

Preparing English-Language Learners for the American Academy

New and Evolving Practices in Course-Integrated Information Literacy in International Student Programming

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Background

International students can sometimes be an overlooked population in academic libraries. At Virginia Commonwealth University, a university-wide initiative has put an emphasis on international education and growing global scholars. The VCU Libraries has created a new partnership with the university's Global Education Office (GEO) to strategically provide outreach and support to students interested in international education. Prior to the Fall 2012 semester, the Libraries' efforts were sporadic and uncoordinated, but with the development of a new liaisonship with a dedicated librarian, the relationship between the GEO and the Libraries has grown stronger, and support for GEO's students and staff has increased significantly.

The library has built new relationships with various program in the GEO, including international exchange and study abroad, services for international students, global education curricula, and the English language learning program. The library has started providing specialized services for students in all areas of the GEO, giving building tours, online resource guides, specialized workshops, and course-integrated library instruction.

Global Education Office

English Language Program

Offers intensive ESL study in six primary ESL skill areas: reading, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation and grammar.

Education Abroad

Assists students who wish to engage in international study.

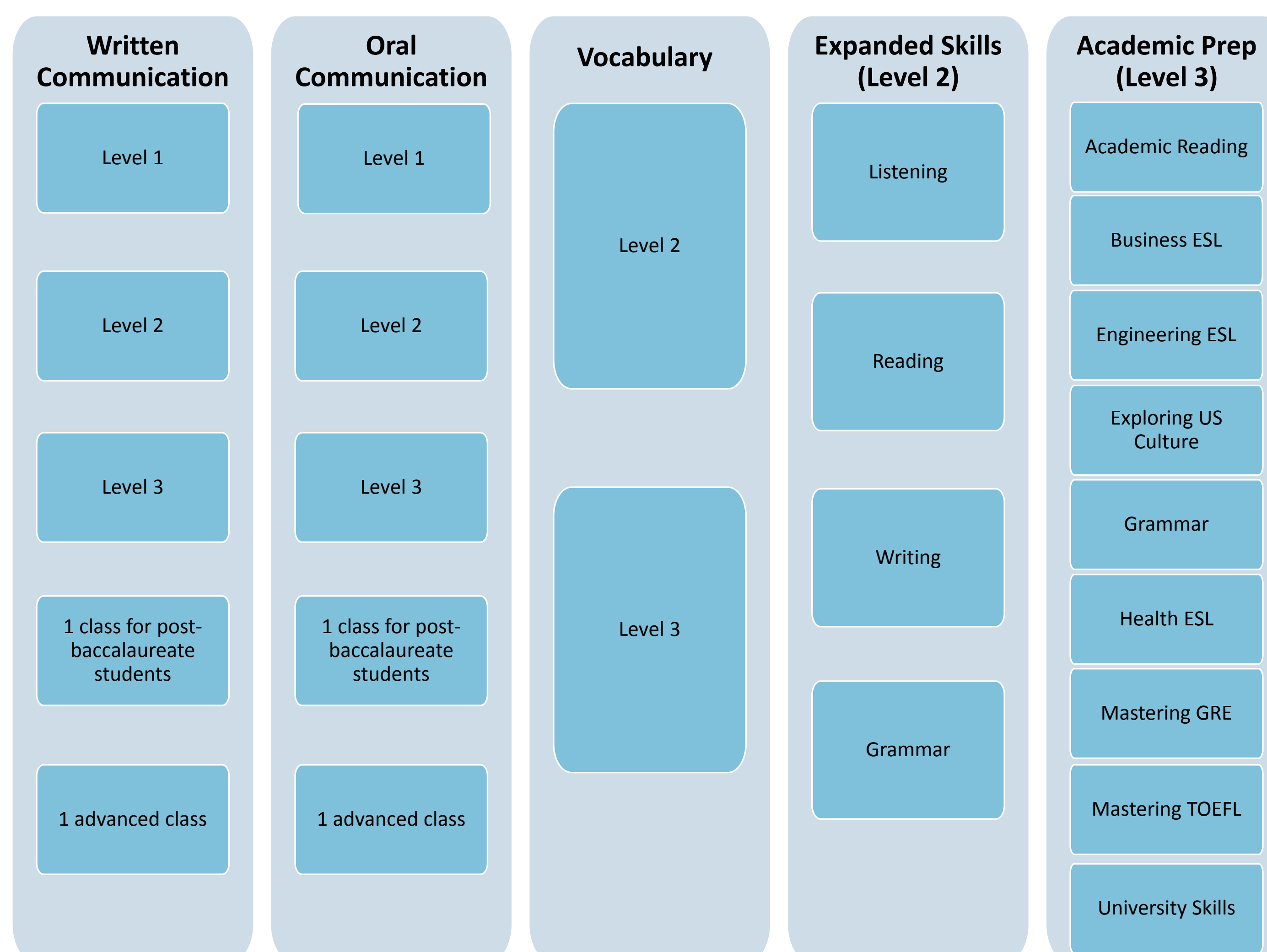
International Students and Scholars

Provides support to international students and scholars at VCU.

VCU Globe

A living-learning program which prepares students to live and work in a 21st-century global environment.

ELP Curriculum



Abstract

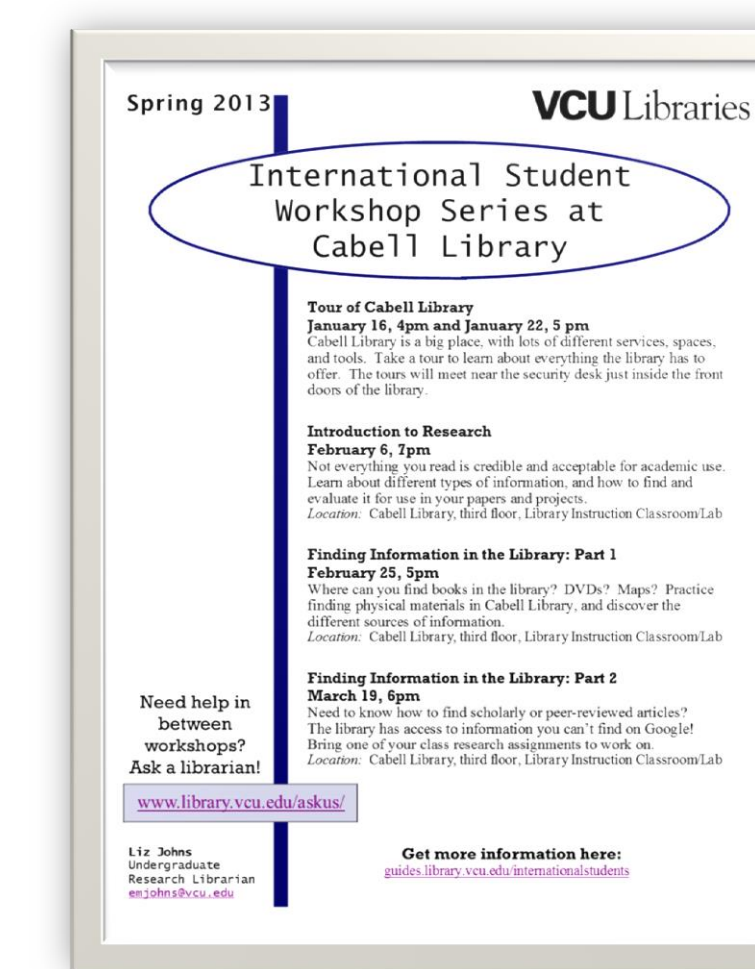
The VCU Libraries created a partnership with the university's English Language Program to strategically provide outreach and support to international English language learners for the rigors of an American university. Over the past year, the Libraries has been learning more about the ELP curriculum, and is working to integrate appropriate information literacy skills into these classes. This poster will discuss the project's progress, challenges, and successes, and knowledge gained through building this new relationship.

Goals

- Learn more about the ELP curriculum, faculty, and students
- Develop and integrate an information literacy program into the ELP
- Increase international student engagement with the library

Initial Strategy

- Met with ELP leaders and faculty to discuss ideas and learn about the curriculum and students.
- Created LibGuides for International Students and the ELP.
- Created a series of research workshops specifically tailored for international students.
- Offered individual and group consultations.
- Developed course-integrated instruction.



