

A World Awaits You

A Journal on People with Disabilities Traveling with a Purpose



People with Disabilities Access Languages



National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange

Access Languages to Access Opportunities

By: Justin Harford, Project Coordinator

“It’s a stuffed bell pepper with rice, meat and different kinds of vegetables.” My parents listened intently as I translated the waiter’s explanation of this traditional Peruvian dish.

As a blind person, I was used to having a sighted intermediary explain the menu, and tell the waiter what I wanted. But this was different. Everything on the menu and all the conversation around us was in Spanish and I was the only one of our group who could understand it. I turn to the waiter and referring to my parents, I explained, “She’ll have the stuffed bell pepper and he wants the soup.”

This moment represented a change in a power dynamic that traditionally favored sighted people who acted as cultural intermediaries for me. They interpreted the print language, and were called upon to speak for me, when others wouldn’t address me directly.

Studying Spanish abroad in Mexico and then in Chile didn’t teach me how to be proficient in the language, but it did validate all of the time that I had invested in watching telenovelas, reading books, looking words up in the dictionary, following Spanish-language periodicals, and listening to the radio in Spanish. While overseas I appreciated how the skills that I had developed might be used in an everyday context. I developed friendships, conducted research, traveled, and gained new perspectives.

Every day, the experience of learning or teaching a foreign language abroad moves us forward as disabled people by providing opportunities for us to challenge traditional paradigms of disabled people as recipients rather than providers of assistance. By studying languages abroad, we reassert our role in deciding how people will interact with us and through teaching we take risks outside of our comfort zone.

Yet, much work still needs to be done to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities in these kinds of programs. Students of languages encounter difficulties accessing materials, classrooms, and host country environments.

The collection of tips, good practices, and stories that you will find in the Access Languages issue of *A World Awaits You*. Professionals involved in the offering of international exchange programs for language learners or teachers will find good practices for adding diversity to your participant roles including discussions of techniques, questions to ask, and formulating procedures and budgets.

Representatives of ESL schools will learn that they don’t need to have access to an endowment to increase the diversity of their student base.

Prospective language students with disabilities will find a tip sheet advising on how to best advocate for themselves in the language classroom.

We also bring you six compelling stories about the ways that exchange participants with disabilities study or teach languages through international exchange.

Ultimately we hope that this latest collection of resources will spark a new way of thinking about people with disabilities accessing foreign language programs and career fields.

Our goal is to empower people with disabilities to take advantage of the same international exchange opportunities as everyone else, navigating any access barriers along the way. For over two decades, our free services and resources have been made possible by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, a project sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and administered by Mobility International USA.



www.miusa.org/ncde

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INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

MING CANADAY

LENGTH

ONE YEAR

PROGRAM

BOREN LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP
- CHINA



Turning a Corner: Reflections on China from a Language Student

Studying Chinese on a David L. Boren scholarship, Ming Canaday connected with her roots.

Yet her experience studying Chinese started much earlier. She was raised in a Chinese orphanage. As a child with scoliosis who used a wheelchair, her future prospects were limited.

That all changed after getting adopted by an American family and coming to the United States at the age of eleven. At that point much of her Chinese was lost and replaced with English.

When Ming began to study Chinese independently as a teenager, it was her way of reconnecting with that country that she had left behind.

After enrolling in the University of Oregon and majoring in International Relations, she was selected to participate in the Boren Chinese Flagship Initiative, which enables students to integrate Chinese language curriculum with the rest of their studies. Flagship scholars choose to complete a capstone year abroad in China either as college juniors or seniors.

Ming was curious about the world, and fixed on the goal to make a real difference in the lives of people with disabilities in China.

The Boren scholarship, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense, helped her pay for her capstone year abroad on the Chinese Flagship Program, covering nearly all the costs of two semesters at Nanjing University.

By the time she went abroad, Ming had poured a lot of her own time into learning Chinese. She had memorized flashcards. She had also watched movies and television series.

Once abroad, Ming took courses on Chinese history, society, and culture, she made massive strides in her Chinese language abilities. Interacting with other Chinese students, her housemate, and her next-door neighbor, she also learned many modern-day phrases and colloquial expressions used by students her age. Completing internships gave her access to professional level Chinese.

With creativity and communication Ming made small adjustments that enabled her to fully participate in the program. One class was moved, when the original room was not accessible. For other situations, such as a step to get into a restaurant or close to 400 stairs to get to the top of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, she found strangers and friends willing to lend a hand.

While she sometimes felt like she was losing her independence, she stayed motivated to push through and she is glad she did.

