

Assessment
Department of Modern Languages
2005

B.A. Spanish

Goal 1: Comprehensive knowledge of literature, culture and linguistics as interrelated 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 Hispanic culture worldwide, as it is experienced in everyday life and as it relates to the job market.

Goal 4: Awareness of the growing importance of Hispanic culture in the arts and humanities.

Goal 5: Prepared to seek employment in careers which may utilize the **B.A.** in Spanish. Specially, students should be able to pass the Praxis exam **and** receive a licensure to teach Spanish in schools.

1. Introduction:

This assessment report includes data of Summer 2004 (Study Abroad courses), Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. The following assessment tools were collected, in order to have a clear view of the performance of our students:

- compositions *[two from SPN 301, two from 302]*

We evaluate the progress in writing among some of the students, looking at first and second drafts.

- research papers *[one from a literature class, one from a linguistics class]*

We evaluated the writing production of 4 students at the 300 level and 4 students at the 400 level.

- surveys *[seven surveys]*

We included some of the input offered by the students in the survey given to all our seniors after graduation.

- syllabi *[all]*

We included the evaluation of four syllabi to see that objectives, ways of grading, material assigned by the instructors is 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:

- meetings We had three assessment meetings during the year with the Spanish faculty. We had the opportunity to discuss as a group some of the areas of improvement. For the benefit of all the faculty (especially for the three new faculty members), we sent a memo with the different areas in which we set goals for the year for better communication with the students.

- syllabi We recommended all our instructors to write their syllabi in English (rather than in Spanish), so outside reviewers can be able to read them. We also recommended all instructors include student goals or expected learning outcomes, and the specific requirements for those classes that will count as Writing Across the Curriculum courses.

- rubrics We created **4** sets of rubrics (composition, research paper, oral presentation, project) in order to assist students in understanding the grading within the department. Most of our instructors are already using or have adapted those rubrics for their classes.

- meetings with majors We continued having meetings to listen to our students' needs. The objective of these meeting were to help students with advising, to meet our new faculty, to select courses, and to establish plans for graduation and future careers.

2. Syllabi:

We examined all the syllabi from Fall 2004 and Spring 2005, in order to see if the guidelines suggested after the last assessment had been implemented. Specifically, we wanted to see whether the recent syllabi include the elements requested: English language (to allow accessibility for colleagues outside of the Spanish section); clarity regarding outcomes; clear delineation of grading criteria; and direct reference to qualification as Writing Across the Curriculum credit (for the appropriate courses).

The majority of the syllabi were written in Spanish, with the exception of those prperae by two senior professors. Most syllabi showed an effort to present relevant course information to the student in a condensed, clear and comprehensive way.

A marked improvement can be noted in the Spanish faculty's presentation of the specific information requested. Nearly all syllabi describe the objectives of the course. In some cases, they are presented under the rubric of "goals" or "outcomes," and sometimes they are included in a general description of the course. Several professors refer directly to the department Handbook in order to describe the outcome. There does seem to be some significant variation in the way of understanding course objectives. One strategy for improvement in this area might be to make outcomes more concrete, avoiding such ideas a "developing skill" in preference of a description

of the level of skill aimed at.

All syllabi clearly outlined the weight of different aspects of evaluation of student work. Several included more specific rubrics applying to aspects such as homework and participation. Since the Department has adopted standard rubrics for different types of assignment, one area of improvement might be to refer to these in order to specify grading policies more precisely and emphasize the Department's attempt to make grading policies more uniform across courses at the same level (2xx, 3xx, 4xx).

The relevant syllabi were perfectly clear regarding courses that count towards the college's Writing Across the Curriculum requirement. One syllabus also mentioned that the course fulfilled the college's Western Civilization requirement; syllabi might improve, also, by including references to all of the college's General Requirements.

In general, our syllabi have improved markedly in their clarity and comprehensiveness. We have been working to make them more useful to students and a better gauge of what participants in our classes can expect to learn.

3. Compositions:

We collected two samples from Fall 04 (SPN 301) and two samples from Spring 05 (SPN 302). Final compositions for these two classes were submitted with first and second draft. The samples show an improvement in terms of verbs command, vocabulary and culture. However, we felt that the course material and strategy introduced by the instructor to guide the students in writing were not adequate for SPN 301. For SPN 302, the instructor addresses this problem and adopts a better approach by recurring to simple autobiography in order to improve students' writing skills. Although no Hispanic culture was reflected in the composition in SPN 302, the

method students to focus mainly on improving their verb conjugations, the use of different idiomatic expressions, and spelling. The samples analyzed for this report show that instructors do their best in helping the students with strategies to improve their writing skills. To continue improving the sequence SPN 301-302, we suggest a year long plan in order to have a better idea of students' improvements.

