

PE2L Program

Professional English Language Learner Program

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Access and success in higher education depend on many factors. Student services and student service programs available at institutions can facilitate access and success. Student services are procedural interactions and student service programs are plans to improve student learning (Shellenbarger, 2017b). At-risk students are a group which can greatly benefit from student services and student service programs to improve their access and success in higher education. The following proposition is a student service program created to improve success in English language learners enrolled in career and technical education programs, specifically allied health programs at San Diego Mesa College.

Professional English Language Learners, PE2L, is a student service program created to improve English language skills for those enrolled in allied health career programs at San Diego Mesa College. PE2L allows students to learn and incorporate effective and efficient oral and written English communication related to their profession. This provides opportunity to learn proper pronunciation, spelling, and grammatical corrections implementing technical terms used in industry.

PE2L serves all students who have not achieved a transfer level English proficiency through standardized college testing that are currently enrolled in allied health career programs at San Diego Mesa College. This includes students who speak English as a second language or students tested at a lower level of English proficiency. PE2L emphasizes effective oral and written communication, pronunciation and spelling of professional terminology, efficient professional communication strategies related to health care industry, and awareness and equity of all cultures in the education, community, and workplace environments.

Language learners are a documented at-risk student population based on background characteristics. These students may also fall into other background characteristics or situational

characteristics placing them further at-risk such as first-generation college student, nontraditional student, or lower socioeconomic status (Shellenbarger, 2017a). PE2L serves this at-risk student population and can reference data to support its necessity. In the United States, 9.4% of K-12 students, or 4.6 million students, are English language learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Musu-Gillete et al. (2016) found the largest increase in undergraduate enrollment was Hispanic and Black students and the percentage of Black and Hispanic children living in poverty was 39% and 30% respectively. These statistics demonstrate a national need for a student support program for English language learners in an educational path that can culminate in a career earning a livable wage (California Community Colleges, 2017b).

English language learners constitute 22.1% of enrollment, or 1,373,725 students in public schools in the state of California (California Department of Education, 2016a). This number demonstrates a continued need for the PE2L program from a state level as these students progress along the educational path.

At San Diego Mesa College, the percentage of students starting in English language learner courses that attain transfer level English knowledge has declined since 2006 (San Diego Mesa College, 2015a). San Diego Mesa College strives to improve diversity and equity on its campus and in the community (San Diego Mesa College, 2015b). From an institutional level, PE2L can assist in meeting this standard by improving English proficiency of English language learners resulting in increased diversity and equity on the campus. Since PE2L is utilized by allied health programs that provide a career after education, it would also improve equity and diversity in the community.

Current trends in higher education and student services that will impact PE2L are online education and technology (Shellenbarger, 2017c). Online education provides students flexibility

that may be required to balance life requirements while offering an opportunity for learning to occur at the pace of the student. Online learning has been found to be at least as effective as traditional learning with benefits including cost-effectiveness, increased completion rate, decreased time to degree completion, and accessibility (Nguyen, 2015). Nguyen (2015) also stated that learning outcomes and student perception of learning were as good or better for online education. PE2L can utilize online education by creating learning modules in which students practice spelling, recognition, and pronunciation of discipline specific terminology at their own pace. PE2L will also include online documentation consistent with community healthcare requirements (MedicalRecords.com, 2015). The use of technology through online education will have minimal additional cost requirements for San Diego Mesa College. Modules will be run through a previously established online learning system and upkeep of documentation software is already included in allied health program budgets.

PE2L can be described as a student service program that will provide students enrolled in San Diego Mesa College allied health curriculum support in progressing English language skills required in the health care industry. Emphasis will be placed on the development of effective verbal and written communication specific to industry or discipline. PE2L will also increase awareness of cultural diversity and equity in education, community, and workplace while developing effective communication strategies.

Similar programs at other institutions include the ESL Program of Study at Mesa Community College in Arizona and English Health Train Program in San Francisco California. The ESL Program of Study at Mesa Community College culminates in a certificate and includes courses which focus on grammar, listening, pronunciation, and writing proficiency to foster student success (Mesa Community College, 2017). English Health Train Program used

workshops to educate foreign trained professionals in proper English language communication with a goal of diversifying and mirroring underserved communities. Results of the program included 55% gain in oral assessment and 98% gain in written assessment (City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University, 2006).

Six PE2L outcomes have been created to describe the desired result of the program and include:

- 1) Students will be able to comprehend verbal communication related to their field of study.
- 2) Students will be able to comprehend written communication related to their field of study.
- 3) Students will be able to enunciate discipline specific terminology within proper English grammar.
- 4) Students will be able to create written documentation using proper English grammar within their course content and work setting.
- 5) Students will be able to evaluate relevant peer-reviewed articles including a written description of such evaluation.
- 6) Students will be able to relate cultural awareness to educational and professional setting.

Four learning outcomes for PE2L have been established and include:

1. Describe challenges associated with improper communication in Allied Health professions.
2. Discuss tactics which foster effective verbal and written communication.
3. Demonstrate proper enunciation, grammar, and body language for Allied Health professions.

4. Demonstrate effective and efficient written communication in line with current industry standards.

Assessment methods utilized will include direct and indirect measures. Rubrics for verbal and written capstone assignments will be used as a direct assessment tool incorporating firm evaluation methods consistent with English Health Train Program (City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University, 2006). Indirect assessment will include surveys of students, faculty, clinical instructors, advisory committee members, peer mentors, and employers as well as employment and pass rate on licensure examinations.

The creation of PE2L incorporates solid funding sources currently available in allied health and career technical education. Perkins grants are available in California to improve career and technical education and focus on improvements within special populations to maintain equity (California Department of Education, 2016b). Perkins grants can fund the program for three years during the pilot phase before resources must come from another source. In addition, Strong Work Force funding is currently available to programs that will strengthen the California work force with high-demand, high-wage jobs (California Community Colleges, 2016a). Budget requests through these two sources will include reassigned time for one contract faculty in each allied health program to create PE2L Blackboard content, mentor students enrolled in the program, and establish Rubrics and surveys to assess PE2L. All other resources are already within each program and funding is reviewed each year through program review.

To improve the access and success of English language learners enrolled in allied health programs at San Diego Mesa College, establish equity in education and workplace, and meet the needs of an at-risk student population, PE2L must be established.

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