

# **REPORT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY WORKING GROUP**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The English Language Proficiency Working Group was created in the fall of 2007 in response to questions raised both within and without the university community as to the fairness and efficacy of our English language proficiency policies. The Working Group was charged by Provost Wise with examining a set of questions including who should be assessed for proficiency, how they should be assessed, what types of coursework or other support the university should provide, and who should pay for such coursework or support. Provost Wise also asked that the Working Group survey best practices at comparable universities, and provide her with recommendations on these and other issues the group identified as significant.

The Working Group found that our current policies reflect their origins; they were developed for a university with a much smaller and less diverse nonnative-speaker population than we find today. Under present conditions, these policies do not promote an environment conducive to best pedagogical practices nor the UW's commitments to campus diversity. If we are to meet our commitment to offering all of our multi-talented students the best possible education for a newly globalized world, our current structures need significant change.

Current policy is based on a remediation model; students who are identified as not sufficiently proficient in English language skills must complete, at their own expense, between one and five courses as they begin their studies. We agree that students admitted with the lowest proficiency levels will continue to need some immediate, required courses for English language learners. Beyond that, however, studies regularly show that students develop language skills best when those skills are studied in the context of actual academic work, and that support for language learning at the level required by university study must extend throughout students' entire academic careers. The Working Group thus recommends that we reorient our English proficiency policies away from remediation toward support-based programs.

Using support models already developed for smaller numbers of our students, we strongly recommend that within the next two years we enact on our campus the kind of flexible, coherent, effective, and fairly-applied policy that research has shown will benefit English language learners from all of Washington state's growing citizen, immigrant, and international student populations.

## Recommendations

A schematic representation of our recommendations appears as Appendix C (attached).

1. ***Reorient English language policies.*** Adopt a UW English Language Proficiency policy that replaces the current remediation model with a support-based model.
2. ***Screen all students.*** Screen all students, not just noncitizens, for English language proficiency.
3. ***Redesign diagnostic testing.*** Extend and redesign our current diagnostic testing to reflect a revised Academic English Program curriculum and a newly expanded set of support programs.
4. ***Transform the Academic English Program (AEP) curriculum:***
  - to include language and academic skills courses early on for students whose language levels put them especially at risk,
  - to articulate with newly expanded support programs.
5. ***Develop additional support structures.*** Facilitate directed self-placement into additional support structures through assessment-informed advising.
6. ***Strengthen writing center support.*** Coordinate support services through the Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC), which would offer additional tutoring for all students and ELL workshops.
7. ***Award credit and omit additional fees.*** Award credit toward graduation for English language learning courses. Resident students should not be required to pay extra fees for these courses.

## Budget Recommendations

***Ramp Up:*** For 2008-09, implementing these recommendations entails funding at the level of \$56,165.

***Steady State:*** The recommendations project ongoing costs of \$1,215,518 per year.

# Appendix C Proposed UW ELL Assessment & Support Model

