



Best Practices in Immigrant Education– Submission Form

Name of Community College

Miami Dade College

Title of Program

Title-V Project ACE (Accelerated Content-Based English) Program

<http://www.mdc.edu/iac/esl/ac>

Type of Program

English for Academic Purposes Program

Primary Division(s) or Department(s) involved:

Department of ESL/Foreign Languages

1. Need for Program

Meeting the needs of immigrant students has always been an issue in education. A more recent challenge in higher education has been to meet educational needs of immigrants who arrive to this country with degrees in hand. The Project ACE program at Miami Dade College is designed to do just that. Funded by a Title V grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2008, the Project Accelerated Content-Based English (ACE) program offers a fast-track English for Academic Purposes to students with strong academic backgrounds.

2. Brief Description of Program

The purpose of the Project ACE curriculum is to offer an accelerated parallel track in English for Academic Purposes. The program saves students time and money by reducing the number of English as a second language courses required before they enter the workforce or an academic program of study. This accelerated option is made possible by the design of the curriculum, which features content-based instruction, an instructional approach whereby students learn English at the same time they are studying content from academic disciplines like psychology or biology.

3. Specific Population Served

The population served includes English language learners with strong academic backgrounds, including immigrants who hold degrees in their countries of origin, have completed some college courses or who are college-bound.

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Demographics

Gender:

77% female
33% male

Language background:

82% Spanish-speaking
10% Haitian Creole
8% other

Education:

70% high school diploma
9% some college
7% BA or BS
3% professional/graduate degree
11% no response

4. Goals and Objectives

The goals of Project ACE are to:

1. Help students with strong academic backgrounds learn English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in an efficient and effective way.
2. Increase retention and matriculation rates of EAP students
3. Enhance collaboration across departments, disciplines, and the campus community
4. Disseminate research findings and curricular practices to other campuses and colleges

5. Outcomes

Project ACE courses are being offered in a “smart” classroom, a classroom that was remodeled to create an integrated language lab and classroom complete with mobile modular furniture, Netbooks, and polycom conferencing capabilities. Outcomes as of February 2013 include:

--610 students served
--98.6% completed EAP requirements with ACE
--80% continued their education
--97.3% success rate for those who continued

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The Pilot Phase

During Year One of the grant, research was conducted in the general education classroom and with the general education faculty to learn more about the language demands of the classroom. The data collected from general education informed the development of the accelerated English for Academic Purposes curriculum. Fifty-three faculty and staff at Miami Dade College participated in a workshop on Content-Based, Corpus-Informed English for Academic Purposes. The first two cohorts of 53 students were admitted to Project ACE in the fall of 2009. Accelerated, advanced courses in English for Academic Purposes were piloted at the InterAmerican campus in the fall of 2009. Accelerated, intermediate courses in English for Academic Purposes were offered for the first time at the InterAmerican campus in the spring of 2010.

6. Collaboration

The Title-V Project ACE program partnered with the Title III-STARs grant at Miami Dade College to promote high achievement on the College Placement Test, a high-stakes, gate keeping instrument to the college's academic programs of study. Project ACE has also established partnerships with the local school district to establish a system of referrals between programs that serve English Language Learners.

7. Success Factors

The vision of EAP faculty and college administrators who recognized the need to provide an accelerated track in EAP was instrumental in obtaining the funding from the U.S. Department of Education to establish the program. Further, campus leadership supported the project at all stages from its inception, to its creation, and to its current status of implementation. Project ACE Staff is dedicated to the mission of the program, and is exceptionally well-prepared by virtue of their diverse talents and professional backgrounds to operate this program. Finally and most importantly, the students selected to participate in Project ACE courses have been enthusiastic about the program.

8. Challenges Faced and Overcome

Because the Title-V Project ACE program received such wonderful support from college administration and faculty peers in the discipline, the initial challenges in establishing the Title-V Project ACE program were relatively small. Innovation brings about change, and therefore, a few faculty and students alike were reticent about trying a new program. However, opportunities for faculty development and participation in the innovative curriculum in addition to recruitment and outreach activities have generated great interest in the program on the part of faculty and students and a groundswell of support.



9. Funding and Sustainability

The program was funded by a U.S. Department of Education Title-V grant, designed to improve Hispanic-serving institutions. The grant was awarded with the expectation that grant activities will be institutionalized. At every step, Project ACE faculty and staff are building and expanding the program with program sustainability and replication in mind. For example, faculty training workshops have been established through the College's training and development office. As new faculty members are trained in the curriculum, they will become eligible to facilitate the workshop for their peers in the future. The Project ACE staff are also mindful of integrating best practices already in place throughout the college into the program, as the familiarity of proven techniques that have already been adopted increase the likelihood that support for the program will be ongoing. An example of this may be seen in the inclusion of learning communities in the curriculum model. Many programs at Miami Dade College feature learning communities, and therefore, faculty readily integrate the model into their professional practice.

For more information, contact:

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