.
2. Identify options for increasing ESL offerings. Continue the exploration of a pathway program with ESL offerings in China taught by the University of Iowa, with English proficiency testing available in China and with related early course registration before arrival in Iowa. Continue and potentially expand Courses in Common ESL offerings.
3. Develop more course options in the GE curriculum that explicitly focus on cross-cultural understanding (*e.g.* continue creating dedicated sections of Rhetoric or Interpretation of Literature or related courses). Explore counting one ESL course toward GE requirements.
4. Collaborate with the Center for Teaching to enhance programming and effective practice guidelines for faculty and TA's around teaching for inclusion.
5. Identify and implement additional effective practices the committee may discover.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following served on the committee:

Mirra Anson, Director, Retention and Early Intervention, University College

Jennifer Blair, Assistant Director, Global Community Engagement, UPO, Tippie College of Business

Amy Brewster, Director, Global Experiences and Academic Advisor, College of Engineering

Jane Caton, Manager, UI Threat Assessment Program

Monica Crissman, Area Coordinator, Residence Education, UH&D Administration

Steve Duck, DEO of Rhetoric; Professor, Communication Studies, CLAS

Kathryn Hall, Chair; Senior Director, Curriculum and Academic Policy, CLAS

Diane Hauser, Director, Academic Advising, CLAS

Anita Jung, Professor, Art and Art History, CLAS

Lisa Kelly, Associate Director, Center for Teaching

Doug Lee, Assistant Provost for International Programs, ISSS, Study Abroad

Stephanie Preschel, Assistant Director, Academic Support, UC

Jiawen Sun, College of Engineering, Student Member

Benjamin Walizer, Assistant Director, Retention & Early Intervention, University College

COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

The committee generally met twice monthly, beginning in February and ending in May 2015, inviting guests with expertise in the topic to speak with the committee. The analysis and recommendations were gathered from those sources as well as from the expertise of members on the committee who all work with international students.

COMMITTEE GUESTS

Andrew Beckett, Assistant Dean, University College

Maureen Burke, Director, English as a Second Language and Iowa Intensive English Programs, CLAS

Helena Dettmer, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum, CLAS

Jean Florman, Director, Center for Teaching

Lee Seedorff, Senior Associate Director, ISSS, International Programs

FINDINGS: OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Identify a process (and perhaps incentives) to encourage the creation of new First-Year Seminars and GE courses that emphasize oral conversation and shared cultural experiences and provide balanced enrollment opportunities for domestic and international students.*

The committee spoke to Andrew Beckett, Assistant Dean, UC, about issues related to the enrollment of international students in first-year seminars, with the group agreeing that international students tend not to enroll in FYS for a number of reasons.

- The late arrival of international students at UI means there are fewer seminars open that fit the interests and schedules of these students.
- English language proficiency testing and enrollment in courses for the major take precedent, especially in this first semester of enrollment.
- International students may be unaware of FYS.
- International students may be wary of pursuing an elective requiring more intensive speaking and reading in a second language.

In spite of these pragmatic constraints, the Committee recommends that international students be encouraged to enroll in a first-year seminar. International students particularly would benefit from these smaller classes, helping them to meet others and to get to know their instructors better, while having an opportunity to practice discussion skills. However, many international students are transitioning to Iowa and are not yet ready for these courses which are quite unfamiliar in style as well as in topic.

The committee recommended to Andrew Beckett that UI investigate piloting FYS offerings in the spring semester to see if extending the program to the second semester might encourage this enrollment by international students.

Additionally, the committee recommended creating some FYS for the fall semester that might more clearly appeal to international students by directly focusing on topics of cultural exchange or on topics of interest to international students. Offering such courses as part of the LLC curriculum in the second semester would be appropriate. There are currently four FYS being offered in Fall 2015 that were designed to appeal to international students as a pilot; once the international students register for Fall 2015, we will see if these were successful.

