

**Assessment**  
**Department of Modern Languages**  
**2004**

**B.A. Spanish**

Goal 1: Enhanced knowledge of literature, culture and linguistics as integrated disciplines within Hispanic settings (Spain and Latin America) and across major historic periods.

Goal 2: Enhanced Spanish language skills in linguistic structures, oral proficiency, writing, reading and comprehension, research, critical and analytical thinking.

Goal 3: Appreciation of the role of Hispanic culture, as a growing field of global importance in the arts and humanities, in every day life, and in the job market.

Goal 4: Prepared to seek employment in careers which may utilize the B.A. in Spanish and to successfully pass the Praxis exam in Spanish. The B.A. did in fact prepare them for these careers or contribute to the personal or professional enrichment of the students.

## 1. Introduction:

This assessment report includes data of the Spring and Fall semesters of 2003. The following assessment tools were collected, in order to have a clear view of the performance of our students:

- exams [one from a conversation class, one from a linguistic class]  
We examined the production of four undergraduate students per class.
- research papers [one from a literature class, one from a linguistic class]  
We evaluated the writing production of 4 students at the 300 level and 4 students at the 400 level.
- surveys [two surveys]  
We included some of the inputs offered by the students in the survey given to all our seniors after graduation, and another survey offered to our juniors and seniors during a meeting with them (Spring 2003)
- syllabi [four syllabi]  
We included the evaluation of four syllabi to see that

objectives, ways of grading, material assigned by the instructors in congruent with the objectives and expected outcomes presented in our departmental handbook..

During the current academic year we incorporate some new ideas and guidelines to continue improving the quality of our department:

- syllabi We recommended all our instructors to write their syllabi in English (rather than in Spanish), in that way outside reviewers will be able to read them. We also recommended all instructors to include objectives or expected outcomes.
- rubrics We created 4 set of rubrics (composition, research paper, oral presentation, project) in order to standardized our way of grading within the department. Some of our instructors are already using those rubrics for their classes.
- meetings with majors We had our first meeting during the Spring of 2003 and we are planning to have two meetings per year to listen to our students' needs: one in the fall to help students plan their junior/senior experiences and one in the spring to prepare for graduation/career planning.

## **2. Syllabi:**

We selected four syllabi for assessment (two 300 level courses, and two 300/500 level course). In general the syllabi prepared by our faculty are clear in presenting objectives and expected outcomes. Three of the four syllabi were written in English and one in Spanish. This is a big improvement, and our goal is to have everything accessible for external reviewers. We have some model syllabus available for all our instructors in the main office.

## **3. Exams:**

We selected two exams, one from a 300 level class and one from a 300/500 level. At the three hundred levels our students show clear strengths and weaknesses. Students at the three hundred level still show difficulty with grammar, although their writing expression is clear enough for a general understanding. The students in the 300/500 level show a better use of the language and are able to use the language for a specialized discussion.

## **4. Compositions:**

In order to assess the progress of our students at the 300 level class, we ask the students to write a composition the first day of class and another composition the last day. We included a sample of 4 students from that class and we were able to observe progress in all our students. Some of the improvements included: more diverse vocabulary, more sophisticated grammatical structures, dramatic improvement in spelling, and a better articulation and organization of ideas.

## **5. Papers:**

We selected four graduate students' paper for assessment and compared the writing with the essay they wrote as part of the admission requirements. It is obvious that our graduate

students improve tremendously in writing and research skills during their years in the master's program. When comparing entrance essays with papers written for one of their classes we can observe improvement in orthography, syntax, and vocabulary selection. The writing and research process give our students an opportunity to expand their knowledge in literature, culture, linguistics and literary theory.

At the 300 level we observe that students still struggle writing a research paper. Familiarity with MLA format is a general problem. We are assuming those skills are acquired in ENG 101-102, however, they are not reflected in the papers they write. Students show clarity of ideas, but limited research skills affects the quality of their papers. We understand we need to improve in this area. One way to accomplish this will be by asking our students to write research papers for most of their 300 and 400 level classes. Research papers are an extraordinary opportunity to expand the knowledge of our students in different fields.

