



Ancilla College launches ACEL program for non-English speakers

Ancilla College is launching a new program this fall developed and designed to support students who are coming to college reading and speaking English as a second language. The ACEL Program is Ancilla's newest program aimed at helping students to develop college-level English language and study skills.

"We want to help all students achieve at Ancilla. Students from around the globe or right here in Indiana can apply to Ancilla College and join a series of specially designed classes that support English language knowledge and communication skills alongside our traditional liberal arts curriculum," said Prof. Sam Soliman, Ancilla's interim vice president for academic affairs.

"Ancilla students in the ACEL program will take an extra class with more intensive language skill training. They will also be earning regular college credits in pursuit of one of our 25 degree programs," Soliman said.

They will be simultaneously earning a college degree that transfers to major universities around the country, and also develop high quality, college-level, English language and study skills, he said.

"The ACEL program is not limited to foreign students. We are seeing a lot of interest from first and second-generation students with some decent English skills but they want to be college-ready," Soliman said.

Classes will give students practice to develop stronger English skills alongside living, eating, and studying with English speakers. The classes will include social and cultural experiences, learning related vocabulary, with written and oral responses to the experiences.

ACEL students will live on campus, engage with Ancilla students from Indiana around the world, take classes, work in special study groups, and take part in cultural events and trips. "This is an immersive program for students who want to become prepared college students. This will include ESL students from the United States or around the world," said Eric Wignall, vice president of enrollment at the college.

"Ancilla is small, with just under 600 students, but we are amazingly diverse. Along with students from 112 Indiana high schools we enroll students from 20 different countries and 14 states," Wignall

said.

In an environment of uncertainty about foreign student admissions in the United States, Ancilla has seen their overseas enrollment grow by over 50 percent in the last six years. The college, located near Plymouth, Indiana, is about a two hour drive from Chicago's O'Hare Airport or Indianapolis International Airport.

In the last three years the college, a two-year, associate's degree school, has added a several academic programs and signed transfer agreements to more than 25 major universities across the Midwest. Since 2013 new student enrollment has increased 124 percent at the small Catholic school, founded in 1937.

"International students at Ancilla have mostly been student-athletes recruited to play soccer, basketball, and baseball but that's changing," Wignall said. "Today we're seeing interest from students from across the globe who have good English skills but just that extra time and study to make reading, writing, and presentation skills truly college-ready."