

2007-2008 Group on Faculty Affairs
AAMC Listserve Queries & Responses

Query: ESL and the Lecture Hall

*Question from Kathy Sukalski, University of North Dakota
(sukalski@medicine.nodak.edu)*

I am entertaining the idea of submitting a session proposal for the CGEA spring meeting related to the effective transitioning of basic science faculty for whom English is a second language into the lecture hall.

The university of North Dakota is a small school with the majority of our recent hires in the basic sciences having English as a second language. Maybe this is an issue particular to us or perhaps it would be a topic of interest to more? Aside from the skills development of the instructors, it seems to me the topic contains an element related to professionalism on the part of the students.

I would appreciate hearing from others with a similar interest. Thanks in advance.

Responses:

From Paula Trief, SUNY Upstate (triefp@upstate.edu):

I can't add any expertise in this area, but at Upstate, this issue has recently been a focus of discussion. Our student affairs office is considering hiring someone to work with foreign grad students re: English as a second language issues. In my academic dept., Psychiatry, we have a course for foreign residents that discusses cross-cultural issues relevant to psychiatry and academia.

Your idea would be a logical important next step.

From Luanne Thorndyke, Penn State (lthorndyke@psu.edu):

I think this topic would be timely, interesting, and useful.

The development of communication skills in these faculty is an issue that we have struggled with as well.

Perhaps others have successful solutions to share?

From Carrie Cameron, MD Anderson Cancer Center (ccameron@mdanderson.org):

This is my first posting on this list; I was alerted to this discussion by my colleague at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. I have created and been teaching an English for Special Purposes* class for nearly a year here at M. D. Anderson. The class, called "Scientific English," is for international trainees, researchers, and visitors, and the curriculum is based entirely on the science they are doing at the time. The participants are highly motivated to learn about how to express their research questions and findings and how to talk in a lab or conference setting. So far it has been very successful, and will be launched formally as a continuous offering (with 3 levels) in January 08. I would be happy to discuss the program with anyone who is interested.