Challenges Encountered

- **Workshops had zero attendance.** Why? It was something extra, not required. Students had too many other more pressing activities surrounding survival in the U.S.!
- The initial interest from ELP instructors was very positive – but it quickly became frustrating for students. Most professors requested building tours and web orientations, so **students were getting repeat sessions.**
- **Very few individual research consultations.** We know the students need help but they are not asking for it.
- **Cultural differences.** Students (and sometimes faculty!) are more often than not more than 15 minutes late to library sessions.
- **Librarian learning curve.** The first class I taught was frustrating for me, the teaching faculty, and the students. Teaching English-language learners requires very different methodology and pedagogy.

A Revised Strategy = Greater Success

After encountering the challenges above, the library partnered with ELP faculty to focus on a strategic set of library and information literacy related activities. These activities are further described in the next section.

- Positive response to the course-integrated classes led to **a huge increase in library instruction, a better understanding of the ELP curriculum, and new relationships with GEO faculty.**
- More course-integrated classes led to **more international student interaction** with the library, and librarians gained a **greater sense of the international student** at VCU.

Number of ELP Library Instruction Sessions

Fall 2012	2
Spring 2013	22
Fall 2013	35
Spring 2014	38

Course-Integrated Information Literacy Programming

After collaborating with an ELP instructor to create one library-based activity, we decided to develop more activities that incorporated the library into the ELP curriculum. We discovered that many of the curricular goals could be supported with library services, materials and expertise. We started by developing one activity per class that incorporated the library in some way – either through the use of library resources and spaces in homework assignments, or through course-integrated class sessions with a librarian. The ultimate goal was to introduce the library in lower level classes, and at each level, increase student interaction through multiple library activities: 1 library activity in each level 1 class, 2 library activities in each level 2 class, and 3 library activities in each level 3, post-baccalaureate and advanced class. This allows for scaffolding of information literacy skills over time.

Examples of Information Literacy Activities for ELP Classes

- Web orientations for Written Communication 1 and building tours for Oral Communication 1.
- Introduction to library vocab and material types in level 2 classes.
- Written, Oral and Vocab level 3 classes develop search strategies and learn to search in Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar, and the VCU Libraries Search, respectively.
- Introduction to copyright and fair use for Advanced Oral Communication.
- Subject specific resources introduced in Academic Prep courses, such as a Factiva introduction for Business ESL.

Featured Activity:

Expanded Listening Skills: "How the Library can help Prevent Sleep Deprivation"

Expanded Listening Skills helps students prepare for academic lectures. Much of the course is spent listening to recorded lectures and podcasts, and taking notes. The class is divided into themed units that also help with new vocabulary, and other issues related to success at an American university, such as getting enough sleep. The instructor asked that I create a lecture related to something about the library, and mentioned that they were in the middle of a unit on sleep deprivation, and asked that I incorporate a few of their current vocabulary words. The resulting lecture not only incorporated the unit vocabulary, but tied the library directly to their theme.

View the slideshow: tinyurl.com/elp203-listen

Next Steps

- **Review learning outcomes** for each current activity and ensure they fit in with the current ELP curricular goals.
- **Add more activities** to the areas that are lacking.
- **Assessment** of student learning and the impact of the library activities on international student engagement with the library.
- **Increase face time** with ELP faculty at faculty meetings, invitations to library information sessions for faculty, and more participation at international student events.

Learn More

Research Guide for ELP
guides.library.vcu.edu/elp

Research Guide for International Students
guides.library.vcu.edu/international-students

LiveBinder for ELP Faculty
go.vcu.edu/library-elp

VCU Library Website
library.vcu.edu

GEO Website
global.vcu.edu

Recommended Readings

Conteh-Morgan, M. E. (2001). Empowering ESL students: A new model for information literacy instruction. *Research Strategies*, 18, 29-38.

Herring, D. A. (2014). A Purposeful Collaboration: Using a Library Course Enhancement Grant Program to Enrich ESL Instruction. *The Reference Librarian*, 55:2, 128-143.

Hickok, J. (2005). ESL (English as a Second Language) Web Sites: Resources for Library Administrators, Librarians, and ESL Library Users. *Journal of Library Administration*, 43, 247-262. Retrieved from haworthpress.com/web/JLA.

Jackson, P. A. (2011). *International students and academic libraries: initiatives for success*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Sovic, S. (2013). *International students negotiating higher education: critical perspectives*. New York: Routledge.