- 2. Identify options for increasing ESL offerings. Continue the exploration of a pathway program with ESL offerings in China taught by the University of Iowa, with English proficiency testing available in China and with related early course registration before arrival in Iowa. Continue and potentially expand Courses in Common ESL offerings.*

Increased ESL Offerings

Numbers seem to suggest that around 570-600 first-semester undergraduate international students will attend UI this fall, with additional seats in ESL courses thus indicated. The ESL Program has been working to hire additional instructors to staff more sections but such instructors can be difficult to recruit to Iowa, with demand high at other institutions for these teachers. Still, Maureen Burke, Director of ESL, has been very successful at adding additional seats in ESL courses for international students. Last fall a total of 87 sections were offered; this fall 103 sections are scheduled, with a net gain of 6 full-time lecturers.

Pathway Program

A working group has been meeting over the summer and will meet this fall to explore the concept of a UI Pathway Program in China. The model now being considered would partner with ACT's [Global Assessment Certificate](#) programs (GAC), using the existing GAC infrastructure but with the UI standards for admission and for instruction. The goal of the Pathway Program, if instituted, would be to reach international students whose English language skills would place them in the Iowa Intensive English Program (IIEP) or in a larger number (4-5) of required ESL courses at UI. The Pathway Program's goal would be to increase English language skills to a level requiring only one to two additional ESL courses at Iowa, thus facilitating students' integration into the UI academic community while speeding their progress toward the completion of the degree. The working group, convened by Downing Thomas, Associate Provost and Dean, International Programs, is chaired by Maureen Burke, Director, ESL, includes members from AAC, TCOB, CLAS, including Kathryn Hall from this committee, and others.

ESL Courses in Common

Students held to five ESL courses were required last fall to take four of these courses "in common" with the same group of students. This pilot proved successful, with the creation of close ties among students with similar English language skills who were encouraged to participate orally in class and to be more engaged. In the pilot, only 8.5% of these students were placed on probation at the end of the semester, while for those not in the CIC pilot, 17% were on probation. The CIC offerings also encourage students to

move through the ESL requirements quickly, being immersed in language learning. The program will continue offering CIC courses in Fall 2015, with 140 seats.

Other Innovations from ESL

During Spring 2015, ESL began offering one semester courses on topics of interest beyond the study of English language to both international and domestic students. The four courses offered in Spring 2015 enrolled a total of 97 students with 48 international students enrolled or around 50%, allowing these small courses to encourage friendships and cultural exchange among different student populations.

ESL is again offering three of these courses in Fall 2015, reporting that the courses have been successful in bringing domestic students into ESL classes while introducing international students to topics related to American culture, such as the civil rights movement, the US constitution, and US dialects. ESL plans to continue offering a range of one semester hour courses that encourage enrollments by both domestic and international students.

3. Develop more course options in the General Education curriculum that explicitly focus on cross-cultural understanding (*e.g.* continue creating dedicated sections of Rhetoric or Interpretation of Literature or related courses). Explore counting one ESL course toward GE requirements.

Innovations in Rhetoric

Rhetoric (REHT: 1030) is one of the largest GE courses offered, with around 129 sections offered Fall 2015. The Department of Rhetoric has been exploring ways to offer topics that might be of interest to international students, thus encouraging an emphasis on oral conversation and shared cultural experiences.

The committee noted that the Rhetoric Department has recently extended the scope of its General Education offerings in order to align the transmission of rhetorical skills with the interests and majors that students bring to the rhetoric course. The essence of such innovations is a better intellectual integration of the undergraduate first-year curriculum, especially in the fall, a principle that could be adopted and expanded to help the social integration of international students during their first year. For example, Courses in Common (CIC) can be used to provide special support for international students and their immersion into US culture and practice. By adding cultural diversity of rhetoric sections other CIC courses also fulfilling GE requirements, it could be possible to create more opportunities for intellectual and social shared experiences to stimulate integration and acceptance of diversity. Figuring out strategic ways to balance enrollments between the populations without treating either group differently will continue to be a challenge, as was seen this summer, with the reservation of seats for students by country of origin not possible. (For more information, see Appendix A.)

Conversation Center

Students from the Department of English, Rhetoric, and ESL are partnering to create a Conversation Center, where students who are more proficient with English language skills will meet with students wanting a conversation partner. The students will take a training practicum for credit and will be supervised by a CLAS instructor; students will schedule the sessions they want online. The Center will be

recommended in ESL courses and will refer students to the Center. The Center hopes to be up and running this fall. The Center is the idea of an instructor teaching Rhetoric and some very gifted undergraduates.

