

Review of the B. A. in Spanish, in the Department of Hispanic Studies

by the Committee on Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness, Spring 2017

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In summary, the program appears to meet all items other than the concerns about resource limitations indicated by high adjunct dependence as noted in item (13); thus this report will emphasize recommendations for follow-up, improvement, and better documentation of some activities for the sake of future reviews.

1) Has an articulated mission statement that aligns with the College's mission and Strategic Plan. [Meets]

The department has a mission statement in its bylaws, which aligns with the College's mission and strategic plan, and accurately reflects the activities of the program. However it is more detailed than is usual for a mission statement with a long list of items. The first three items seem appropriate and perhaps sufficient for a mission statement, while most or all of the remaining items are better characterized as goals or strategies in support of that mission. Indeed the whole is described in the evidence document for this review as a "strategic plan". It is recommended that this distinction between a broad mission statement and more specific goals of the department and of the B. A. in Spanish program be distinguished.

Also, it is suggested that the specific mission, goals and learning outcomes of the B. A. in Spanish program under review be distinguished from broader aspects of the department as a whole.

2) Has stated goals and Learning Outcomes in support of its mission statement. [Meets]

The list from the departmental mission statement is restated as a list of goals, some of which are not specific to the program (the B. A. in Spanish) being reviewed here. It is recommended that program goals be stated separately, in part to support the setting and assessment of learning outcomes for the program. The list of goals could also be shortened.

The goals are in support of the departmental mission statement, and the learning outcomes stated for the major are appropriate for the relevant goals.

3) Uses assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of learning outcomes. [Meets]

The program has defined four student learning outcomes and appears to assess them fairly well. However, additional details regarding the specific measurement of these outcomes could be provided. Although a

high percentage of students meeting an outcome is certainly desirable, instances of 100% of students meeting an outcome (i.e., SLO Knowledge of main periods, movements, authors, and genres of Hispanic Literature, and literacy interpretation skills) may suggest that the assessment tool being used is creating a “ceiling effect”. The program is commended for increasing graduating major participation in assessments and for using a data-driven approach to identify areas where learning outcomes were below desired thresholds and implementing adjustments in the curriculum to address these deficiencies.

The program is recommended to report data from each annual assessment in the future, and to keep reviewing the SLO’s.

4) Reflects on and if necessary acts on assessment of student learning. [Meets]

The Department seems to exhibit conscientious attention to assessment outcomes. For each particular SLO that failed to reach the benchmark, an explanation was explicitly given and a strategy to improve was given. The faculty reflect on a variety of possible reasons for outcomes and try various approaches to improving those outcomes, including, but not limited to, ad hoc committees, curriculum revision, and alteration of teaching techniques. They explained what they did wrong and gave a strategy to improve.

5) Has implemented curricular change to better meet program goals and learning outcomes. [Meets]

Extensive curricular changes have been made to both the major and the minor in response to assessment results. These changes include the creation of 7 new courses, deletion of others, new guidelines for Spanish 275 along with a conversational component 275C as a one credit-hour elective, adoption of new textbook for SPAN 202, and the creation of committee to examine Study Abroad enrollment problems. The department also made changes within courses to assignments and directions to assignments in order to clarify what outcomes the department was pursuing.

One related suggestion is that the conversational component 275C might be more effective in building oral communication competency if it were a requirement, rather than an elective.

6) Has professionally active and engaged faculty scholars. [Meets]

The only suggestion is on presentation of the evidence: it would benefit all involved if the evidence document summarized the data from faculty CV’s with a more concise summary, including highlights, distinctive accomplishments and activities, and perhaps some statistics on publications, presentations and such.

7) Has faculty members who are engaged in service to their Department, School, Campus, Discipline and/or their Community. [Meets]

The program’s faculty are actively involved in department and college service, with notable service work including Josephe Weyers as Co-Director of Global Scholars, Nadia Avendano, Lola Colomina-Garrigos, and Elizabeth Martinez-Gibson each serving as Co-Directors of Trujillo Summer Study

Abroad, Elizabeth Martinez-Gibson for Program Director of Interdisciplinary Linguistics Minor and Silivia Rodriquez-Sabater for Program Director for M. Ed in languages. In addition, faculty members are active in community service including Mark Del Mastro as founding director of the S.C. Spanish Teacher of Year Program and several faculty members volunteering translation and interpretation services.