Currently Ming works for a senator's office to fulfill the government service requirement for her Boren award, while also completing a fellowship with respectability USA in Washington, DC.





NAME

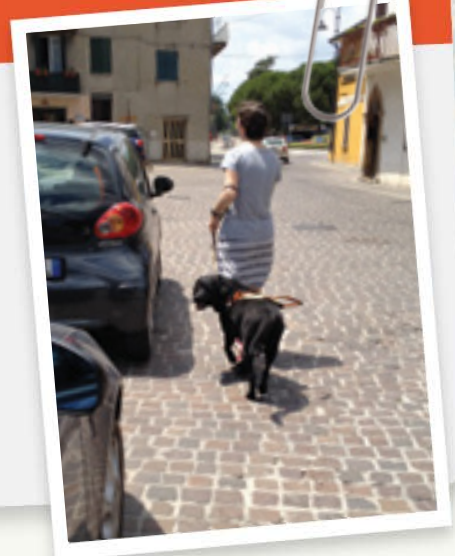
JAMEYANNE FULLER

LENGTH

NINE MONTHS

PROGRAM

FULBRIGHT ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP - ITALY



Natural Born Advocate Goes Abroad

Early on in her 9-month stay in Assisi, Italy, Jameyanne Fuller went to the supermarket to buy groceries, accompanied by the married couple who were her landlords, and her guide dog, Mopsy. When they got to the entrance, a worker blocked Jameyanne from entering. To avoid a scene, her landlords offered to get the items she needed, but she would have none of it.

“I said, ‘I’m not waiting here.’ And I pushed, until the person let me go in. I was going to be independent, and I was going to push back against people who told me I couldn’t do things.”

Jameyanne has lived a very active life as a blind person. Her family always supported her in whatever she wanted to do.

In Assisi, Jameyanne was participating on the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship where she taught at two high schools. At one school she taught students

English literature, social science, and other subjects. At the other school, she helped students who were taking technical courses such as electricity, plumbing, and accounting.

The Italian method of teaching is mostly a lecture model, with little input from students. Jameyanne came from a different tradition. She encouraged her students to ask questions and participate in class discussions.

“Their English improved considerably once they started talking. They had a lot of good, insightful questions, and we had deep conversations, particularly about issues that both American and Italian cultures have in common – what the issues are that everyone is facing.”

As a child Jameyanne took part in various programs for people who are blind. In high school, she hiked in the Andes and river-rafted the Grand Canyon as part of a youth adventure group. She had a special education advocate who helped her get services throughout elementary school, middle school, and high school. In her college, the disability services office helped her get whatever she needed.

Living in Italy was a different story. Italy has laws granting rights to people with disabilities, but the culture hasn't caught up with them. Cars often used the sidewalk as another lane. Bus drivers didn't always want her to get on their bus, or they forgot to tell her when her stop came up. Merchants sometimes didn't want her in their stores.

“Italy was the first time I really had to advocate for myself in a way I hadn't had to before. I realized not only could I advocate for myself, but I was good at it.”

Knowing she could be a strong advocate for herself and others also changed Jameyanne's mind about her future. She had planned on getting a Ph.D. in comparative literature, but ultimately decided to go to law school and is finishing up her first year as a law student.

“In college I didn't want to do anything that drew people's attention to the fact that I am blind. But in Italy, I realized the best person to represent blind people is someone who is blind.”

A few weeks before she returned to the United States, Jameyanne, Mopsy and her landlords, Bruno and Stefania, visited the L'Eremo delle Carceri Hermitage, where St. Francis of Assisi used to meditate. When they entered a small chapel, a nun scolded them for having a dog on the premises.

Before Jameyanne could say a word, Stefania confronted the nun, telling her that Italian law allows guide dogs in the chapel, and reminding her that the Hermitage was where St. Francis went to commune with animals. The chastened nun apologized.

Jameyanne was pleased at the exchange.

“It was a very telling moment for me. I realized how much I had changed these people's perspectives, about what I can do, and about the rights of someone with a disability.”



Educating by Example: Including Teachers with Disabilities

Working with English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers with disabilities is easier than you think. By keeping an ongoing conversation about the individual's progress and requirements, you will ensure a successful experience for all.

This is best illustrated through the experience of the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), which accommodated Erinn Snoeyink, first in a semester abroad program in Seville, Spain, and then on their Teach in Spain Program in Toledo. Erinn, who is blind, wanted the opportunity to get to know Spain better after her first experience, and CIEE was more than happy to oblige.

