

External Reviewer Report
Sonoma State University
BA Spanish
MA Spanish

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External Reviewer

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I would like to thank the faculty, staff, and students in the Spanish BA and MA programs as well as faculty of the Department of Modern Languages and Literature along with the Office of Academic Affairs, the School of Arts and Humanities and other university administrators for their cordial welcome during my recent campus visit. Your candid responses to my questions and your willingness to adjust your schedules to meet with me were greatly appreciated.

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May, 2013

Table of Contents:

	page
I. General Overview of Programs and Issues.....	4
BA in Spanish	
MA in Spanish	
II. Strengths, Innovations, and Unique Features.....	5
III. Challenges and Concerns.....	6
IV. Recommendations.....	7
V. Persons Interviewed.....	9

General Program Overview and Issues

BA in Spanish:

The undergraduate offerings in Spanish lead to Bachelor of Arts degree of 36 units or to a minor of 20 units. Three full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty are in charge of programming which includes instruction and student advising in addition to managing a Language Lab. The workload is complemented by two Graduate Teaching Associates (selected from the ranks of MA program participants) along with lecturers.

University Institutional Research data show between 37 to 60 declared majors during the 2006–2012 time period (data maintained by program faculty showed higher numbers of declared majors – the difference in figures most likely due to the number of students who have two or more majors). Over this same time period the undergraduate Spanish program generated between 85.6 and 75.7 FTEs (with the highest of 104.1 during the 2006-2007 academic year). Clearly programming and resources were affected by the California recession which meant fewer dollars to the CSU System and consequently fewer resources (fiscal, materials, and human) for campuses. Data review found decreasing course offerings during years of the fiscal downturn.

While teacher education is one of the core missions of the CSU and of the Spanish Program at Sonoma State – the shortage of resources necessitated the discontinuation of the Wavier Program.

The core program faculty work collaboratively, supporting the programming and students. Each faculty member maintains an active research agenda, in addition to engaging in department and university service. This reviewer observed the faculty's dedication and positive responsiveness to individual questions during the campus visit (whenever a student stopped to ask a question or seek advice, faculty took the time and responded).

The BA program design is congruent with national programs of Spanish, including a mix of literature, linguistics and translation as well as reflecting the ACTFL Standards and proficiency guidelines (<http://www.actfl.org/>). Clearly assessment is an on-going component of the program, and is used regularly in program decision-making.

MA in Spanish:

The Master of Arts in Spanish is a relatively new program, with its first program admits starting in 2008. This 34-unit program is offered through the School of Extended Education. All courses are scheduled during the summers, a feature that addresses the needs and interests of employed single-subject Spanish teachers as well as recent Sonoma

State Spanish program graduates. All participants meet the University's graduate admission requirements and follow the same graduate guidelines as other campus graduate programs.

As designed, the MA program makes it possible for participants to complete the degree in three summers (including the culminating exams) while maintaining their teaching positions. As of 2013, the MA program has graduated 26 students.

A tenured faculty member, Dr. Jeffrey Reeder, serves as Graduate Coordinator and leads the program. Program faculty include Sonoma State campus members in addition to individuals from the program's part-time pool – all hold terminal degrees with specializations associated with their teaching assignments.

The program takes a generalist approach including coursework in literature, linguistics, and pedagogy. While this is the first formal program review for the MA in Spanish program, clearly assessment has a significant role in the program and is an on-going program feature. Since the program's founding, core courses were changed from 3 unit-courses to 4 unit-courses and the manner in which courses were scheduled during the summer was also changed. These changes were in response to program assessment and participant feedback.

Strengths, Innovations, and Unique Features

This section identifies areas for which the Spanish BA and MA merit recognition. The fact that the references are brief should not diminish their significance.

Faculty: dedicated to the success of students; decision-making is collegial, manages a significant workload with professionalism; highly respected by their peers

Curriculum: clearly stated SLOs (measureable, realistic, reflect current national norms and guidelines)

Senior Capstone: capstone experiences that engage senior program completers in a rigorous academic project (including selection and justification of a topic; collection and organization of research; professional presentation and assessment; culminating in a scholarly work) while also enhancing their language skills in a meaningful manner (2013 student samples: <http://sonoma-dspace.calstate.edu/handle/10211.3/98763>)

The Language and Culture Learning Center:
supports student learning while enhancing ability to think
critically, socially, and ethically.

Student Resources: the number and quality of clubs, honor societies, and activities
provided for students (encourage and support student retention and
program completion).

MA program that addresses the needs of an identified population offered in a
mode that is responsive to the participants' working schedules;
highly praised and valued by participants

Effectively uses assessment findings to make programmatic decisions

Challenges and Concerns

This section briefly describes what I consider to be the major challenges faced by
the Spanish programs. The recommendations section will address these and other
issues.