## **6. Survey:**

We include in this report the results of two surveys: one is the standard survey offered to all our students upon declaration of the major and then at graduation and the other is a survey we conducted during an informal meeting with our juniors and seniors. The **standard survey at the time of major declaration** indicates that most of our Spanish majors have had some previous study in high school, though only two years. Others come from Spanish language heritage families. Most had not determined their Spanish major on entry to the university. Some change from other majors or add to them, becoming double majors. There is considerable variety in their motivation, including good experiences with teaching Spanish as a parent volunteer in school; an easy major for a heritage speaker to complete and then continue to law school; and a

student found Spanish a more interesting major than Anthropology.

Most Spanish majors have interests in other fields, notable fine arts and the humanities in general; they engage in activities such as reading for pleasure, creative activities and volunteer work more than doing puzzles or computer work, sports and club activities or talking with friends.

Spanish majors intend to pursue a wide range of careers, from teaching English as a second language to law, with several interesting in teaching Spanish and social work. Their areas of doubt revolve more around scheduling and work issues than around the major itself.

The **survey at graduation** indicates that all are either “Very satisfied” or “Moderately satisfied” with both their choice of career and with how well the Spanish major has prepared them, with a somewhat higher evaluation of the program than with their choice. Suggestions for improving the program include more interactions with faculty, from sharing plans and activities to advisor availability on the one hand; and suggestions for classes in translation and Don Quijote, on the other. One student was very laudatory concerning the program and we will modify the survey sheet to allow space for such remarks, which we had not previously included.

Spanish majors graduating during this period indicate plans for teaching, grad school (Spanish, Linguistics, TESOL) and government work. All of these are reasonable options for our BA graduates.

## **7. Meeting with majors:**

Some of the comments written by the students during our first meeting were: department offers a good class selection, a variety of study options (e.g. study abroad, tutoring), helpful

advising. They also indicate that the department has knowledgeable instructors and that the staff is generally available to serve the students. Among the suggestions the students provided are: to offer an internship program, to have more meetings with the students, more classes, and participation in the National Student Exchange Program.

## **8. Study Abroad**

Study abroad is an important component of both our B.A. and our M.A. programs. We have programs of 20 years' standing in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and in conjunction with various programs over the years in Spain. Study abroad is required for the M.A. and encouraged for the B.A. However, students in other B.A. programs also may participate in these programs. Here we report on the results of the 2003 and 2004 student surveys of B.A. students. All questions were open-ended, though in a couple of cases possible answers were suggested (e.g., Amount of work: too little, about right, too much, followed by open space). Excerpts are provided in the appended table. **Virtually all students felt they had an excellent experience overall and that they also got excellent academic work in addition to the cultural experience.** Our program was praised for its excellent integration (on-target) of the academic program into the overall experience and the students would definitely recommend our programs to other students.

## **9. Some changes, improvements, success' stories:**

- Every year we have some of our undergraduate students (2-4 per year) who join our MA program, either as full time or part time students.
- In association with the College of Business Administration our instructors have been receiving training to teach Spanish classes with an emphasis in business. This courses

will help to enhance our course offering for our undergraduate program.

- Among the students who took the Praxis II Exam all who applied for teaching positions in 2003 (spring, summer) have passed the Praxis II exam in content knowledge (French, Spanish). We will be instituting the ACTFL OPI or MOPI to meet the state level of speaking ability. This will present the challenge of assuring that the skills are continually developed throughout our curriculum to a greater degree than is currently the case.

#### **10. Conclusion and goals for the future:**

This assessment report is an indication of how our goals for the BA program have been fulfilled in different ways. The classes we provide, the experiences (study abroad, conferences), the research focus is helping us to enhance knowledge of literature, culture and linguistics among our students. The writing progress in our students is an indication of the way we are enhancing Spanish language skills, and through the process of writing research papers our students are improving in their critical and analytical thinking. The popularity of our study abroad programs increases, without any doubt, the appreciation our students have for the Hispanic culture. Although we have no statistical evidence, we know our students have been successful in getting jobs which have been helping them to use the skills they acquired in our program.

We will continue improving the services we offer our students. It is important for us to maintain a good communication with our majors and minors, and listen to their needs. We will be offering more courses in the area of Spanish for business and translation. Our instructors have been receiving training in this area with the help and support of the College of Business Administration. We intend to develop an internship program for our students in order to offer our students other working experiences beyond the teaching market.

