Development of the Academic Resource Center
at Miyazaki International College
March 22, 2014

In response to a request from the Dean and Assistant to the Dean, the English faculty at Miyazaki International College (MIC) established a working group to develop a vision for a viable, functioning Academic Resource Center (ARC). This document contains a statement of that vision as well as a plan of action for the next two years.

Purpose
The purposes of self-access programming need to be meaningful and readily apparent to both students and faculty. They should be seamlessly integrated with the curriculum so that the two are mutually supportive. Finally, there must be something about ARC offerings which compels students to use them; why study the Academic Word List, do extensive reading, or learn about grammar points in the ARC if these things can be done more naturally elsewhere?

Though the ARC could gradually increase in variety of programming over time, we view the initial purpose of the ARC as being to address learners' linguistic needs in an individualized way.

MIC attracts students with a broad range of language abilities. In any yearly intake, students' initial TOEIC scores range from as low as 200 to over 750. This vast range of proficiency poses a substantial challenge for providing classroom instruction that meets all students' needs. Learners who could benefit from individualized attention beyond that which is available in the classroom include those who:

- lack fundamental, prerequisite knowledge for the streamed English and Academic Writing classes (and the Reading courses beginning in 2015);

- are of low English proficiency and enrolled in English-medium content courses;

- need to improve their TOEIC score for entry into the upper division, the Teacher Certification practicum, or employment purposes;

- wish to improve specific aspects of English during either the academic year or vacation periods; or

- are of exceptionally high proficiency.

We view a second purpose of ARC programming as being to promote learner autonomy so that students become better at goal-setting, developing plans of study, identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, and monitoring goal achievement.

Programming
We envision the ARC as offering learning experiences ranging from informal drop-ins to credit-bearing online courses. Below is a general overview of several program types which could run out of the ARC.

Classroom Referral and Informal Drop-Ins
We see the ARC as being equipped with a full range of up-to-date, photocopiable English-learning resources in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, TOEIC, and functional language use. There would also be a catalogued selection of online resources in these same

areas as well as in reading, listening, and speaking, and these resources would be easily accessible both on and off campus.

Some of these resources would be organized according to learning objectives for existing courses, and classroom teachers could refer students to make use of them. Students with persistent problems using modals of advice, as one example, could be referred to the ARC with a brief description of the problem, and ARC personnel could orient the learners to related resources and assist as needed. This process would be systematized so that ARC personnel could prepare for students before their visit, and classroom teachers could know the outcome of the learning experience.

In addition to classroom referrals, students could also make free use of ARC materials with or without assistance from ARC personnel. To encourage such use, each incoming cohort could be given a thorough orientation to the ARC, and programming could be advertised around campus and online.

ARC as Writing Center
The ARC could also function as a writing center. Rather than being a place where students get entire pieces of writing "checked" before submitting them to classroom teachers, however, we envisage the ARC helping students become more autonomous in their writing.

In an orientation session, students would initially learn to use a checklist or rubric to identify ways to improve their own work. They would then independently go through their writing. In this process, they would consider such things as organization, lexis, grammar, and content, and they would identify specific areas to discuss with ARC personnel in a subsequent appointment. During this appointment, students would take the lead in asking for help with the specific points identified through use of the rubric.

Credit-Bearing, Mixed-Mode Courses
The ARC could also offer a variety of credit-bearing courses. Such courses would make use of online resources for teacher-guided self-study in areas such as vocabulary, grammar, listening, pronunciation, and extensive reading. In these courses, students might initially meet with ARC personnel to go through the course syllabus, determine appropriate goals, and learn to use the learning resource. Course requirements would include regular use of the resource, periodic assessment, and at least two follow-up one-on-one consultations with ARC personnel. The purposes of these consultations would be to find out whether learners are experiencing difficulties using the resource, to provide feedback on student progress, and to provide structure to the experience. Assignments could be checked online and, like any other class, would be required to earn credit.

Such courses could stand alone, be optional for some students in a class, or be co-requisite with a regular class. Here are three examples of how this might work: upper division students who wished to continue systematic study of vocabulary could do so by enrolling in a stand-alone ARC vocabulary course; or students in the streamed English program who lack prerequisite knowledge of English grammar for even the lowest level could be required to take an appropriate ARC class to develop this knowledge; or students in the new reading classes could possibly take extensive reading quizzes in the ARC after having completed the reading elsewhere.

