

Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication in the IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI

An internationally recognized center, unique in the US, the Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) in the IU School of Liberal Arts was created in 1998 to enhance links between the city of Indianapolis, the state of Indiana, and cultures/nations throughout the world. ICIC provides language and intercultural training in academic, professional, and other occupational settings.

The Center's staff have graduate degrees in languages and intercultural communication and have all lived in other countries and cultures. At the moment, the permanent staff expertise includes Japanese, Burmese, Chinese, German, French, Spanish, Finnish, Swedish, and Korean languages and cultures.

Types of programs offered by ICIC include:

Workforce English language training for immigrant workers. ICIC's English program for McDonald's restaurants in the city in 1998 was the first such functional language program offered in the area. Other contracts have included language courses in manufacturing and laundry service facilities in Indianapolis and in towns in the Central Indiana area. Clients have included FFA International, G&K Services, General Devices Company, Handleman Company, Time Warner, and United Hospital Services. Language instruction is also provided one-on-one or in small groups for nonnative English speaking professionals – researchers and managers – in local businesses to successfully adapt to Indianapolis and be effective in their work. Clients have included Alcoa Aluminum, Cambridge Industries, Citizens Gas, Eli Lilly, Knauf Insulation, Starkey Law Group, IUPUI, and IU School of Medicine faculty.

Training of trainers for the workforce. ICIC and the Department of English at IUPUI have offered an intensive summer institute for the past seven years for teachers and have certified dozens of teachers for language teaching in the workforce. ICIC designed the award winning program “English works in Indiana” for the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, which educated language teachers for the specific demands of workforce English language teaching.

Intercultural communication training. ICIC has offered intercultural communication workshops for a variety of businesses starting to do business internationally. Sometimes the training has focused on specific cultural and linguistic aspects of the new international business partners, e.g., a Swedish insurance company taking over an insurance company in Indianapolis, or a company learning to understand their new offshore call center workers in India. Other times, the training has dealt with communication with a number of different constituents. For example, when Formula One came to Indianapolis for the first year, ICIC was hired by the Indianapolis Tourist Bureau to offer a workshop for 800 food service professionals

and taxi drivers on how to speak and deal with international tourists. In 45-minute blocks, ICIC taught hundreds of service workers to interact smoothly with international visitors, using tips such as “smile, don’t shout, repeat and ask for repetition, don’t expect tips as you would from US customers.”

For its intercultural communication training, ICIC has developed a model of accommodation, in which both parties – native and nonnative speakers alike – learn to adjust their ways of speaking for mutual understanding. This unique model is gaining attention all around the world. In 2006 for example, the ICIC Director was invited by the Government of Iceland to consult with the President and the Ministry of Education about the model and how it can be used in the immigrant – Icelander relations.

New programs in which ICIC seeks further collaboration with local businesses:

Women as leaders program. ICIC offers a 3-week summer program every August for a group of 24 students from Japan’s premier women’s college, Tsuda College, Tokyo, on language, culture and communication. ICIC welcomes women leaders from the community as guest speakers. In addition, office visits would be very beneficial for these future Japanese leaders.

Internships and site visits for professionals from around the world. For two years ICIC has offered a semester-long language course for the Ministry of Finance Office from the People’s Republic of China. As part of the functional language program, site visits to businesses and government offices are scheduled, for which ICIC welcomes participation in the community. In the next few months, agriculture experts from Afghanistan will spend eight months at ICIC learning language and culture before entering a graduate program at Purdue University. Guest lectures by individuals in local businesses and industries, and site visits, are very much welcomed.