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Rosemarie Howard | [University Advancement](#) | 20 March 2007



Marcus Martins, current chair of the Department of Religious Education at BYU-Hawaii has been named as the new chairman of the campus L2 Committee. According to [Keith Roberts \(watch video\)](#), Vice President of Academics, this committee, composed of a cross-section of faculty members and staff is critical.

"The L2 Committee is central to what BYU-Hawaii is all about," said Roberts in a recent interview. Approximately half of the students are international students, making English the second language for a significant portion of the university's studentbody. "Few, if any other universities, have that many second language speakers," Roberts said.

One of main objectives of the BYU-Hawaii administration is prepare students to return to their home countries, proficient in English as an international language.

"At the level of the Board of Trustees," said Martins, "there is a great deal of interest in having our graduates, especially the international students, leave BYU-Hawaii fully proficient and fluent in English."

"One of the reasons Dr. Martins is such a good choice as chair of the L2 Committee," said Roberts, "is that he is a second language speaker." As chair of Religious Studies he is also responsible for an area that touches all students. Martins has also had significant experience as a translator, having translated the Book of Mormon into Portuguese for the LDS Church some 20 years ago. He has also traveled and used English extensively in his professional life.

Roberts credited Martins with being one of the first people on campus to focus on the fact that students not only need to be articulate in English, but that they also need to know the professional vocabulary of their discipline in their native language.

"It's much more complex than simply trying to prepare someone to use English to get through an American university," said Roberts. "We view English as a vocational skill," he continued.

"English has become the lingua franca in the world today" said Martins. He shared an experience of attending a high level government conference in Malaysia. "There were not more than 20 non-Malaysians attending the conference," said Martins, "so the conference could very well have been in Malaysian, and yet it was entirely in English."

The president of a health sciences university from Mongolia who visited the BYU-Hawaii campus recently told of a summer medical program they ran in Mongolia for people from Europe, Korea, and Japan. "They all studied in Mongolia in the health sciences university," related Roberts, "and the language of instruction was English."

"It will always be of great benefit professionally, socially, and ecclesiastically for any person to become proficient in English," said Martins.

One of the goals of the committee is to be a clearing house for passing on good ideas for encouraging international students to use English not only in the classroom, but in as many possible

situations outside of the classroom as well.



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