4. Papers:

We selected two samples from a linguistic course (SPN 315-Fall 04), three samples from two literature courses (SPN 484-Fall 04 and SPN 371-Sp 05) for assessment. The 315 samples show that students were guided into improving their research as well as their language skills. The citations show that students were able to research important books in Spanish linguistics books. Naturally, the difficulty of the topics made the students rely on secondary sources. However, this aspect is addressed later in SPN 402/502, for which the students show excellent linguistic and cultural preparation that enables them to consult different sources and write correctly and meaningfully. Comparing the work produced by students in SPN 315 and SPN 402 was very useful, since these two courses are taken in sequence by a great number of the students (315 in the Fall and 402 in the Spring of the same academic year).

The sample for SPN 484 shows a sophisticated writing, literary analysis and research which suggest that the instructor was giving enough feedback and that the guidelines for the term paper were very precise and helpful. For 371, two drafts were submitted along with the final version of the papers. The samples show that throughout the semester students were developing their skills in writing, since a considerable part of the evaluation was based on language aspects.

The samples also show that students were developing their critical analysis skills.

6. Survey:

We include in this report the results of seven surveys from the students about how they feel after completing a BA in Spanish at CSU. The standard survey shows that most all of our students are either very satisfied or moderately satisfied with the career they chose after graduating from the program. Most of our students surveyed became teachers, but others continued with their graduate education in Spanish or Counseling. One of the respondents is serving in the *Peace Corps*.

In general terms, we know our students are very satisfied with the education they are receiving. They seem to feel very comfortable with their writing, oral and reading skills they developed. We need to encourage students in other fields such as business and health to complete a minor/major with us to have a more global education. But we also are aware that we may need to adjust our curriculum to better serve those specific audiences.

6. Meeting with majors:

We had two meetings with all our majors during this academic year. During these two meetings we gave the students the opportunity to meet the three new Spanish faculty of our department. It was a great opportunity to talk about advising, selection of courses for the following semester, selection of careers and study abroad. These meetings are an excellent way to improve our relationships with our students, to listen to their needs and to continue offering the best services and courses to our students.

We had the opportunity during this year to improve our advising services to all our students. All the Spanish faculty was involved in this process. Each faculty member was

assigned some specific hours to assist the students during the advising period before registration.

7. Study Abroad:

Study abroad is an important component of both our BA and our MA programs. We have more than 20 years' experience with a joint program in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and in conjunction with various programs over the years in Spain. Study abroad is required for the MA and encouraged for the BA; however, we are very pleased that students in other undergraduate programs also participate in these programs.

We analyze the responses of three students from the student evaluation form provided by the Center for International Services and Programs at CSU. All students agreed that it was a very helpful and enriching experience, and that they would absolutely recommend it to other students on campus.

8. Some changes, improvements, success stories:

- We had three meetings among ourselves in which we had the opportunity to discuss issues about assessment. We wrote a memo for all faculty with information to make the assessment process more easy and productive.
- This year two of our Spanish B.A. students joined and will graduate from our M.A. program. For the coming academic year one student was already accepted in our program, and one was accepted to start her MA at the University of Pittsburgh.
- Faculty representatives attended the Assessment Workshop provided by the university during this year and we are incorporating new information into our procedures.

- Starting Spring 2005 we are giving the students the opportunity to take the WebCAPE Foreign Language Placement Exam developed by Brigham Young University. A total of 37 students have taken the exam. We will continue using this standard test since it is an opportunity for our students to measure their level of proficiency in the language over their years at CSU and the accumulated data will help us gauge any changes we might make in the level of work expected in our courses.

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 do not have not complete statistical evidence, we know from our surveys and emails from former students that 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 to improve the services we offer our students. It is important for us to maintain good communication with our majors and minors, and to 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.

Most of our Spanish faculty are very involved with the assessment process, and everyone is aware of the changes we need in order to become more effective and productive. We continue to incorporate what we have learned in order to improve our advising, the courses we offer and our curriculum so as to present students of CSU with an outstanding B.A. program in Spanish.