As soon as Erinn was accepted to the program, CIEE staff initiated a conversation regarding her accommodation needs that started before departure and continued throughout the program. They decided that Toledo would be a good location for the assignment. It is a small city with 80,000 inhabitants, and a short 23 minute train ride from the CIEE Center in Madrid.

According to Morgan Reiss, the Director of Student Services with CIEE Seville who worked with Erinn during her study abroad: Smaller cities offer certain advantages. Most of the roads are newer, life is a bit slower, and communities are very people oriented.

They also found that Erinn's skill set was probably not going to allow her to negotiate her surroundings alone. Toledo was full of cobblestone streets, which did not follow any pattern, and the sidewalks were only

separated from the street with posts set just a couple yards apart from one another. Traffic patterns meant that it would likely be impossible for her to cross the street independently.

CIEE located a personal assistant through trusted sources to help accompany Erinn between her work and her home stay, as well as to help her with any errands in Madrid. They shared this cost with Erinn.

Alana Meek, CIEE Teach in Spain Program Coordinator, reflects that these early conversations were helpful for them to get a sense of the arrangements that would not only work best for Erinn's disability, but also for her personality.

Despite the success, things did not always go off without a hitch, says Morgan.

"I would love to say that our programs were all designed with universal design, but the truth is that a lot of times there are logistical issues or architectural things or just even the city itself."

And they did experience certain setbacks during her program. The first assignment that she received was at an elementary school with young children. Erinn reflects that teachers and staff did not appear to believe in her abilities, and she had limited opportunities to organize and carry out lessons with the students. Much of the coursework was also centered around a single textbook, which turned out to be difficult to obtain.

Alana took a broad view on the issues that arose.



Discover the Opportunities!

ciee.org

“Sometimes it is not known how things will work out until the moment. Therefore, flexibility, thinking creatively, and keeping communication open are essential by all involved.”

Things improved after Erinn moved to a high school. The teacher and students would volunteer to write things on the board as needed and colleagues were willing to email handouts so she could access them.

Thanks to her CIEE experience, Erinn has found a new calling, she says.

“It’s wonderful to see someone not understand something and then find a way to break through that barrier and then they catch on.”



Learn more about Erinn’s experience teaching and studying in Spain from her Ripple Effects podcast episode:

miusa.org/resource/podcast/erinn



Fast Fact: In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, CIEE and Mobility International USA (MIUSA) partnered to provide 27 scholarships to U.S. college students with disabilities to study abroad.



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

CHRISTOPHER ORTEGA

LENGTH

SIX MONTHS

PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY STUDY ABROAD
IN CUBA



Never Too Advanced for Language Study

The best thing about language study is that it never ends. The best thing about a road trip on a makeshift bus for 13 hours across Cuba, is that it does.

No one knows this better than Christopher Ortega, who, despite growing up speaking the language with his family of Mexican immigrants, benefited from participating in a Spanish immersion and traveling with new-made friends in Cuba.

Christopher, who is blind, originally found the Cuban program through the University at Albany where he was completing his undergraduate work. Looking through the

program offerings, Cuba seemed like the most interesting option, given his fascination with recent political history between the Castro government and the United States. As someone who is already an advanced student, Christopher was challenged by the classes offered. Despite having taken Spanish for native speakers in high school, and qualifying for the most advanced level in the Cuba program, he was still surprised at how little he knew. Only one of the four classes was about Spanish language. In the remaining three, students developed their Spanish proficiency by studying Cuban economics, religion, and history.

The conversation about reasonable accommodations began immediately after Christopher's acceptance, which offered lessons learned for others.

"Make sure to get your books digitalized early, make friends, and be patient as you negotiate your reasonable accommodations while confronting the unexpected."

However, sometimes issues would come up. At the beginning of his program, he had an instructor who would regularly bring in printed handouts that had not been emailed to him beforehand. Eventually his teacher began planning lessons further in advance so that Christopher could receive the materials for class time.

After receiving the names of the textbook titles, the Disability Resource Center on the Albany campus managed to convert all the books into accessible formats by the time he arrived to Havana two months later.

Also, due to limited access to internet and printers, his classmates also were required to handwrite their assignments. He was, upon reconsideration, allowed to turn in his typed assignments on a thumb drive.

Christopher has never regretted his choice to spend a semester abroad studying Spanish or road tripping in Cuba. His sense of Spanish grammar, writing, and professional vocabulary has improved significantly, and he feels more confident as he goes forward to pursue a career as an immigration lawyer.