8) Provides opportunities for faculty development in teaching and research. [Meets]

Annual internal funds are provided for conference and professional development, with priority given to roster faculty. Over the past three years 17-22 faculty members were funded annually, including at least one visiting or adjunct faculty member each year, with 24-36 different conference workshops, publication fees, professional workshops and research trips funded each year. Several faculty members have attended on-site Teaching, Learning, and Technology workshops and Writer's Retreats. Faculty are encouraged to continue use of on-campus faculty resources.

9) Produces alumni able to launch successful careers, enter graduate programs, or contribute to society. [Meets]

The program provides evidence in the form of descriptions of a number of careers of former students including teachers, professors and graduate students. Additionally, the program lists students who have pursued careers in business where they have leveraged their Spanish training.

However, rather than provide anecdotal evidence they should provide should try to sustain a track of alumni.

10) Contributes to the broader educational development of students by participating in programs or initiatives such as general education, Honors, interdisciplinary programs, the Quality Enhancement Plan and/or the First Year Experience. [Meets]

The program makes a rich variety of contributions through:

- courses serving the general education language requirement and SNAP needs;
- several honors courses in recent years (HONS 131/132 and 381);
- supporting several student organizations;
- study abroad programs; and
- numerous interdisciplinary contributions through First Year Experience Learning Communities and engagement with the programs in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Comparative Literature, Women & Gender Studies, and the M.Ed. program, as well as the innately interdisciplinary content of many courses that address culture, history, politics, business, economics, and society.

There is also some evidence of engagement with the broader community through SPAN 400, a service learning class for "experiential learning", as encouraged in the College's Strategic Plan.

These contributions are more noteworthy given the limited number of roster faculty and high adjunct dependence.

However it would help program reviews if more details of the activities of this course were provided. Likewise, more details of the activities and outcomes in the study abroad program would be helpful.

11) Provides high impact experiences for students (capstone courses, research, internships, travel, performance, etc.). [Meets]

The program provides several varieties of high impact experiences with a novel service learning course SPAN 400, several recent study abroad programs, and a recently added Senior Capstone course, SPAN 495.

One place where there could be improvement is support of student research activities, with one source of opportunities being the numerous interdisciplinary engagements the program. Also, providing more details of the activities and objectives of SPAN 400 and the study abroad programs would be helpful for future program reviews: detailed sample syllabi would probably suffice.

12) Has an enrollment strategy to maintain student interest in the discipline in a way that enhances program quality. [Meets]

Several recent initiatives have been taken in recent years to maintain and expand interest: a new system of advising of all minors, some curriculum changes, and current investigation of a proposal to establish a program in “Spanish for the Professions”.

In each case it is too early to determine the effectiveness of these efforts, so this should be considered in follow-ups to this review, to be conducted over the next year. In this respect, it is recommended that data be collected on the outcomes of minor advising. Also, it would help to provide a description of specific curriculum changes, with explanations of how each change is related to the feedback, and to the program's mission and goals.

13) Has sufficient resources to not be overly reliant on adjunct faculty, and has an articulated process for adjunct evaluation. [Does not fully meet.]

A high level of adjunct teaching is a persistent problem for this department, with about 50% of the faculty being adjuncts and 70% of the language courses staffed by adjunct instructors. The roughly 50% or credit hours taught by adjuncts compares to about 40% for other departments in the school and 30% college-wide. This appears to be related to the large minor program and inadequate resources being provided to the department. As the resources coming into the Department have not increased appreciably for the past several years, it is likely that this adjunct reliance will remain high for the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, the department should be commended for developing a thorough and well-articulated adjunct evaluation program. A departmental evaluation form is used, any concerns are addressed with the basic languages coordinator, and adjuncts use a standard syllabus for the lower-level language courses.

14) Attracts diverse students and faculty. [Probably Meets.]

Perhaps in part due to the nature of the Hispanic Studies program in general, the program attracts a diverse collection in faculty, in terms of age (new PhDs to senior members), in terms of gender (>60% are women), and ethnic background (12 different countries).

The pattern of diversity seems also to hold with the students in the program; however further breakdown of ethnicities would be helpful, particularly with respect to students; it is recommended to collect and report such information in future.

Cc: Chair, Dean, AVP for Assessment and Strategic Planning