Development of a New GE Category

During the 2015 spring semester, a CLAS faculty-led committee recommended the creation of a new GE Area called Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, requiring a minimum of 3 s.h. of course work. The recommended outcomes for this category will limit it to courses able to help students to think critically about their own position in relation to inclusion and social justice and will provide experience with skills that will facilitate students' willingness for enacting respect for each other and thus social and climate change. The new GE requirement has not yet been approved by CLAS, a process that will begin this fall, with the particular language and outcomes of the category refined according to faculty discussions on the topic.

Members of the Action Committee on International Student Academic Integration and Success helped to research GE Programs across the US that might serve as models for this CLAS GE requirement and this proved extremely helpful for moving the concept of a new GE requirement forward (see Appendix B).

Exploration of Counting an ESL Course toward the GE Requirements

The committee discussed the possibility of allowing an ESL course to count toward a CLAS GE requirement. It became clear, however, that the content of these courses does not translate easily into the outcomes of the GE Program. The committee also noted that international students currently are not held to the World Languages GE requirement since their English proficiency fulfills that requirement. In that sense, students are already receiving credit toward the GE Program requirements through their study in the US. The committee also was concerned that establishing GE course credit for ESL classes would encourage attempts to enroll in the courses by those not held to them, creating administrative problems for the program in part because of the limited seats in ESL courses for students in need. The committee decided not to support the idea of counting ESL courses toward a GE requirement.

- 4. Collaborate with the Center for Teaching to enhance programming and effective practice guidelines for faculty and TA's around teaching for inclusion.*

The Center for Teaching (CfT), in the ITS Office of Teaching, Learning & Technology, is an excellent resource for instructors looking for ways to help international students succeed academically. The CfT provides resources on its website (teach.its.uiowa.edu) such as handouts and information about teaching inter-culturally, motivating student learning, teaching reading strategies, leading classroom discussions, and more. Staff members lead workshops on issues such as cultural diversity in the classroom and how to teach international students. Staff are also available to attend department meetings or to consult one-on-one with faculty and graduate instructors who have questions or concerns about teaching international students. The CfT works with faculty and graduate instructors who are in the process of designing new courses or improving current courses (including first-year seminars) and staff can help instructors integrate new classroom technology into their courses.

The Director and Associate Director of the CFT met with the Action Committee, describing the resources their office currently offers and providing some examples of pedagogical techniques that help international students (as well as minority and first generation students) improve their learning and feelings of engagement in the classroom (See Appendix C.)

The CFT works closely with the Office of Assessment to analyze and interpret data from student engagement surveys to ensure that faculty and staff at UI are aware of how students are experiencing UI and to determine what instructors can do to improve their students' experiences (see report on International Student experience <http://www.uiowa.edu/assessment/files/assessment/files/SERU2014-1.pdf>).

During this committee's discussion with CFT, the committee was struck by a perceived lack of communication across departments, colleges, and individual instructors about best practices in instruction for international students and about what programs, campus resources, and events were available to help. To solve this problem, members suggested that a list-serve or some kind of information clearinghouse be designed to provide interested individuals with resources and information. This could be modeled after Tom Rocklin's weekly "Conversation Starters" that rose out of the Student Success Team initiative.

The Center for Teaching is spearheading this project for a better method of communication, looking into creating a system in which individuals could opt into receiving information on a regular or semi-regular basis about issues surrounding international students on campus. The Center for Teaching is in discussions over the summer with IT staff to look into setting up a communication method that would fit these needs. Particularly, a model called the *Professional Interests Manager* from the Center for Faculty Excellence at UNC-Chapel Hill is of great interest and CFT is working to see if something like this could be developed for the UI campus, with the goal of helping to better educate the UI community about best practices in teaching and resources for international students.