 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

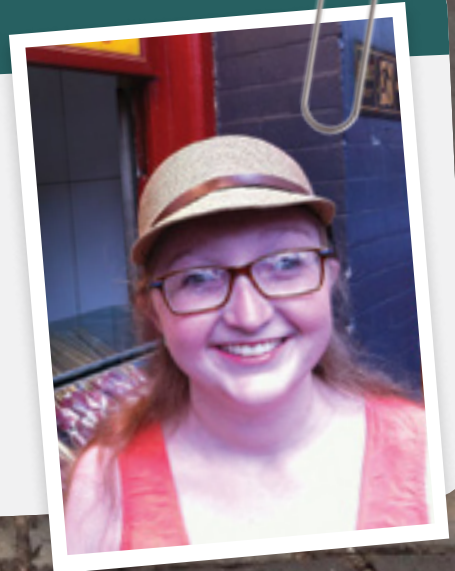
STEPHANIE COLLINS

 LENGTH

EIGHT WEEKS

 PROGRAM

CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP
- CHINA



A Ripple Starts in China

Early on in Stephanie Collins' stay in Dalian, China, she had coffee with her language partner, the person assigned to help her practice Chinese. Having had few opportunities to meet blind individuals, the language partner asked Stephanie about her vision, how she studied and how she navigated through the world. Stephanie explained to her partner about using her cane and even let her try it out.

Later, the two ran into one of her partner's friends. Stephanie was walking with her cane, and her partner explained to the friend how and why Stephanie used it. Stephanie was delighted to let her partner do the talking.

"She repeated everything I had just told her. I was so excited—the ripple had started."

Stephanie was a junior at the University of Oregon's Clark Honors College. She spent eight weeks in China on the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship program, whose goal is to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering foreign languages that are critical to U.S. national security and economic prosperity.

Stephanie guided her program administrators in the United States through the disability-related accommodations she would need for access abroad and found them to be supportive.

"I explained the difference between being blind and legally blind and why I only sometimes use my white cane."

Stephanie found herself doing a lot of educating in China as well, where students with disabilities attend different schools from their non-disabled peers. Her teachers had never worked with a blind student, so they, too, asked her many questions about her vision, her cane and how she used her iPad to help her in classes.

"I took a lot of photos of the board in class. I think teachers found that a little strange. I also asked more questions than other students; I was more blunt than they were used to."

Stephanie began learning Chinese in high school, partly because she was attracted to Chinese culture, but also because she liked the challenge of learning such a different language.

In Dalian, Stephanie had all the challenge she could handle. Some hurdles, like chopsticks,





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were minor. Others were more daunting, such as navigating through a busy city with a population of 6 million.

“Chinese traffic is chaotic. In America, it’s pedestrians first. In China it’s vehicles first. It’s quite scary, even for sighted people.”

Several months before she left for Dalian, one of her professors at the University of Oregon told her about MIUSA. Stephanie looked up the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange resources on MIUSA’s website, which she now credits with helping her adopt a new attitude about her mobility.

“MIUSA gave me the mindset to be very proactive, to find ways to get around independently.”

At first, Stephanie’s host mother would walk her to school each morning to help her cross a wide and busy street. Stephanie realized she was too dependent on her. But one day a friend showed Stephanie an overpass that allowed them to avoid the street altogether.

“It clicked that there were ways to get around without having to cross the street, that I didn’t have to be dependent on my host mom. Before MIUSA, I wouldn’t have paid attention to that.”

Stephanie’s time in the CLS program improved her Chinese and boosted her self-confidence. She is thinking about pursuing a career with the U.S. Department of State or a position where she can work with the disability community in China.

“I want to be very active with Chinese and American relations, whether one-on-one, or at a greater scale. One of the first steps towards that is to learn the other country’s language. It helps my career, but it shows a bigger gesture of respect and encouraging good relations.”



Critical Language Scholarship

clscholarship.org



INTERNATIONAL
EXCHANGE

NAME

SHEILA XU

LENGTH

SIX MONTHS

PROGRAM

TEACHING ASL IN ITALY ON THE
INTEREXCHANGE'S CHRISTIANSON GRANT



A Multilingual Gathering: Teaching ASL in Italy

Your friends are sitting around a dinner table, each speaking their own language. One person speaks Italian, another English, another American Sign Language (ASL) and still another Lingua dei Segni Italiana (LIS), which is Italy's sign language. Now imagine that you get to facilitate communication between all of you.

This experience might have seemed far-fetched to Sheila Xu at the beginning of her freshman year. Up to that point, she had limited experience connecting with other deaf people, and most of her friends were hearing. A friend connected her to ASL and Deaf culture, and Sheila took it from there.