Student Tutor Program

Students who have been identified as having particularly high English proficiency could be recruited to act as tutors for students of lesser ability. For recruitment, a program could be developed to give TC students the opportunity to be tutors in order to gain experience in the role of educator; similarly, it may be possible to request that teachers of the career education courses promote the program as a way of improving a resume. The tutors could be assigned to staff the ARC alongside MIC faculty or, to a lesser extent, during times when no members of faculty are available. They could provide informal assistance with school work as well as support with some of the resources described above. These tutors would be given an orientation to help them understand the various resources in the ARC as well as the role of the ARC in promoting learner independence.

Programs to Be Piloted in 2014
Several programs are scheduled to be piloted in 2014. They include:

- The use of the ARC as a writing center as described above.

- An online study of vocabulary for upper division TC students. For this program, students' vocabulary knowledge will first be assessed. In consultation with ARC personnel, students will then set learning goals. These goals could include focused study of high-frequency words, academic vocabulary, or terms needed for success on the TOEIC. Students will then be oriented to the use of Quizlet.com, a website where a number of self-study vocabulary resources at various levels have been prepared for MIC students. ARC personnel will monitor student use of the resource, consult with each learner periodically during the semester, and assess learning.

- An online study of listening and pronunciation, also for upper division TC students. For this program, students will be oriented to use of the English Central online learning resource. Learning goals will then be set and, like above, periodic consultation and assessment will round out the program.

Staffing
Substantial faculty involvement is needed to establish and maintain quality self-access programs. It must also be considered that expertise in this kind of programming will only develop with time and experience. For these reasons, it is preferable that the same member of faculty be consistently assigned to the ARC and with few or no other teaching obligations. This allotment of teaching resources would be equivalent of up to six teaching assignments per year. With some creativity, this is possible without the addition of a new faculty member.

First, the English classes, which currently run on a half-semester system, could be converted to a semester system. This would free up three or four teaching assignments each year because in the fall, when second-year students are off campus, just three or four sections of English would be needed instead of the seven which currently run. This option will come up for discussion among the English faculty later this year anyway; with the addition of the Reading classes next year, the English program will be comprised of three separate courses each semester, and making them all similar in format would make the system easier to understand and administer.

Second, the addition of the new English teacher in the Department of Liberal Arts in the spring of 2014 has led to increased staffing flexibility. This is evident by the fact that for the first time in several years, we are able to assign one member from this department to the ARC

in each semester.[1]

Finally, we could be more flexible with the format of the Bridge English course for students who have not met the upper division TOEIC requirement. This course currently requires one teaching assignment each semester. However, when staffing is limited, it could be run out of the ARC in a partially online format, perhaps meeting face-to-face one hour per week. Tying this course to the ARC would be consistent with the purposes of ARC programming discussed above. Moreover, decreasing the amount of face-to-face instruction would be offset beginning in 2015 when students in this course will also have available to them a full complement of English, Academic Writing, and Reading classes.

Proposed Course of Action
In the development of ARC programming, it may be beneficial to adopt a philosophy that seeks to begin by doing a small number of things well and then builds on these core programs over time. We therefore suggest the following timeline, or something similar to it:

2014
- Allocate one or two teaching assignment to the ARC in each semester; these would include faculty from either department.

- Staff the ARC during lunch and late afternoon hours primarily with faculty members assigned to the ARC and to a lesser extent with other faculty members.

- As described above, pilot the writing center, vocabulary course for TC students, and listening and pronunciation course for TC students.

- Possibly propose the establishment of credit bearing courses (to begin in 2015) based on the pilot programs.

- Develop self-access resources which (a) specifically address objectives in the English program or (b) address basic knowledge which is considered prerequisite for the English program; prepare to pilot these resources in 2015.

2015
- Trial the assignment of one member of faculty to the ARC with few or no other teaching assignments.

- Staff the ARC with the person assigned to it.

- Begin a small number of credit-bearing courses.

- Pilot the self-access resources for the English program which were developed in 2014.

- Pilot a system of peer tutors as discussed above.

- In the fall, assess all ARC programming and determine whether to continue with fulltime staffing.

An approach such as that outlined above is aimed at incubating success but, should the decision be made to discontinue fulltime staffing, only calls for a substantial staffing commitment of one year.

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[1] This does not include the ARC-related work of Professor Murray, which is through the ==Department of Education.==