Course Offerings and Enrollments:

In discussion with faculty and students as well as review of
institutional data, the limited number of sections of beginning language
appears to impact growth in the number of BA majors. "When entering
students want to declare Spanish as a major, with only one section of most
beginning/lower division courses, no seats available for them." While the
limiting of sections offered may be directly related to the recent fiscal
downturn, to maintain critical mass, a pathway to the major for newly
admitted freshmen will need to be identified. Simply opening new
sections will not completely solve this challenge, a means of staffing
additional courses will need to be addressed.

In terms of enrollments in the MA program, thought must be given to size
of program, in terms of growth and meeting student demand. What is a
reasonable size; how big is too big; and if the program were to grow, how
would that growth be managed?

Student needs:

There was much discussion about the needs of heritage speakers in both the BA and MA programs. Some current students reported “feeling sorry for the non-heritage speakers, because the programming is hard.” While seeking maintain and enhance program diversity, faculty will need to access what support would best attract and retain non-heritage speakers while also continuing to address the needs and the interests of heritage speakers.

Recommendations

The faculty posed several questions to the reviewer: 1) how to establish a campus foreign/world language graduation requirement; and 2) what might be done to immediately address incoming freshmen desire to major in Spanish when the classes needed to start the program are full before they can register?

While funding and new resources may appear to be answers to many of the identified challenges, increasing these alone would not be the most effective pathway. That said, program faculty are encouraged to find a time to focus on the effect that any of the recommendations might have on the overall program and discuss what would be most appropriate to ensure that program quality, identity and integrity are maintained.

Establishing a campus foreign/world language requirement:

As member of COPLAC, Sonoma State University is considered a public liberal arts institution. In reviewing the COPLAC website, language and culture are referenced consistently and addressed as a practical component of a liberal arts education (for example in a speech by Steve Smith, Truman State University, <http://www.coplac.org/publications/plan/?article=6>). Given the institutional commitment to providing a quality public liberal arts education, the Modern Language faculty may wish to approach the addition of a world language requirement as a necessary component of a liberal arts education (especially in terms of preparing graduates to function successfully in a global society). Additionally, consideration should include discussion of what would be the appropriate number of units associated with the requirement and what the student learning outcomes might be. This is most critical in light of the CSU focus on retention and timely graduation.

Addressing the need for more sections of beginning Spanish courses:

A viable option outside of the immediate addition of more course sections might include the building a collaborative partnership with area high schools and community colleges as a means of addressing the need for more sections of beginning Spanish courses. Building a “formal 2+2+2 collaborative” has the potential of growing the number of students entering the BA in Spanish program by developing a pipeline. Teachers and counselors in high school encourage students to take the beginning lower division courses

at the partnering community colleges; the community colleges working in collaboration (and articulation) with the SSU campus offering students the beginning Spanish course; and then having the completers move into the upper division Spanish courses on the SSU campus.

Additionally, consider the use of hybrid courses and/or course flipping as a means of increasing the number of seats available to students seeking enrollment in beginning Spanish courses.

Addressing needs of heritage speakers:

There was much discussion about meeting the needs and interests of heritage speakers, while also being responsive to non-heritage speakers, little data were available identifying the actual numbers of each group. Is there a critical mass of either group? If so, what are faculty concerns and understanding of the needs of each group? With concrete information about each group, it will be easier to clearly delineate the needs of each group and to be more responsive through curriculum adjustment.

Affecting campus culture through collaborative partnerships:

Identify and build programmatic partnerships with other campus disciplines/programs. Through campus partnerships, the modern language faculty, more specifically, the faculty in Spanish, can start to develop a “campus culture” that sees modern/world languages as a necessary component of a public liberal arts education.

There are several possible programs/centers in the School of Arts and Humanities:

American Multicultural Studies, Chicano and Latino Studies, California Cultural Studies, and Center for Ethics, Law & Society. Also think about business and nursing.

Occasional summer offerings like “Spanish for nursing and healthcare,” or “Spanish for the business professional” will help to establish a broader understanding of the value of “language learning” and its benefits to future professionals.

Persons interviewed

Provost Andrew Rogerson
Dean Thaine Stearns (School of Arts and Humanities)
AVP Elaine Sundberg
Robert Rosen, Director of Programs ((School of Extended Education)
Tenured/tenure track Spanish Program faculty
 Jeffrey T. Reeder
 Parissa Tadrissi
 Robert W. Train
Department of Modern Languages and Literature faculty
 Michaela Grobbel
 Christine Renaudin
 Suzanne Toczyski
Teaching Associates
 Dámaris Caro
 Carmen Payan
Students
 A. Campos
 M. Galicia
 C. Figueroa
 A. Torres
 J. Drummond
 J. Anguiano
 S. Salguero
 L. Guerrero
 A. Jimenez
 N. Vacasotelo
 M. Martin
 B. Sepulveda
 J. McManus
 D. Sanchez
 E. Toledo
 H. Perez