She then became interested in Italy after taking an Italian cooking course in the last semester of her senior year at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in which she and a group of students learned traditional Italian recipes along with basic Italian vocabulary.

Shelia used an interpreter who translated spoken English to ASL and finger spelled Italian words so that she could understand both the spelling and pronunciation.

"I have to point out it was very rare to find a trilingual interpreter (ASL-Italian-English)."

The next chance came when she backpacked to Italy after graduation, and met members of the deaf Italian community and learned the basics of LIS.

After those initial experiences, Sheila decided that she wanted to learn more about Italian culture; however, in order to do that she would need to establish residence. In order to establish residence she needed a visa.

That came when she was awarded the InterExchange's Christianson Grant, and collaborated with the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies at Ca' Foscari University to teach a course of 50 deaf and hearing students. This was her chance to not only immerse herself in Italian culture, but also to create an exchange between American and Italian Deaf cultures.

“There was a significant interest in ASL and the American Deaf culture in Italy, and I wanted a chance for further intercultural exchange between me and my students/community. And I admit it wasn't too bad having the experience of teaching a language in a university setting on my resume.”

As her students started coming in through the door, Sheila was worried. How would she teach the class with so many students? Yet she did not want to turn anyone away. She made sure not to forget her goal, which was to help the Italian students to become proficient in conversational ASL, so that they could interact successfully with deaf Americans.

She made sure that her students received plenty of opportunities to practice ASL. She facilitated group conversations, games, and discussions with guest ASL speakers.

“My approach is designed to work for both deaf and hearing students equally.”

Ultimately, her efforts paid off. Reviewing the feedback surveys from her students, Sheila appreciated the compliments that she received on her presentation style and engaging approach to teaching ASL.

Her times in Italy were not without their challenges. Sheila sometimes missed the United States where she could go to a movie theater and find multiple showings of a film with captions at anytime she wants to see a movie. She also missed having the free Video Relay Service (VRS) for communication.

Yet the chance to teach about American Deaf culture, and to sharpen her skills in LIS and spoken Italian made it all worth it.

Sheila will have plenty of time to continue developing her language skills in her next international exchange, researching deaf Italian entrepreneurs on a Fulbright Deafness Grant sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Tips to #AccessLanguages

Studying a language could be just what you need to take your international exchange to the next level. These tips will help you gain access to languages no matter what your disability, and no matter what the language.

Research Language Nuances

Understand what is involved with your language of interest.

Does it use the Roman alphabet or another alphabet? Are there words that are pronounced differently from their spellings?

Brainstorm modifications for you to master those differences. Speaking with a trusted supporter such as an advisor from the office of students with disabilities, a supportive teacher, or a mentor with your disability could help you come up with ideas.

Plan for Reasonable Accommodations

Request reasonable accommodations or modifications with the language teacher.

Ideas might include:

A digitalized or braille version of the textbook and the use of a draftsman's board to make tactile depictions of calligraphy symbols.

A sign language interpreter who can understand both spoken languages thus can fingerspell the way that words are spoken and written.

A revised rubric for the final grade to focus on student strengths while reducing emphasis from areas that a student might not be able to do.



Practice and Problem-Solve

Actively seek out opportunities to use your language and be prepared for unexpected challenges.

Read newspapers, books, watching films, or talking with native speakers such as international students, immigrants or members of your international community or with student alumni of international exchange programs.

This will not only help you take your language skills to the next level, it may also be imperative if you find that you don't get the necessary support in the traditional classroom.

Travel with a Purpose

Consider doing an international exchange that allows you to practice using your new language.

Refer to online resources, such as miusa.org/plan, to plan, prepare, decide on and request reasonable accommodations for an international program.

Immerse yourself in another setting, stay with a local host family, and better understand the culture to make sense of the language you are learning.



