

ELP STUDENT NEWS

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Get ready...it's time to register for academic classes

Good news! Registration for academic classes is just around the corner. For all you ELP students, who are also currently enrolled in a VCU degree-seeking program, please take note of the following registration dates for Fall 2005:

- Honors students.....March 28
- Graduate students.....April 4
- Post-baccalaureate certificate seekers.April 6
- Seniors.....April 6
- Juniors.....April 11
- Sophomores.....April 18
- Freshmen.....April 25
- Special non-degree seeking students.....May 2

You will have to register for any prerequisite ELP classes and receive a Clearance Form before you can register for your academic classes. Please meet with Jessica in the ELP Office to get your Clearance Form and register.

How can ELP help you in academic classes?

By: Ming Iu Shih, Taiwan

I just finished my ELP classes last semester in VCU. Actually, I was an ELP student for over one year. Most study strategies that have helped me in my academic classes came from ELP, and I believe all ELP students who learn these skills will benefit as I did.

I am a Master of Public Administration (MPA) student. This year is my third semester of being a graduate student, and, like many students, I took both ELP and academic classes at the same time for one year. It was difficult and busy to study in both classes for me. However, I would tell you that ELP classes can help you accommodate the academic career more easily if you can stay involved in your classes

In my personal perspective, either learning a language or studying unfamiliar subjects is not easy when you first start. That's not even saying how hard it is to study at a university in a foreign language. I remembered how nervous I was in my first academic class last year. At that time, the only thing that supported me and helped me stay caught up my academic studies was the important learning experiences that I got from my ELP classes. For example, I could not completely understand most of the speaking of my professors or classmates in the classes at first. Probably, I got 50% or less of the discussions. It was similar to how I felt in my first ELP class. My success came from the strategies that I learned in the ELP classes. I remembered my ELP teachers saying to find key points and write them down logically in my notes. I did that and soon I began to understand more and more.

Another important practice that I learned in my ELP classes is how important it is to build the effective and efficient communication between you and your teachers or team project partners. These strategies helped me to improve my communicating skill in English. This also helped me reduce the unnecessary mistakes of my speaking in academic classes.

Thanks to ELP, I believe I can deal with my academic classes easily and I know how to manage the situations that come up. I have learned many study skills as an ELP student. Therefore, I encourage ELP students to participate more in your classes and you will do better in your academic performance in future.

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Language makes people feel closer together

By Stephanie Shih, Taiwan

In the world, the best way to communicate with people is language. The different countries have different language. Most people learn their language when they are a child. There are many different ways to learn a language. I want to discuss the three common ways to learn language.

The most basic way is from family. The children's first language comes from their parents. Their mother and father will teach their children to talk with them. They learn native language from their parents. Before the children go to school, their parents teach them to communicate. It is very natural way to learn a language.

Second, the children learn language from school. The teachers teach the children new knowledge. The classmates also can affect the children to learn language. They play and talk together, so they can learn very fast in the school.

Finally, they can learn language by them self. Now, many children learn language from media. They imitate from TV, computer, or video. They can learn different language by those media. More and more parents like to let their children watch media, but sometime those can teach the children bad knowledge.

There are many ways to learn language. People learn language is most important in the world because the language can communicate with different people. As we all know, knowing how to use language can solve different problems and communication is necessary in everything that you do.



Communication across Culture

By: Maheen Perwez, Pakistan

What does it mean to “communicate across cultures”? Before starting discussing this topic, I would like to define culture and communication. In simple words, we can define it as the art and technique of effectively being able to impart information or ideas like behavior, patterns, art, beliefs and many more.

Communicating across culture is a vast topic to write about. It is an interesting topic when you start comparing the different aspects of culture between the native and non-native people. Communication fills up the gap between the native and non-native, as it does for me. When I came to the USA, it was very difficult for me to communicate with native people because their language, the way they talk, customs, belief, food and clothes were different from mine. It was a challenge for me but I accept the challenge and start focusing on communication, which helps me a lot of to overcome my fear and I started feeling more comfortable in the environment. Communication also raises the understanding of culture, like every country or region within the country have a unique common heritage and society.

I would like to conclude by the saying that communication across culture is rewarding because it brings mutual understanding, it opens people to listen. In short, it brings an effective global communication. On the other hand, some people may disagree with me but I guess it is up to the people how they want to perceive it.

Are you feeling stressed?

Studying in a foreign country is exciting but can also be a stressful experience. *VCU Counseling Services* provides many types of services to help manage your emotional and mental well-being. The programs will teach you to use strategies and skills that will help you manage your life and reach your academic and personal goals.

When should I consider counseling? When you are feeling worried or overwhelmed or weighted down by life, anxious about school, or struggling in your relationships with other students or friends. If you feel like you have too much stress or that you need a way to better manage your stress, you should consider counseling.

How do I make an appointment? You can telephone 828-6200 or stop by the office. The *VCU Counseling Services* office is located in the Student Commons in room 225. The counselors will help you schedule an appointment.

Have you been...?

