

For over forty years, AEI, Fresno State's Intensive English Program, has been providing non-credit ESL on campus to international students from around the world. Most AEI students hope to earn a degree at Fresno State after their English Studies.

The Problem

For the Summer 2015 session, close to 75% of registered students were from one country. AEI students complain when the population is not diverse.



"I am proud to study [at AEI]."
--Roberto

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Integrating the Campus and the Fresno Community: The Community Exchange Opportunity at the American English Institute

The Solution

AEI offered full scholarships to outstanding Fresno area adults who wished to study ESL on a part-time space-available basis. AEI chose personable, outgoing long-term residents who were eager to learn and share their experiences and culture with AEI students. The program is called the **"Community Exchange Opportunity."**

Results

- AEI classrooms became more diversified with 15 students from Ukraine, Mexico, Armenia, Japan, Laos, and El Salvador.
- AEI students learned about new cultures and about living in the United States.
- Community students got a high level of academic English instruction and the chance to meet people from a number of different countries.



Unexpected Results

- Community students raised the level of maturity of the AEI classrooms.
- Community students caused less first language use (more English) in the classroom.
- Community students took part in AEI and university activities and encouraged AEI students to do so.
- Community students were exposed to the university, encouraging them to re-examine their career goals.



"[Students] taught me how to say hello!...in seven different [languages]."
--Mario a speaker of Nahuatl, is now a language consultant for the Linguistics Department and may study Linguistics.

Next Steps

AEI will recruit a new cohort of Community Exchange Opportunity participants and allow current participants to continue their studies.

"I have learned more English, am more confident, and am not as shy."
--Yolanda