Addressing Learning Disabilities in Intensive English Programs

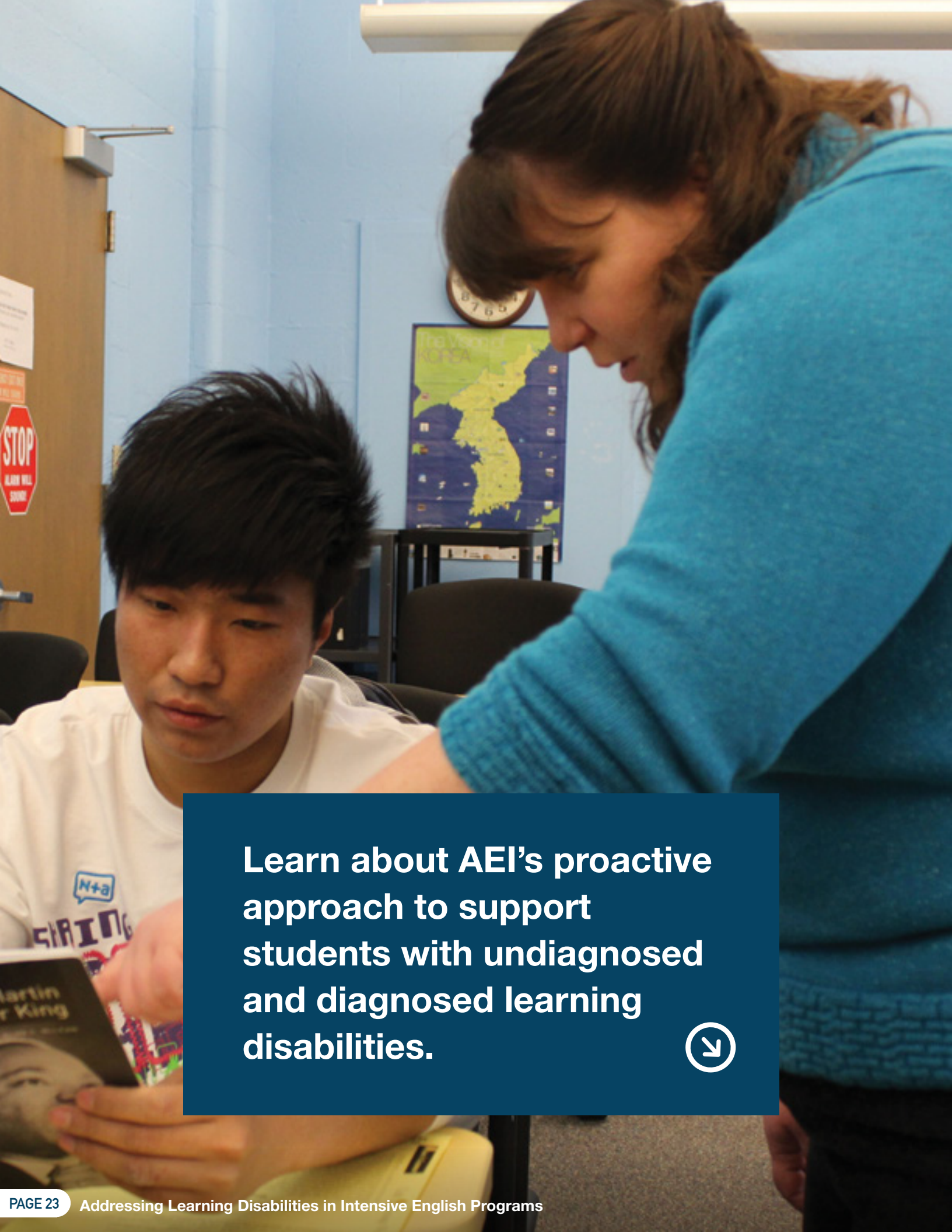
For many years, Maiko Hata of the American English Institute (AEI) at the University of Oregon in Eugene, would notice commonality between the students that were falling through the cracks. Through meetings to discuss probation and disqualification status, to the discovery of learning disabilities in her own family, Maiko came to appreciate that the reason why so many students were struggling was most likely related to undiagnosed learning disabilities.

Something needed to be done if her program was going to take its work to the next level. After putting in place procedures to educate teachers, destigmatize, detect and diagnose learning disabilities, as well as partner with the university's Accessible Education Center, things took a turn for the better.

"It's fun to learn about approaches like universal design and differentiated learning, as they help not only the students with non-apparent disabilities who might never get diagnosed. It also helps students with other disabilities like blindness, deafness, epilepsy, and other conditions that require them to learn or focus in a different way."



Learn More
aei.uoregon.edu



Learn about AEI's proactive approach to support students with undiagnosed and diagnosed learning disabilities.



