April 2, 2010

Presidential Review Committee

Dear Sir or Madam:

As the Director of the Office of International Students & Scholars, I am writing to support the continued operation of the English Language Center. The Center provides crucial services which enable international students to come to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Leaders in the state of Nevada recognize the importance of having international students at our institutions of higher education. In May 2005, the Nevada State Assembly and Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 38 which states “Nevada is committed to encouraging students from other countries to study in this state.” Closing the UNLV’s English Language Center would be in opposition to that resolution.

UNLV has been fortunate to enroll international students from all over the world with basically no recruiting. International students must enroll full-time in accordance with federal regulations and as a result, they increase the university’s full-time FTE. They also pay non-resident tuition throughout their studies. According to the Open Doors 2009 Report published by the Institute of International Education, international students contributed $70.1 million dollars to the Nevada economy in 2008. Despite challenges such as 9/11 or the economic down turn, the number of UNLV’s full-time FTE international students has often increased or remained level over the last ten years. Other schools have lost international students, but not UNLV.

We now have 1364 international students. Those students pay an additional admissions application fee to support the international admissions processes in Undergraduate Admissions and in the Graduate College. International students also pay a special enrollment fee which supports the majority of the specialized operations of my department. I point these facts out to reassure you that international students are not an additional expense for the university.

One major reason why the university is able to attract international students without recruiting is the English Language Center. Countless students contact my office asking how they can come to UNLV as soon as possible even if they do not yet have the necessary English proficiency. They ask that question because other comparable universities offer some type of English Language instruction as a bridge to enrollment. When we explain to them that we have our own English Language Center and that the Center enables a student to be admitted into the major of English as a Second Language, they are thrilled. I am absolutely certain that without the English Language Center as a link to enrollment to UNLV, the university would see the number of international students decrease and continue to decrease for the first time in over a decade.
The English Language Center is more than a recruiting tool for international students. It also provides academic transition and support to ensure that students who speak English as a second language can still successfully become members of our campus community. Both international students and domestic students who need to build their English skills find more than just English courses at the Center. They also find assistance with how to be successful in an academic classroom in their new country and they receive advising and guidance about academic expectations that they cannot get anywhere else due to their initial limited English skills. Even graduate students need the Center to assist them with accent reduction. Also, of the approximately 225 international graduate assistants – mostly in the Sciences, Math, and Engineering fields - those who serve as TAs take the Speak Test at the Center. Without the Center, how would we ensure that international TAs are ready to teach Math 124, for example? More importantly, without the Center, UNLV’s students from diverse backgrounds would lose an important support system resulting in an increased dropout rate which the university has been striving so hard to minimize. Removing the English Language Center is akin to putting up yet another roadblock for students from diverse backgrounds to enhance our student body.

I urge you to keep the Center open so that our university can continue to benefit from the enrollment of international and diverse domestic students.

Sincerely,

Kristen Young
Director
Office of International Students & Scholars