



**Emeritus College at
Clemson University**

The Academy

Special Edition

October 2018

National AROHE Innovation Award

In 2018, the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) initiated a national award to recognize outstanding programs presented by institutional members of the association. A committee of Clemson emeriti, led by M. Elaine Richardson, Professor Emerita of Animal and Veterinary Sciences and Director, prepared a strong nomination for the Clemson University Emeritus College Language Skills Program consisting of the Clemson English-Speaking Proficiency (CESP) test and the Conversations with International Students (CIS) program. The Emeritus College program was one of three recipients of the AROHE Inaugural Innovation Awards for 2018.

Clemson University, like most colleges and universities that employ graduate teaching assistants, has a requirement that non-native English speakers demonstrate a level of proficiency in speaking and understanding English. Faculty members from the English Department developed an interview-based assessment for that purpose several years ago. Administration of the CESP test was transferred to the Emeritus College in 2014. Since then, a dedicated group of emeriti faculty under the leadership of Adolph Beyerlein, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry, has continued to improve and refine the CESP interview process. Dr. Beyerlein and his colleagues developed the CIS

program to work with students whose English proficiency was evaluated as “Conditional Pass” or “Fail.” Emeritus College volunteers meet with these students in an informal setting over an extended period. Following their CIS experience, most students are able to earn a “Pass” on the CESP test.

The Language Skills Program is provided by emeritus faculty at virtually no cost to Clemson University. The program provides a valuable service to the participating graduate teaching assistants, their students, their home departments, and the university as a whole. The AROHE award reviewers also noted the value of the Language Skills Program to enhancement of cultural diversity at Clemson.

In addition, the CESP testing program provides an avenue for international students to fully participate and excel in teaching assistantship programs equal to any domestic student. An example is Huixi Li, the recipient of the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award for 2017-18. Li entered the Mathematical Sciences PhD program in the Fall of 2014 and has fully participated in the Mathematical Sciences teaching assistantship programs since passing the CESP test at the end of his first semester. Li also was the 2018 recipient of the Drennon/Gabet Award, funded by the Drennon/Gabet Endowed Memorial Fund for Mathematical Science.



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Clemson English Speaking Proficiency (CESP) Testing

Quick Facts:

- Transferred to the Emeritus College in 2014 to provide departments a means of evaluating English speaking proficiency of international students who are seeking graduate teaching assistantships.
- Through direct one-on-one interviews with emeriti faculty, the student is asked a series of 12 questions and graded on how effectively they communicate his/her answers in English. The student's performance is graded as Pass, Conditional Pass or Fail.
- A student receiving Pass may be appointed teaching assignments as deemed appropriate by their department.
- Students receiving Conditional Pass or Fail receive a recommendation to participate in the CIS program at least one semester to improve their chances of receiving a passing grade on the CESP test.
- Departments and graduate coordinators prefer the CESP testing method because of the one-on-one interaction and the expediency in which the grades are provided (day after testing).
- Currently 21 departments are using the CESP testing program including most of the university's departments with large graduate teaching assistantship programs.
- Since CESP testing was initiated in 2014, 273 international students have taken the test and 13 emeriti faculty have served as graders.

Conversations with International Students (CIS)

Quick Facts:

- Established in 2014 to help international students improve their English communication skills and adapt to life in the United States.
- A one-on-one mentoring program designed to meet the student's specific needs and expectations. Mentor and student meet weekly. Open to all students with priority given to students preparing for CESP test.
- 75% of students participating in CIS program pass the CESP.
- 32 emeriti faculty have served as mentors since 2014.

Benefits of the CIS and CESP Programs

- Collaborative effort between the Emeritus College, the Pearce Center for Professional Communication, department chairs, the Office of Global Engagement, graduate coordinators, Graduate School and university administrators.
- The one-on-one interactions between the international student and emeritus faculty are preferred by departments, graduate coordinators and students, who appreciate emeriti faculty's lifetime of teaching experience.

For more information contact: [Clemson University Emeritus College](http://www.clemson.edu/emmerituscollege/)

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