

Central Michigan University

Central Michigan University is located in Mount Pleasant, Michigan and has a total enrollment of 28,292 students: 21,041 full-time, 7,251 part-time. It was established in 1892 and has a 17:1 student to faculty ratio. The school offers more than 200 academic programs at the undergraduate, masters, specialist and doctoral levels. We spoke with Richard Forest, director of the English Language Institute.

History

The college's ESL program was founded within the English Department in the mid-1990s as a component of the English department. The English Language Institute ELI split off from the English department in 2003 but still works closely with them. The reasons for the separation were that the ELI was not receiving enough attention within the English department and because the program began to generate enough revenue to serve as its own department. As the overall international student population grows, the ELI program does as well.

Classes and Levels

The ELI Program has four levels: the first three are an intensive English language program in which students take English classes for 20 hours a week. The program also provides the students with 12 credits which do not affect their future GPA. The fourth and final level is a dual program in which students attend both academic and ESL classes. The number of academic and ESL courses in this program is basically evenly divided, and this is the case

for both graduate and undergraduate students. Up until level 4, Richard's unit controls which classes students are able to register for. Classes are assigned based on the individual progress of each student's general academic work and test results throughout the program. By level 4, Richard explains that "we take off the ELI hold and they are on their own."

Faculty

The ELI faculty has eight full-time fixed-term faculty members who each have contracts for one or two years depending on their rank. The program only hires individuals who have their Masters in TSOL or Applied Linguistics. Each instructor has a required teaching load of fifteen weekly contact hours. Despite the fact that they are adjuncts and do not qualify for tenure, Richard has never had any difficulty motivating faculty to participate in efforts outside of the classroom. "Teachers take a lot of ownership over the unit, it's their ELI," he explains, "We have dedicated teachers who care about what they do."

Budget

97% of the program's budget is for salary and compensation and about 3% are set aside for supplies, equipment, field trips and any other expenses. The program has an assigned budget at the college administrative level; however, additional requests, such as hiring a new staff member, are almost always granted. Richard explains that the ELI program is a profitable unit and that the dean is aware of that.

Trends in Enrollment

The program has about 120 students; this coming semester the number is expected to be slightly higher. This number has been relatively stable over the past few years; the program is designed to handle only a number of students within range of the 120 figure, so if there is significant growth, expansion of the program would be required as well. This process seems to be inevitable, since the university is working hard to increase enrollment.

Currently, the demographic breakdown of the student body is 40% Saudi, 40% Chinese, and 20% from all other countries. The percentage of students of Chinese origin is slowly increasing and is expected to reach 50% soon. The school's large Saudi population is due primarily to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, an institution set up by the Saudi government to build the country's workforce by sending students abroad. 95% of the school's Saudi student population are funded through this Saudi institution. Similarly, many students leave China to obtain an English language degree, or to acquire English language skills, which have substantial economic benefits in their home-country. The students are divided fairly evenly between male and female, and a majority are of traditional college age.

Nearly every student in the ELI ultimately goes on to the broader college, a trend that has shifted during the past decade. This is primarily due to a shift in where students are coming from and their purposes for enrolling in ELI classes. Ten years ago, a significant portion of the program's students were sent there solely to acquire either language skills or

specific job oriented skills. Many were from Japan, sent by Japanese companies for highly specific skills

Program Assessment

The program relies on director and faculty evaluations for its program assessment. The university has a program assessment cycle implemented every five years. The program assessment consists of a set of requirements which ties into the school's accreditation, specifically involving concepts such as working with GPA curves and the pass-fail rate. Individual classes have rubrics to compare the status of entering versus leaving students.

Student progress is also assessed through traditional metrics of students able to successfully complete work in class. There are established benchmarks as they move from level to level of proficiency, as well as program level exit tests for a majority of classes. The evaluation is mostly up to instructor, since teachers are hired on the assumption that their personal judgement can be trusted. However, at the end of each semester, students take a series of tests that makes up 20% of their grade and this test is rated by multiple instructors. This process helps to make sure that every instructor is in sync with overall program goals.

Clubs and Extracurricular Activities

In terms of clubs for ELI students, the college has a very active international student organization, as well as a Saudi student and Chinese student club. The program also