Appendix: Excerpts from the Study Abroad evaluations

E. Academic program	SPAIN 2003	MEXICO 2003
1. Academic component Good?	Excellent: 4 Very good: 1	Excellent: 1 Challenging but well worth it: 1 Very: 2.
2. Coursework integrated into the experience?	Very well 1; yes 3.	Excellent: 2 Very well: 3
3. Amount of work expected good?	About right: 4, but 1 said they needed more computers available. Too little: 1	A little too much: 2 About right: 3
Recommendations to improve?	Nothing: 2 Add more interview assignments.	Make it a full semester program. Make more of the excursions optional. It would be nice if the final exam were not on the last day of our stay. I didn't realize that dress was so important--please draw attention to this next time.
G. What you learned (both quotes and paraphrases)	Actually seeing the living and ancient history of Spain side by side. The fantastic way of living in a Spanish country. Adapt and succeed. The culture is really very different. Meeting Spaniards and speaking Spanish.	Made me appreciate what we have in the U.S. Truly learned about the differences in cultures. The small class sizes helped me a lot. How Mexicans actually live. Great life experience and learning about the culture. I realized how spoiled I am.
Would you recommend the program to other students?	Yes, I got what I wanted out of it. Yes, I do. Yes, to absolutely anyone! Yes, this experience cannot be duplicated in the classroom! Yes.	Yes: 1 Yes, because it was a great cultural experience. Definitely, I had a wonderful time. Yes, but I would warn students that this is not a vacation! Yes, it's a great way to learn about the culture hands-on. Absolutely. It is a wonderful program.

## COMPOSITION PROFILE

**COMMENTS:**

<b>FOCUS/CONTENT</b>	30-27	Excellent-Very Good	
	26-22	Good-Adequate	
	21-17	Fair-Poor	
	16-13	Needs a lot of work	
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	20-18	Excellent-Very Good	
	17-14	Good-Adequate	
	13-10	Fair-Poor	
	9-7	Needs a lot of work	
<b>GRAMMAR</b>	25-22	Excellent-Very Good	
	21-18	Good-Adequate	
	17-11	Fair-Poor	
	10-5	Needs a lot of work	
<b>VOCABULARY</b>	20-18	Excellent-Very Good	
	17-14	Good-Adequate	
	13-10	Fair-Poor	
	9-7	Needs a lot of work	
<b>CONVENTIONS</b>	5	Excellent-Very Good	
	4	Good-Adequate	
	3	Fair-Poor	
	2	Needs a lot of work	
<b>TOTAL</b>			/100

## ORAL PRESENTATION PROFILE

Oral skills:		Comments
40-36	Excellent-Very Good	
35-32	Good-Adequate	
31-28	Fair-Poor	
27-20	Needs a lot of work	
<b>Other skills:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="640 922 1060 987">• Use of audiovisuals: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤</li> <li data-bbox="640 1030 1060 1095">• Understanding of the material or topic: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤</li> </ul>	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	/50	

## PROJECT PROFILE

**COMMENTS:**

<b>Focus/Content</b>	25-22	Excellent-Very Good	
	21-18	Good-Adequate	
	17-11	Fair-Poor	
	10-5	Needs a lot of work	
<b>Objectives</b>	25-22	Excellent-Very Good	
	21-18	Good-Adequate	
	17-11	Fair-Poor	
	10-5	Needs a lot of work	
<b>Written expression</b>	25-22	Excellent-Very Good	
	21-18	Good-Adequate	
	17-11	Fair-Poor	
	10-5	Needs a lot of work	
<b>Creativity/Presentation</b>	25-22	Excellent-Very Good	
	21-18	Good-Adequate	
	17-11	Fair-Poor	
	10-5	Needs a lot of work	
<b>Total:</b>	/100		

## RESEARCH PAPER PROFILE

**COMMENTS:**

<b>Focus/Content</b>	75-68	Excellent-Very Good	
	67-60	Good-Adequate	
	59-52	Fair-Poor	
	51-40	Needs to work a lot	
<b>Research</b>	30-27	Excellent-Very Good	
	26-24	Good-Adequate	
	23-21	Fair-Poor	
	20-15	Needs to work a lot	
<b>Written Expression</b>	30-27	Excellent-Very Good	
	26-24	Good-Adequate	
	23-21	Fair-Poor	
	20-15	Needs to work a lot	
<b>Format/Organization</b>	15-13	Excellent-Very Good	
	12-10	Good-Adequate	
	9-7	Fair-Poor	
	6-3	Needs to work a lot	
<b>TOTAL:</b>			/150