- feeling homesick
- experiencing culture shock
- feeling like others don't like you
- wanting to clarify American customs
- worrying that your English is not good enough
- worrying about being a failure or disappointment to your parents
- feeling upset over the break-up of a romantic relationship
- feeling conflict regarding your own needs versus those of their parents
- having difficulties getting up and going to classes because of feelings of depression

VCU Counseling Services is a safe and pleasant place to talk, and **you don't have to worry about your English skills.** Counselors are trained to be aware of the cultural and language differences that they may meet when working with international students.

Click on the link for more information:

<http://www.students.vcu.edu/counsel/students.html>



Be Proud!

By: Kai-Hsin Su, Taiwan

Have you ever had to repeat a sentence over and over again in order for people to understand you? Do not get frustrated and say, "Forget it," after you repeat it for what feels like a million times. Do not give up. Tell them what you want to say. It is not your fault! Do not feel ashamed. English is a difficult language. Be proud of yourself and talk.

Do you worry about your accent? Be Proud! English is a level four language, which means it is one of the hardest languages in the world. English is difficult to pronounce, listen to, read and write. It takes time. Be proud of yourself and learn from your mistakes.

Are you nervous about talking to "Americans"? Be Proud! They are just another kind of species on the Earth, just like you, the girl who sits next to you, or maybe your best friend from another country. Try to talk to Americans or other International students next time you go to the International Coffee Hour. All of the students, instructors, and people who go there are very friendly and are interested about your cultures, experiences of living abroad, and feelings. So talk to them. Be proud!

Be proud of yourself and learn from your mistakes. English is a difficult language; so do not get frustrated when people do not understand you. Talk to Americans or other International students and practice. Be proud!

DATES TO REMEMBER ELP SESSION INFORMATION

Sessions	Placement Test Dates	Class Start – End Dates
Summer 2005	June 20	June 27- August 5, 2005
Fall I, 2005	August 23	August 29 – October 13, 2005
Fall II, 2005	October 19	October 24- December 9, 2005
Winter, 2006	January 9	January 17 – March 3, 2006
Spring, 2006	March 14	March 20- May 2, 2006

SPRING & SUMMER 2005 ACTIVITIES

April 16: Country Cookout Come to the countryside to relax and have fun. Play volleyball, take a leisurely walk and then have dinner with friends.

July 4: Independence Day Celebration at Dogwood Dell. Celebrate the birthday of the U.S. We will have a picnic dinner, listen to bands play music and watch fireworks.

July 16: Washington, D.C. Spend a day in our nation's capital exploring the Smithsonian museums, the famous monuments and have your picture taken in front of the White House.

July 30: Canoe and Kayak River Trip and Dinner
We'll spend a day paddling along a beautiful river and finish with a picnic dinner at a 200 year old country home where you can play volleyball, soccer or just sit and relax.

Please contact Bob Wood (rawood@vcu.edu) or Pam Haney (pohaney@vcu.edu) with questions.

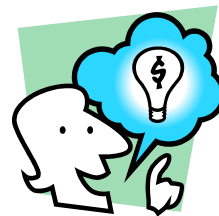
Your Country Helps You to Communicate

By: Olga Borisova, Russia

The ability of people to communicate with people from different countries depends on cultures of the countries where the people come from. Every country has its own culture, which includes rules, religion, morality and which determines the life style of people.

Some countries have rules and morality which other countries don't accept at all. In most countries, parents raise their children based on these society rules. So, when people visit a foreign country they can meet misunderstanding and have difficulties communicating. For instance, in some countries, women don't have many rights. If they come to European countries, it will be harder for them to communicate because women and men have equal rights in Europe. For those women, it can seem rude when a man wants to speak with them, so when they visit other countries, it is easier for them to say their opinion, to change and to ask some information.

So, people from different countries communicate in different ways. In my opinion, the more friendly the culture and the more democratic the country, the more communicable the people. They are more open to help other people and it is easier for them to ask for help. So, I think that every country should be more adaptable in order to make people's life more pleasant. An opportunity to communicate with other countries can open many other opportunities in our life.



Do you have any ideas for the "ELP Student News"?

E-mail your ideas to Brian at btarnold@vcu.edu

ELP Teacher Profile - Getting to know the faculty.

Diane Bumpass

- **Born:** Montpelier, Hanover County, Virginia
- **Bachelors Degree:** Radford University in Radford, Virginia
 - Triple Major in Statistics, Math and Computer Science
 - "I liked math and computers, so I tried statistics and loved it. The majors just worked so well together that I decided to get a triple major."
 - "What's interesting is that I worked for 6 years as a mathematician at an insurance company where my mother had worked before I was born."
- **How did you become an ESL teacher?**
 - "I wanted to work more with people, and I have always liked language and world cultures. Teaching ESL put all that together, so I went back to school at Columbia International University."
 - **Masters Degree: Teaching English to Speakers Of Other Languages (TESOL)**
 - Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina
 - "South Carolina was okay, but I wanted to come back home to Virginia."
 - "I later got a job at VCU and came home."
- **What is your job at ELP?**
 - "I'm the Writing/Grammar Chairperson. I'm in charge of what is taught in W/G classes."
 - "Working with wonderful people makes this job fun."
- **What do you like most about working at ELP?**
 - "I really enjoy seeing how each class makes the experience of teaching and learning a little different. It's the 'little differences' that make my job enjoyable."
- **Hobbies: Knitting, traveling and bird watching**
 - "Some of the places that I've traveled to include Russia, Romania, Morocco, Guatemala, Mexico, Canada, and India. I really enjoy experiencing different people and places."

