Proposal of International Language Center
Working group: Petra Heinz (ESL Coordinator), Maggie Garner (Writing Center), Beau Bingham (Oral Communication Center), Bridget Hardy (ELS – English Language School), Meg Flanigan Skinner (ECTL)

Rationale:
The University of Wyoming is currently participating in the A.C.E Internationalization Laboratory. UW has a substantial number of international students (currently around 750) and is looking toward increasing this number in the coming years. While there are undoubted benefits to the university community, there is a demonstrated need for post-TOEFL infrastructure to alleviate the practical challenges that accompany such an endeavor. The following are points in support of establishing an International Language Center at the University of Wyoming.

A. Benefits of an International Language Center

1) Supports International Students:
   • Provides a venue for international students to practice, strengthen and enhance English language skills
   • Enhances ease of learning and ability to meet UW requirements
   • Facilitates ease in which international students make valuable contributions to classes and research
   • Improves confidence and functionality in future endeavors

2) Supports domestic students:
   • Allows fair distribution of UW resources, including professors’ attention, services of the Writing Center, Oral Communication Center, etc.
   • Improves the communication skills of Graduate Assistant teachers, which subsequently benefits student learning
   • Helps domestic undergraduate and graduate students access the skills and knowledge of the international peers
   • Increases cross-cultural knowledge and competence, as prescribed by LEAP

3) Supports faculty, staff and the larger UW community:
   • Attracts more international scholars
   • Enhances international communities and networks, and creates loyal graduates around the world
   • Enhances research publications and leads to expanded international reputation
   • Hub for net-working, social events, personal support, etc.
B. Requirements for an ideal International Language Center

1) Dedicated spaces and facilities
   - Eliminates conflict with facilities dedicated to other purposes
   - Provides meeting rooms/small classrooms for one-on-one and small group work
   - Provides technological resources (computers, video and voice-recording)
   - Provides written resources – references, grammar books, works books

2) Sufficient number of qualified staff
   - Requires trained, flexible, dedicated instructors with understanding of academia
   - Provides capacity for intensive one-on-one work
   - Utilizes UW students via teacher training, internships, volunteers and language/culture exchange

C. Mission of an International Language Center

We are modeling our mission on the parameters described by Peggy Heinish in *Language Training a la Carte* (please see handout). She emphasizes that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work because there is large variation in the types of support that international students may require. There is, for example, large variation in the following:

- Language competencies – students may exhibit problems with oral or written fluency, pronunciation errors, poor general vocabulary or minimal academic vocabulary, grammatical errors, or any mixture of the above.
- Disciplinary expectations – depending on the needs of the host department, some international students may be expected to write well, teach or present seminars early after arrival. Some may be granted a longer adaptation period.
- Cross-cultural differences – The roles and behaviors of students can be strongly culturally imprinted. Some believe that “students” be passive and quiet learners; others are taught to be actively engaged and questioning. Some adaptation to the American academy may be required.

It would be beneficial to identify the needs of international students as early as possible and channel students toward the most effective and efficient manner of support. Heinish recommends, in addition to TOEFL scores, that international students take an individual 20 minute placement interview with trained staff; she states that this interaction serves as both a “counseling and advising” session that grants students realistic assessment of their strengths and weaknesses and helps them to understand how these factors might affect their academic progress and endeavors. She reports that such early intervention motivates students to willingly
and enthusiastically participate in their program. We would recommend that all incoming international students be evaluated in this way and that the graduate supervisors take such recommendations seriously. To date, many departments either waive TOEFL requirements or rely solely on students' TOEFL scores for admission, assuming that good TOEFL scores equate to good English language skills, which often proves to be untrue.

D. International Language Center Offerings

The International Language Center aims to provide training and practice of linguistic competence, academic fluency, cross-cultural adjustment, teaching assistant skills and writing for the academy. Depending on individual needs, a student may be directed toward any number of possible options, including, but not limited to:

* **Short courses** (7 weeks)

* **Workshops:**
  - Basic or advanced fluency challenges
  - Advanced grammar monitoring
  - Presentation basics
  - Public speaking clinic
  - Speaking and listening skills

* **Seminars**
  - Becoming a better language learner
  - Conversational styles
  - Critical listening
  - Job interviewing for international students
  - Reading strategies
  - Pronunciation for advanced speakers
  - Plagiarism

* **“Focus On” Series**
  - Focus on fluency
  - Focus on grammar
  - Focus on pronunciation

* **Individual Appointments**
  - Tutoring
  - Self-paced appointments

* Taken from Appendix A Language Training a la Carte
Note that many of the “Writing Skills” listed in Appendix A, and not included above (e.g., citing sources, improving scientific writing, etc.), would remain within the purview of the UW Writing Center.

**F. Cost-Benefit**
Rather surprisingly, the Heinish model at Carnegie Mellon is cost-effective. She states that there are three full-time employees (including the director), three part-time instructors (who, in our case, could be graduate students), and several tutors (who could be senior undergraduates) and that they are able to offer 8000+ class hours each academic year. Additionally, graduate and undergraduate instructors and tutors would benefit from the experience of applying their academic knowledge and backgrounds. Internships could be offered on a competitive basis.