

Editor's Note

In December 2018, Colleges and Universities from around the region convened at the University of Kansas to present at the *Building Bridges for English Language Centers* conference. The conference explored relationships among ESL practitioners, English language center staff and administrators, and others across the campus. In short, the conference brought together a variety of university professionals to shed light on their roles in English language centers.

Bringing together both domestic and international students, McClendon, Pacioianu, Routsong, and Williams describe interdisciplinary models where ESL students interact with domestic students in Communications Studies, English 101, and Education courses. In their article, *Building Bridges in Classrooms: Collaboration for Integration and Globalization*, the authors describe class projects that allow for authentic interaction, setting up two-way opportunities for learning and cultural awareness that go beyond classroom assignments. The authors also provide student comments to give specific insights into how non-native and native English speaking students reacted to these unique opportunities in international education.

In her article, *Promoting Your Department and Practice with Twitter*, Thiessen builds bridges across the University and beyond through Twitter. This social media platform flattens out University hierarchies and allows ESL instructors, Deans, and University Chancellors to communicate directly with each other overriding barriers that arise from organizational charts. Twitter can also be used by ESL practitioners and IEPs to raise their visibility and build professional relationships, which is especially important during this difficult time in our profession. Thiessen also demystifies Twitter for the novice ESL professional, provides clear explanations for using Twitter, and offers advice for engaging with the wider ESL and educational community.

Sood and Taveggia report on their experience teaching in a pathways program, where students are co-enrolled in EAP courses and General Education courses such as Environmental Studies and American Studies. Their article, *From General ESL to EAP: A Fall Leap*, discusses their transition from ESL instructors focusing more on general English language development to EAP instructors helping students use English and other academic skills to negotiate academic content from specific disciplines. This firsthand account offers candid discussion on using specialized knowledge or content from General Education and other disciplines in the EAP

classroom, which is perhaps one of the most significant concerns of general ESL instructors who transition to teaching EAP.

Berardo, Šedriks, Lamer, and Greene outline two short-term programs that require the involvement of different departments on campus as well as international education specialists such as the Education Program Coordinator. Their article, *Re-Envisioning ESL for Short-Term Programs*, goes beyond the IEP to begin to re-position the ESL/EAP practitioner as an instructor/guide for participants in international short-term programs. Rather than focusing on the traditional 4-skills, grammar, and vocabulary, the ESL/EAP practitioner contributes to the short-term program by providing classroom space for program participants to critically examine their international education experience in its entirety. Critical exploration of the international education experience is done in English through writing and speaking activities, making the ESL/EAP professional uniquely qualified for this role.

Larson's article, *Addressing Cultural Challenges of Teaching English to Chinese Students for Beginning ESL Instructors*, tackles cultural perceptions about Chinese students for ESL instructors who may be working with Chinese students early in their career. The author bases her observations, perceptions, and advice on much firsthand experience studying and working in China as well as teaching ESL to Chinese students in her IEP. Written from a Western perspective, the paper reveals North American cultural values as well. Key issues the author deals with are integrating students into the larger community, saving face and risking embarrassment, critical thinking and plagiarism, as well as cross-cultural perceptions maturity and privacy.

The primary mission of English language centers includes preparing international students who have not yet met the University's ESL requirement for academic success. ESL and EAP courses are at the heart of this mission. The conference, *Building Bridges for English Language Centers*, demonstrated that there is much involved in the successful implementation of this kind of preparation. The conference broadened the discussion to illuminate the bigger picture: relationships with colleagues across disciplines, networking and new media, professional journeys from ESL to EAP, relationships among instructors, staff, and administrators, and the cultural complexity in the ESL classroom at the University today. Recognizing the profession in its entirety allows us to see beyond our silos, work more effectively together, and make relationships with colleagues and other professionals on and off campus.

Marcellino Berardo
University of Kansas