Conflicting Cultural Differences



By: Darshan Patel, Zambia, Africa

Today in the world there are many different beliefs and cultures. Back in the days culture varied from continent to continent, but today there are many people from a different country going to a country that is totally new to them. A person who comes from a country where he has been raised with different knowledge, morals and beliefs might think that people who do things in a different way compared to the way he does things is wrong and the only way to do it is the way that he does it. Many people now are moving to different places and exploring the different cultures that exist in the world today. They want to know why people do certain things in a different manner, they want to learn and know more about the different backgrounds of various people and interact with them. There are some difficulties in the path to knowing one's cultural beliefs like communication problems, different styles of eating their meals and making new friends.

Language is the most important thing that one has to be fluent at before he goes to a new place. He or she has to be able to communicate clearly with the native people of that country or state. If a person does not know how to ask or talk about a certain thing, they might get into an argument with another person because that person did not clearly understand what was said. Sometimes misunderstandings may lead to great consequences, which could have a huge impact on the impression of a certain group of people that have different beliefs. Good communication skills can come in handy when a person, for example would like to order food at a restaurant, he might not say a word correctly or describe his meal to his perfection and would end up getting something other than what he ordered.

The other thing that might be a problem when trying to interact with someone of a different culture is the types of food that a person eats and the way a person eats it. A person who is new to a place like the United States might be able to get used to the way many Americans eat their meals, always rushing because they have better things to do than wasting too much time eating. Compared to a person from a European country who, likes to have at least three hours when he is dining and wants to relax and enjoy his meal rather than his friend who is shoving food down his throat. Another example of a conflict between cultures would be times when people for example in the US like to have their meals while watching tv, this would conflict with the way many Europeans like to eat their meal. They tend to talk about things they did during the course of the day and things they need to be the next day. Many people would think that eating food while watching a tv show is wrong and inappropriate but that is just the way some people were brought up, they learnt to eat their food while watching tv because their parents did the same thing.

Making friends in America

Ever tried making friends in a totally new place? People who migrate to different nations have hard times getting involved socially because they don't know people who would be willing to listen to them talk about something. It takes many immigrants years to build new friendships and trust in natives of that specific place. They don't get their start as soon as they set foot in a new place, they have to find a place where people meet and talk about many different things that evolve around their lives. Places like sports bars, bars, gyms and high school football games are just a few examples where new people in a community can meet and get to know other people. Places like these may be the starting points for new people to get acquainted with the new and different environment. Often many people with different cultural backgrounds have a hard time finding something to talk about other than the weather, which could be because of the way they were brought up. They could have been kept away from different people and not taught how to make new friends in their childhood days.

Cultural differences can lead to seclusions from a certain group of people for a period of time, until a person comes out of his "shell" and opens up and willing to take a few risks at knowing different culture; its origins and its beliefs. No culture in the world today is right or wrong, it depends on the way people view the beliefs and customs of another man's culture. People should learn to view each other's beliefs as valuable and not just some wrong belief. The world is getting more diverse due to many modes of transportation and communication that are revolutionizing it day to day, people should take advantage of this and get to know more about things they see in their daily lives and also know why people do things differently.

The "magic" in America for me

By: Awer G. Bul, Sudan

There was no better word to use for American food than "delicious." It is the best terminology to use. My first breakfast was the best meal I have ever had. It was: a bowl of cereals with milk; a sausage, egg with cheese biscuit; pancakes with syrups; and a glass of milk. This was something I have not have before.

My first thought after this wonderful meal for a long time was to wakeup in the morning and get ready for breakfast, but right at noon that day, my hope of getting up in the morning was ruined. There was a lot of ingredients: beef, bread, rice, ham, and a lot more on the table. There was no definition of dinner if the both breakfast and lunch tasted this delicious, there was one important thing.

Time was running faster than I expected. I came to the table but now my appetite was gone. The only best thing I tried was sweet potato, and I asked Mrs. Carol if I could leave the table, but she said that I did not use the "magic word"... "What magic word?" I wondered. "Please is the 'magic word'" she told me.

"What a place America is," I thought. Magic food and magic words.

Unfortunately, I was getting sick from eating American food by that night, but still I wanted to wakeup in the morning for that breakfast. I was now introduced to the new house and I wanted to learn to cook American food. I decided to wake up early to learn to prepare my own breakfast. I just had to learn to eat and make the magic American food.

When I first arrived in the U.S., I was skinny. I did not know if I would have a good chance to get used to American food, but I tried and tried even though there were so many different foods. I was in terrible bad shape at first because I was confused about what I should eat. Foods were mostly defined as junk food, and I decided to keep trying all of the food until I found my favorite. I'm still trying, and so far, all of the food is my favorite.