Learning

- **Integrate a system to help identify undiagnosed learning disabilities. Learn more about indicators by connecting with learning disability specialists.**
- **Build regular training and professional development opportunities for teachers on techniques for supporting struggling learners led by experts in the field.**
- **Create working groups to discuss strategies for universal design, differentiated learning, privacy and protection laws, and more.**
- **Maintain record of what practices are working and re-visit to know how to continuously enhance support.**

Building

- **Include welcoming message to students with disabilities on all application and promotional materials.**
- **Implement a process for providing reasonable accommodations in the classroom and through partnership with the office for students with disabilities.**
- **Create a system of peer tutors for students to review and reinforce what they learn in class.**
- **Obtain access to assistive technology so that students with disabilities can make use of computer lab facilities and so that teachers can understand the technology that their students use to finish assignments.**



NAME

AHMED ALQAHTANI

LENGTH

TWO YEARS

PROGRAM

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN,
ESL SERVICES



Finding New Paths in Special Education through ESL

Set goals to turn your dreams into reality, and then complete them one step at a time. Two years ago, Ahmed Alqahtani, a legally blind student from Saudi Arabia, did just that. He wanted to become proficient in English as a Second Language (ESL), meet new people, and complete academic graduate studies in the United States. At the time, those goals might have seemed quite ambitious.

To be honest with you I didn't imagine that I could speak English like this. Because it's not my native language and I would hear the radio two years ago and I couldn't understand anything.

After studying ESL at the University of Texas in Austin, he can converse with friends and professors, he has nearly completed an undergraduate degree, and he is applying to graduate school. In other words, it took him slightly less than two years to complete all three of his goals.

Ahmed's desire to learn English came from a larger interest in achieving a graduate degree in Special Education. During his undergraduate days in Saudi Arabia, he would visit mainstream schools and meet children with disabilities who were going through the education system just like he did, without receiving reasonable accommodations or supports. He wanted to have a chance to learn how education of students with disabilities is done in the United States to see what he could bring back to his country.

His opportunity ultimately came when, after working as a special education teaching assistant, he received an almost fully funded scholarship from his government that enabled him to take the leap.

In the beginning it was very challenging, because issues would come up due to differences in lifestyles between him and his three roommates. He began to feel homesick and thought about giving up multiple times.

Things improved after moving to a host family. He began to meet friends in his community of international students. And, he could express himself better in English.

Like many other international students with disabilities, Ahmed began his studies without extra support or accommodations, because he did not know what was available to him. After his first semester of studies and suggestion of a friend, he reached out to the ESL office for help. They worked with publishers to request PDF copies of his textbooks, notified his instructors that he should be allowed extra time on exams, and helped him to submit accommodation requests for standardized exams such as TOEFL, IELTS, and GRE.

Since then his ability to focus and study has improved significantly. Now, he does not have to take breaks every 10 minutes from his readings because he has his textbooks in an accessible format. He also is able to pace himself more with extra time available on tests and options for breaks.

Ahmed has found plenty of opportunities to practice his language skills outside of class. He has made friends with English speakers from all over the world, and his English continues to improve through daily interactions with friends and host family, the readings that he does for school, and the movies that he enjoys.

“I don’t speak English very well but I can express my ideas. Also I passed English language test and I’m working to be able to study in academic English.”

After going to graduate school, Ahmed hopes to return to Saudi Arabia where he will either teach and research at a university or open a school for students with disabilities.





 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

 NAME

CHENG YU

 LENGTH

SIX MONTHS

 PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
AMERICAN ENGLISH INSTITUTE



Counting Opportunities: Lessons in an ESL Classroom

Studying English as a Second Language (ESL) creates opportunities. Cheng Yu, a Deaf alumnus from China of the University of Oregon (UO) American English Institute, can count quite a few that came to him as a result of his language learning.

Because he studied ESL, Cheng got a Psychology degree at the University of Oregon. He served as a research assistant, and now has the possibility of going on to graduate school.

He also gained a lot of personal benefits from ESL. He made lots of new friends both from the United States and around the world. He now can access knowledge, which otherwise would have been inaccessible, and he has a much broader outlook on the world.

Cheng didn't always think that study abroad was an option for him, coming from humble circumstances and not speaking English well. That changed when he learned that a friend with his disability managed to study Engineering Science at the University of Toronto in Canada.

"I was shocked, University of Toronto is one of the best universities in the world. So, I think, I can do this too if she can do this."

His family were also supportive of his goals to study in North America. He paid for a large amount of his U.S. education with the money that his parents had saved for 20 years so he could go to university.

Being deaf and using a cochlear implant, Cheng did not always find it easy to study another language. Hearing what teachers were saying, and listening to the soundtrack of a film could be difficult. When he originally came to the United States, he spoke very little English, and it took him some time to connect with his new American community.

The UO Accessible Education Center (AEC) worked with him on finding a notetaker, who would listen in on the classes over Skype, and send him a transcript of what was discussed at the end of each class. If he couldn't understand something still, he would approach professors during their office hours.





