

Date: November 20, 2003

To: Dr. Sharon Nelson, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts

From: Henry Limouze, Chair, English

Subject: TOEFL Substitution proposal

Every undergraduate from overseas whose native language is not English must take the TOEFL (the Test of English as a Foreign Language) to gain admission to universities in the United States. Wright State has a TOEFL score requirement of 500 for most undergraduate programs. This requirement is low, but it is intended to certify some English proficiency.

There are two problems with this situation. First, TOEFL does not do a very good job of certifying that students actually have the skills in reading, understanding, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehending English they need to have in order to succeed in a university classroom. The first three skills (reading, understanding and writing) are somewhat assessed by TOEFL, which at least now contains a writing component. The last three skills are not assessed at all. Yet English speaking and listening abilities are as important to a student as are reading and writing abilities.

The second problem with TOEFL is that as an internationally administered standardized test, it generates enormous test-anxiety among students around the world who must jump through this one particular hoop in order to gain entrance to a U.S. university, one of the most coveted educational opportunities available today. Those who know the international student community know well the dread of TOEFL among international students. This has of course spawned the usual profitable test-preparation industry. Unfortunately, it has also spawned widespread allegations and/or suspicions of cheating in parts of the world where the secure administration of this test cannot be relied upon.

The bottom line is that international students will “do anything” to avoid having to take TOEFL, and that TOEFL is not the best indicator of student ability anyway.

We propose to provide a certificate to the university guaranteeing that any student successfully completing our highest-level LEAP courses in intensive English (the “Bridge program” that the proposal refers to) possesses skills in English reading, writing, speaking, listening, and so on, skills more than sufficient to be able to succeed in the college classroom. When students complete this Bridge program, which also includes a course in the student’s prospective major subject (thus enabling us to insure that students’ skills are sufficient to permit them to succeed in their majors), they will be certified as having English skills equal to those required by TOEFL, and the TOEFL requirement will be waived.

The benefits this program will provide are at least two. First, this new policy will help increase enrollment in our intensive English program at a time when intensive programs around the country are suffering from decreased enrollments because of new visa restrictions and immigration rules. Second, this new policy will help attract international students to various excellent programs at Wright State University. We suspect that few or none of these students will be interested in majoring in English, but many of them will want to explore majors in business, the sciences, engineering, social sciences, computer science, mathematics, and the arts. Permitting these students to substitute completion of our LEAP Bridge program for the required TOEFL score will open the university up to further internationalization of its student body, one of the goals our university has articulated for years.

The WSU School of Graduate Studies has already approved a substitution similar to the one we are proposing here. Programs like it are already in place at a number of other universities (the University of Findlay, for example). Note that we are not asking that the TOEFL requirement be removed; we are simply requesting that the requirement be waived for students who successfully complete a demanding program in intensive English. And note also that we do not ask the university to take our LEAP Certification of English Proficiency on faith. Students will not be able to complete the Bridge Program until they demonstrate their ability in English by passing a course in their prospective major department. We will work with students and with departments to select appropriate courses and to determine an appropriate minimum grade level.

We have discussed this proposal with the Vice President for Curriculum and Instruction, Lillie Howard. She supports it. We would hope that the CoLA Curriculum Committee could approve and forward this proposal to UCAPC. Approval there would be followed by consideration and approval by the Faculty Senate. Thank you.

February 18, 2004

RECOGNITION OF THE CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION  
FROM  
THE LEAP INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM  
  
PETITION

We are petitioning to have the certificate of completion from the LEAP Intensive English Program recognized as an alternative to the TOEFL requirement for undergraduate admission. Currently, all international students applying to Wright State University from overseas must submit a TOEFL score of 500 (173 Computer Based).

Successful completion of the LEAP program will require that a student meet all the requirements of LEAP's most advanced level, the bridge level. The completion of the course in the bridge level certifies that a student has achieved proficiency in English speaking, writing, and academic study skill well beyond what is certified by the TOEFL.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BRIDGE LEVEL

The bridge level has the most advanced language instruction in the LEAP program. There are two fundamental components to the Bridge Level:

- 1) An advanced level in LEAP that addresses academic language and study skills needed for college admissions.
- 2) A certificate of completion from LEAP that can be used in place of the TOEFL for Wright State Admission. For any student not enrolled in LEAP, the TOEFL will still be used when applying for admission

The bridge level will include a combination of 1) ESL service courses, 2) a new LEAP study skills course, and 3) a course in the student's future major or a course recommended by the student's future department or program.

Bridge Level Program of Study (16 contact hours a week)

**1) Speaking**

\* English 110 (4 contact hours)

**2) Writing**

\* English 111 or English 112 (4 contact hours)

**3) LEAP**

\* Study Skills (4 contact hours)

**4) Course in or recommended by prospective major** (4 contact hours)

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### Benefits

#### Recruiting

- Students will be assigned an academic advisor who will help them apply to Wright State University.
- Classes would be small. On average the ESL service classes enroll 12 students a quarter and the LEAP classes enroll 8 a quarter.
- Students can apply for IHOP on campus housing and live with a native English speaking student.
- Students will gain university experience by taking approved academic classes and have the opportunity to meet faculty in their future majors. Students will no longer have to take the extra step of applying and passing the TOEFL for admission to Wright State. A certificate of completion from the *Bridge Level* will constitute validation of college-level proficiency in English. The certificate will indicate undergraduate or graduate proficiency levels.

#### Cost and Administration

- Existing instructors and classes will be used for the majority of the classes.
- The new LEAP study skills course will be taught by a part-time instructor or LEAP faculty member.
- The ESL classes (English 110 and 112) already have university-recognized exams with faculty participation and oversight. English 110 uses a modified OPT as an exit exam and English 112 requires an in-class essay. The 110 exit exam and the 112 essay are evaluated by university faculty members.

Chris Hall, Interim Director  
LEAP Intensive English Program