

ELI

Changes

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within the system but that the ELI itself is not the problem.

"The problem with the ELI is not with the ELI itself," Colegrove said at a recent meeting of the Faculty Senate. "The problem with the ELI is how it is implemented."

Colegrove said later that financial concerns appear to be a main point of controversy.

"When you are looking at the ELI in particular, I think you will find that they are doing their job," he said. "The problem, and what has everybody irked among the students, is the fact that it can cost a great deal. It's very expensive to go to the ELI. It's extremely expensive."

Deanna Wormuth, coordinator of the ELI, agrees with Colegrove that the ELI is the symbol rather than the source of the problem.

"We are identified as being the source of the entire problem," she says, "whereas, in fact, many of these decisions are not made by us or carried out by us. But we're kind of the visible one because this is where the student is asked to come, so we become the source."

Wormuth says the reason for the cost of ELI courses is the fact that the ELI receives no funds from the state or the University, although it does use University facilities.

She says she is aware that many foreign students take a hostile attitude toward the ELI and says that attitude has a "very definite impact" on the effectiveness of the program.

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dial training is — one, it shouldn't cost them an arm and a leg; and two, it should be taught within the University where normal University evaluations and performance requirements are expected and it should be more directed toward what they're actually going to be doing."

Anderson says this is one solution that he will be considering.

Another major problem that Young and his colleagues have pointed out with A&M's proficiency system is its inflexibility. They think incoming international students should be evaluated on a more case-by-case basis and that the department head and faculty adviser should be involved in that process.

Anderson agrees with this recommendation. "I think we should involve faculty and administrators in departments and colleges that play such a critical role in bringing graduate students to our campus and vital

role in planning the studies and research experience of our graduate students," Anderson says. "I believe the earlier in the process that the involvement of these people can be brought to bear, the greater is the likelihood that proper attention will be given to the English language training that each of them might require."

Anderson says he plans to begin formulating a new "concept and procedure" right away.

"I'm in the process now," he says, "of constructing a procedure for discussion purposes that is responsive to the many complaints of faculty and graduate students that have been brought to me."

"I plan to have this concept and procedure in a form complete enough for full discussion and comment by the end of March. I hope that we can adopt an improved concept and begin to implement new and improved procedures before the arrival of new graduate students this fall."

"Learning a language is very much related to one's attitude toward what one is doing," Wormuth says. "And when a student approaches it and says 'I don't need it, this is a waste of my time, I'm going to invest my energies in other areas,' then the student's not successful. You have to be somewhat committed."

Wormuth also says that if students weren't so caught up in time constraints, they would realize the value of the ELI program.

"The bottom line is it costs them money and time," Wormuth says. "Those are the two issues. I think if students were asked if they felt a need for additional help in English,

they would agree they need it. But they are concerned with the pressures of fulfilling a degree within a certain amount of time. They are also concerned with the cost of doing this."

"Upon entry it appears that it takes your time; upon reflection at exit, it may have been the mechanism that allowed you to finish up in the time that you did."

Stavi Hapzo Polous, a Ph.D. student in biomedical engineering from Greece, agrees with Wormuth's comments. He says he was somewhat resentful when he found out he would have to take a composition course at the ELI after getting a bachelor's degree at the University of Southern

California. But he says that once he got into the program, he realized the value of good communication skills and appreciated the efforts that Wormuth and her staff made to help him.

But Ry Young, a tenured professor of biochemistry who is outspoken against the ELI system, says the ELI itself is a major part of the problem.

"I don't believe the ELI accomplishes what is needed," Young says. "I don't yet have hard data. But anecdotally — which means just talking to a large number of foreign students — I have yet to find any of them, in fact I think it's fair to say I've never found a single one . . .

who told me that they thought they got their money's worth out of ELI."

Young is secretary of the Council of Investigative, an organization of research faculty that has been investigating the ELI system for more than a year. During that time, council members met more than once with Wormuth and other A&M administrators, but Young said they never received solid evidence that the ELI accomplishes its objectives.

"We were not than arbitrary evaluation, other than arbitrary evaluation, that the students actually gained anything from the ELI," Young said. "I'm sure if you forced them to write a lot of sentences and listen to a lot of expositions that they're going to get better at it, there's no doubt about that. But they're also apt to do that in a laboratory and in the University."

"The students, after spending 6 months or a year in the ELI, they are now better at English, no doubt about it. But the question is 'Did they get better at English because of the ELI, or did they get better at English because they've been here a year and been required to speak English all the time?'"

"I don't know whether either one of those is true, but I guess I fundamentally believe the foreign students when they tell me that they consider the ELI a rip-off."

"I think the only difference in these students, as far as I can tell, after ELI is they're a lot poorer and

more cynical about the American system."

Young says he takes a more radical stance than his colleagues in the CPI. In their conclusions, published in a February newsletter, CPI members called their findings "disturbing" and said they oppose A&M's current English proficiency system. Young says he wants the ELI to be abolished.

"I'd like to see the ELI abolished just totally abolished," he says. "Reformed, not anything. I'd just like to see it done away with entirely so the University spend some time on an honest effort to consider what things could be done to make sure that by the time a foreign graduate student has been here the full length of time, he is competent at the end of that period and can read and write it."

Young said he does not question the intentions of the ELI administrators and faculty but says they are addressing the real problems. He says foreign students are being taught generalized remedial English courses at the ELI rather than English skills that would be useful to them in the laboratory and classroom.

"I know these people are trying to do the best job they can, and I'm personally opposed to Deanna Wormuth or anybody else, but it doesn't mean that I think the ELI should continue," he says. "As long as the ELI exists, there'll be a tendency for everybody to assume that the problem is not there."

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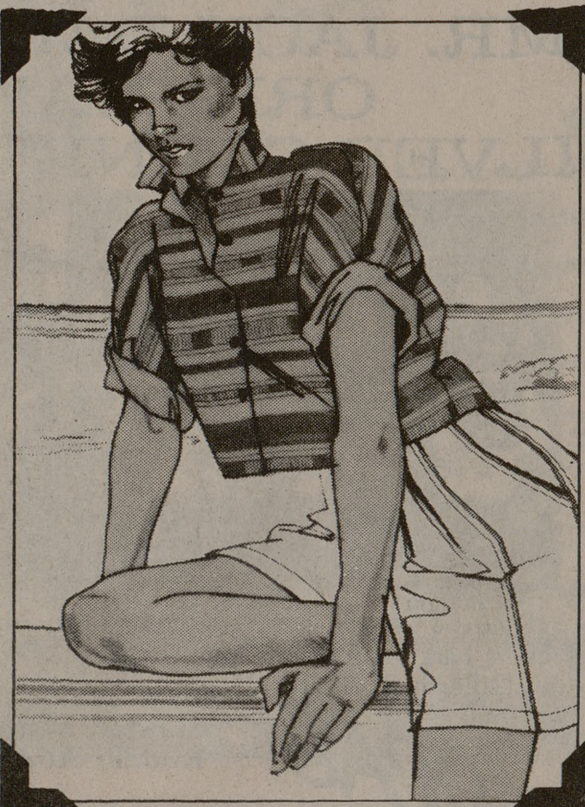
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