Whenever he watched movies, Cheng used English or Chinese subtitles in order to follow along with the dialogues. Whenever he saw a word that he had never heard of, he paused the video to look the word up in the dictionary.

Cheng finds that of all the people that supported him during his ESL studies, he has been his own best supporter. His English certainly has improved by keeping a positive attitude, but being patient with himself regarding his accent and about the mistakes he has made has enabled him to develop the confidence to speak without fear or shame.

“After I started using my English skills to speak with Americans, I noticed it was easier for me to study in my classes!”

Now that he has completed his studies at the AEI, Cheng went on to enroll as a full-time UO student where he is finishing up a degree in psychology. He hopes to one day engage the deaf community on designing better cochlear implants or to become a teacher of deaf students.



Study English at the American English Institute!

aei.uoregon.edu



U.S. Department of State Increases Access to Learning English

The English Access Microscholarship Program (Access) provides a foundation of English language skills to talented non-elite 14–18 year-olds through after-school classes and intensive summer sessions.

ACCESS: Disability-Related Country Spotlights

Mongolia: The Regional English Language Office (RELO) assisted with the creation of a program for Deaf and Blind students to gain knowledge of American Sign Language, Braille tactile writing skills, and enriched knowledge about American culture, friendship and opportunities towards the students' future.

China: More than 200 students with disabilities have learned English through the Access Program, including partnerships with the Guangzhou School for the Blind and with the Guangzhou English Training Center for the Handicapped (GETCH).



Kyrgyzstan: Access program in Kyrgyzstan sponsors “Empower Blind People” for inclusive work combining residential programs, immersive orientation and blindness skills training, and workshops for parents of blind children.

The following are other examples of RELOs engaged in supporting inclusive English language programs.

Russia: Assisted a coalition of English teachers to develop curricula and materials for teachers of students with vision disabilities, both in mainstream classrooms and at specialized schools for students with disabilities. As part of this project, six teachers from Russia had an opportunity to travel to the United States where they consulted with experts in inclusive education.

Colombia: Worked in partnership with the Colombian military to provide teacher training to Colombian law enforcement officers who acquired a disability. The goal was to provide new employment opportunities, while meeting the rising demand for highly qualified English teachers. The program included a 9-month English instruction program in Colombia then traveling to Texas for six months of teacher training.

Bahrain: Embarked on a partnership with the Ministry of Social Development to bring an English Language Specialist to that country to teach English and American Sign Language (ASL) to youth and adults who are Deaf to build awareness of opportunities for further study in Bahrain and the United States.



Learn more about the U.S. Department of State, Office of English Language Programs, including scholarships and fellowships for U.S citizens who are ESL/EFL specialists at

exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching

BRIDGING SUPPORT TO BUILD STUDENT SUCCESS

ENGLISH
LEARNING



COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



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OR COLLEGE



GRADUATE
SCHOOL



SUPPORT SOURCES

**National
Clearinghouse
on Disability
& Exchange**

Pre-arrival
Support

U.S.
Disability Rights
and Culture

Funding
Options

Connect with
other Students
with Disabilities

**Educational
Institution**

Office of
Disability
Services
(reasonable
accommodations)

International
Office

Student
Clubs and
Organizations

Tutors

**Surrounding
Community**

Adaptive
Recreation
Organizations

Disability
Organizations

Places of
Worship

Volunteer
Opportunities

**Peers and
Mentors**

U.S. Disability
Culture

Social
Activities

U.S. Culture

Friendship

NO-COST

Universal Design Examples to Increase Access to Language Learning

From gathering information, to expressing ideas, and staying engaged -- individuals learn in various ways. Check out these examples of Universal Design to create more access for all students.



**Arrange desks
in a circle**



**Assign students
to take notes for
other classmates**



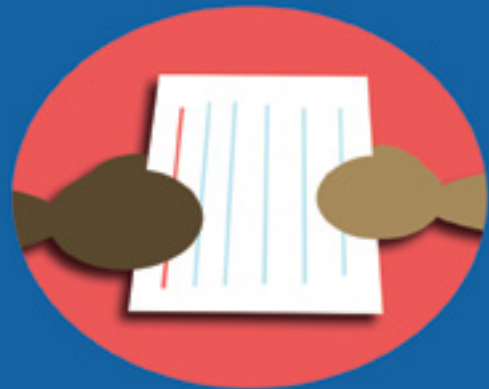
**Schedule regular
one-on-one
conversations
with students**



**Allow students
to complete
assignments in
different formats**



**Use auditory,
visual, and
experiential
teaching methods**



**Allow students
to re-submit
assignments**



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www.MIUSA.org/NCDE