5. Identify and implement additional effective practices the committee may discover.

A UI common book program could also create opportunities for integration, especially if the book program focused on a global theme. These programs have been very effective at other institutions and the committee recommends that the Office of Outreach and Engagement consider this as part of the new "themed-semester" experience, which began in Spring 2015. The theme for Fall 2015 is "Just Living," with activities related to social justice, cultural competence, and human rights highlighted. See this link for more information: <http://justliving.uiowa.edu/events>

Additionally, the committee recommends that students be made more aware of the many courses at Iowa that are small and that encourage active engagement, including workshops, labs, and discussions, with all of these presenting opportunities for social contact and cultural exchange as well as the practice of English language skills. Courses that encourage "doing" give students a shared common experience, whether through studio art or experiments in a lab.

SUMMARY

The committee was impressed by the number of steps being taken to integrate student populations, both within the area of academics and the area of student life, and encourages the ongoing support of them through resource and personnel allocation.

Appendix A

The practice of holding seats for either international students or domestic students in order to integrate the classroom or to create better intercultural exchange has been discontinued under advisement from the Office of the Associate Provost and of Legal Counsel.

A better way to integrate classrooms may be to create subject matter that appeals to both populations.

Appendix B

Universities with Cultural Diversity Requirements (selected from the longer document)

University of Nebraska

Achievement Centered Education – 1 course - Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of an issue.

University of Wisconsin

Ethnic Studies 3 credits - Investigation of the issues raised by living in a culturally diverse society. The University of Wisconsin-Madison is committed to fostering an understanding and appreciation of diversity, in the belief that doing so will:

- Better prepare students for life and careers in an increasingly multicultural U.S. environment,
- Add breadth and depth to the University curriculum, and
- Improve the campus climate.

One of the University's overarching goals is to infuse the curriculum in all disciplines with diversity, including those where traditionally it has been absent. The Ethnic Studies Requirement (ESR) is one of several key elements in reaching this goal. This is a requirement that all students take a 3-credit course that considers ethnic/racial minorities that have been marginalized or discriminated against in the U.S. Because issues of ethnic diversity and religion are often intertwined and cannot easily be separated, courses that focus only on religion may, where appropriate, fulfill the ESR. All courses that the implementation committee approves as satisfying the requirement must provide evidence that the course material illuminates the circumstances, conditions, and experiences of racial and ethnic minorities in the United States.

University of Minnesota

Designated Themes

The designated themes are topics central to an understanding of contemporary life. Investigating these themes helps prepare students to become knowledgeable, ethical, and engaged public citizens. Students are required to satisfy four of the five themes. All theme courses have the common goal of cultivating in students a number of habits of mind:

- thinking ethically about important challenges facing our society and world;
- reflecting on the shared sense of responsibility required to build and maintain community;
- connecting knowledge and practice;
- fostering a stronger sense of our roles as historical agents.

Indiana University

World Languages and Culture: These used to be two separate requirements but in 2014 were rolled into

one, with students have a choice of language study; other courses; and study abroad. Learning Outcomes. Students who complete the World Languages and Cultures requirement will demonstrate

1. an understanding of culture within a global and comparative context (specifically, an understanding that a particular culture is one of many diverse cultures and that alternate perceptions and behaviors may be based in cultural differences);
2. knowledge of global issues, processes, trends, and systems (such as economic and political interdependency among nations, environmental-cultural interaction, global governance bodies, and nongovernmental organizations);
3. knowledge of other cultures (including beliefs, values, perspectives, practices, and products);
4. the ability to use cultural knowledge, diverse cultural frames of reference, and alternate cultural perspectives to think critically and solve problems;
5. the ability to communicate and connect with people in other language communities in a range of settings for a variety of purposes, developing skills in each of the four modalities: speaking (productive), listening (receptive), reading (receptive), and writing (productive) [N.B. This learning outcome applies specifically to students who study a foreign language.];
6. the ability to use foreign language skills and/or knowledge of other cultures to extend access to information, experiences, and understanding.

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

Cultural Studies: Non-Western/U.S. Minority Culture(s), fall 2015

This requirement consists of one course in Non-Western/U.S. Minority Culture(s) and one course in Western/Comparative Cultures. Cultural Studies: Non-Western/US Minority Cultures(s) courses are placed into two subcategories: Non-Western Culture(s) and US Minority Culture(s).

Michigan State

General Education – Integrative Studies—this is a very general requirement covering Social Sciences (A cultural anthropology, economics, human or economic geography, political science, psychology, or sociology course usually satisfies this requirement) as well as Arts and Humanities and natural Sciences--

Penn State

US Cultures and International Cultures requirements (6 s.h.): Baccalaureate degree candidates must complete a 3-credit course designated as United States Cultures (US) and a 3-credit course designated as International Cultures (IL) and/or a course that meets both the United States and International Cultures (US/IL) requirement. Since 6 credits are required, a single 3-credit course may not fulfill both requirements.

University of Maryland

Cultural Competence – 2 courses

Establish the ability to thrive both intellectually and materially and to support themselves, their families, and their communities through a broad understanding of the world in which they live and work. Take at least one course in Understanding Plural Societies and one in Cultural Competence or two in Understanding Plural Societies.

- Understanding Plural Societies courses recognize that life in a globally competitive society of the 21st century requires an ability to comprehend both theoretical and practical dimensions of human difference. From that perspective, Understanding Plural Societies is the centerpiece of the University's Diversity requirement. Courses in this category speak to both the foundations—

cultural, material, psychological, historical, social, and biological—of human difference and the operation or function of plural societies.

- Cultural Competence provides opportunities to gain an increased understanding of cultures and cultural practices, while learning to communicate effectively across cultural differences in a diverse society and world. This diversity category reflects a developmental, on-going process through which students learn about the lived experiences of individuals as members of socio-cultural groups and the complex interactions between groups. Cultural Competence courses emphasize acquisition of new knowledge, thoughtful consideration of issues of equity and justice, critical thinking, self-reflection, empathy, engaged global citizenship, and the development of skills necessary to work effectively with individuals, groups, and teams from diverse identities and perspectives.

Arizona

Diversity Emphasis Requirement – one course (that is being used to fulfill another category as well) must focus on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, or non-western studies

Arizona State

Three awareness areas (general studies)

Students must complete courses that satisfy three awareness areas. Courses that are listed for a core area and one or more awareness areas may satisfy requirements concurrently, up to a maximum of two of the awareness areas listed for that course. These awareness areas promote appreciation of cultural diversity within the contemporary U.S., the development of an international perspective and an understanding of current human events through study of the past.

1. Cultural Diversity in the United States (C)

The objective of the cultural diversity (C) requirement is to promote awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity within the contemporary U.S. This is accomplished through the study of the cultural, social or scientific contributions of women and minority groups, examination of their experiences in the U.S., or exploration of successful or unsuccessful interactions between and among cultural groups. Awareness of cultural diversity and its multiple sources can illuminate the collective past, present and future and also help students achieve greater mutual understanding and respect.

2. Global Awareness (G)

The objective of the global awareness (G) requirement is to help students recognize the need for an understanding of the values, elements and social processes of cultures other than those of the U.S. The global awareness area includes courses that recognize other contemporary cultures and the relationship of the American cultural system to generic human goals and welfare.

Appendix C

Lisa Kelly, Assistant Director, Center for Teaching

Academic Support for International Students:

*All of these tips are useful for all students, but are particularly helpful for international students, first generation college students, and minority students:

- Provide study guides before major tests
- Provide rubrics for writing assignments and projects when you give out the assignment
- Give students a chance to think/write before answering questions during class
- Help students build critical thinking skills
- Demonstrate how students can use course knowledge in careers or outside life
- Assess student learning in different ways than just tests – projects, portfolios, presentations, group projects, etc.
- For writing assignments have students turn in drafts so they can get feedback before the final paper is due
- In lectures help students follow by outlining major points at the beginning and reviewing them at the end
- Consider assigning roles in group work so that quieter students or those who are still learning English get a chance to participate in different ways during the semester
- Don't ever ask a student to speak as a representative of their nation or culture, but do ask students to share their points of view on topics and talk about cultural differences
- Use low stakes quizzes and other formative assessments to see how much students have learned
- Consider giving lecture outlines/slides out before the lecture so students can use these as a basis for their note taking
- Take breaks during lecture to allow students to process material and ask questions. Have them explain complicated concepts to a partner or give time to ask a partner to help fill in notes. This gives ELL students a chance to process language
- When assigning groups consider the group make up. Try to ensure that international students are in groups that will give them a chance to participate.