

**Sonoma State University
School of Arts and Humanities
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures
Program Performance Review (PPR)
External Reviewer Report
November-December 2020**

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Dr. Sandra Pérez (CSU Fullerton)**

This Program Performance Review (PPR) Report responds to the self-study submitted by the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures this past November 2020, as well as the two-day campus and department virtual visit completed November 30-December 1, 2020 (a meeting with lecturer faculty was rescheduled to Dec. 8, 2020 due to issues with the Zoom connection on the original date and time). I would like to commend the faculty of the Modern Languages and Literatures Department for the thoughtful and thorough self-study submitted. It is my desire to highlight both strengths and challenges faced by the Modern Languages and Literatures Department at Sonoma State University in order to provide some direction in creating a plan for continuous improvement. My purpose is to give meaningful feedback and propose recommendations that will further strengthen the department and guide future decision-making both at the school and departmental level, while aligning with Sonoma State's Core Values as documented in its 2018-2025 Strategic Plan (<https://strategicplan.sonoma.edu/sites/strategicplan/files/strategic-plan-2pg.pdf>).

Per the Strategic Plan noted above, Sonoma State University “delivers high-quality education through innovative programs that leverage the economic, cultural, and natural resources of the North Bay.” In accordance with this emphasis, the Spanish Program faculty have refocused their curriculum and efforts to serve the growing population of Hispanic/Latinx students from the region. As discussed in the self-study, Spanish faculty have reimagined upper-division courses to offer greater options to heritage speakers of Spanish while in their professional service, collaborating with campus partners such as *PUERTA*, EOP, and the DREAM Center to reach more disadvantaged community members. Spanish faculty actively serve on committees that directly impact the lives of their students and it is admirable to see their efforts in Alianza for Equity, the Annual Latino Family Summit, Latinx Heritage month, and more. I applaud their hard work and praise them for the transformational opportunities they offer their students. Given this programmatic strength, I encourage continuing to foster these connections while further relating them to curricular innovation. With support from the outreach office, promoting these events to the community can also further strengthen the pipeline to recruit more Spanish students.

Spanish faculty have done a fantastic job in increasing majors and minors since the last PPR and in serving higher numbers of students. Their level of commitment is especially admirable given the steady increase in number of students served by department faculty, as well as the fact that more than 75% of their students are underrepresented minorities and 1st generation students. In fact, it was quite apparent when I spoke with students that they hold Spanish faculty in the highest esteem and have a deep sense of gratitude for their dedication, flexibility, and humanity in supporting them. Given this shift in demographics both for the MLL Department and the University, it makes sense to continue to develop additional courses to serve heritage speakers, expand service learning opportunities to meet more community needs, as well as support internships where service to the Hispanic/Latinx community will be at the center.

Clearly, the Core Values of the institution are reflected in the efforts and direction of the Spanish faculty since the last program review. However, here also lie additional opportunities for more impactful outcomes, especially in supporting the first core value of diversity and social justice and the third value of connectivity and community engagement. As noted in the self-study and mentioned by students with whom I spoke, it is difficult for students to move towards graduation as Spanish majors and minors due to the limited number of sections offered each semester. Wait lists, especially at the upper-division level, indicate that students are not readily able to take needed courses and move towards finishing their degrees in a timely manner. Per MLL data, during the period of the self-study, the number of majors has ranged from 97-170 and the number of minors from 83-120. Accordingly, FTES ranged from 78 to 107 yet the significant increase in FTES has not resulted in the replacement of faculty. In identifying Spanish Program data, it is important to include both second majors and minors; the Office of Institutional Effectiveness should provide updated data so that significant contributions made by the Spanish Program to student success at the departmental, school, and university level can be appropriately recognized (see Figure 3 from the self-study on FTES, FTER, and SFR or Figure 6 on data discrepancy). A crucial goal for the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, in light of the university's first core value, must be continuing to facilitate time to degree for all Spanish minor and B.A. students, as well as Latin American Studies, Global Studies, Business, Nursing, and any student needing upper-division GE units in Spanish.

Furthermore, given that the Spanish minor is the most popular minor at Sonoma State University, additional resources should ensure that students can take needed upper-division courses to complete the minor and move closer to graduation. The health and popularity of the Spanish minor, enrollment data, the dedication of its faculty, the academic and curricular rigor of the existing program, and overwhelming student enthusiasm for Spanish support the additional sections for Sonoma State students. Supporting the culture and language of Hispanic/Latinx students through sufficient course offerings will not only address social justice but also reposition a significant underrepresented community of the North Bay region. The same can be said for lower-division Spanish courses that fulfill GE requirements, which are also crucial in moving students towards degree completion. Spanish faculty are offering great service to Sonoma State students through a vast offering of general education courses; this certainly speaks to the impact the program has on students' overall educational breadth and ability to meet their academic goals. By offering graduate, undergraduate, minor, and GE courses in Spanish, Sonoma State Students clearly benefit from the exposure to the various cultural, linguistic, and literary aspects of the Hispanic world they study while increasing their understanding of local communities. Furthermore, the faculty are deeply committed to student success, the diverse populations they serve, and the well-being of the School of Arts and Humanities. However, because it is the case that a student does not reach the minimum number of units needed for graduation (total of 120-132 units) solely by completing General Education (48 units) and major requirements (36 units for Spanish), minors and certificate programs play a significant role in ensuring students reach overall graduation requirements, especially in the Humanities. This reality points towards a need to foster double majors and certificate programs within the School. Although Spanish faculty support linguistic and cultural agility in the Humanities as well as in various professional contexts, additional opportunities can only be incorporated with expanded resources and local partnerships. I therefore strongly urge the continued exploration of collaborative projects within the School of Arts and Humanities and beyond.

Undergraduate Spanish students are certainly enriched by faculty's efforts to offer cultural events, guest speaker lectures, conference presentation opportunities, and support an understanding

and sensitivity towards the diversity of Hispanic communities of the Americas and Europe. Additionally, Spanish faculty clearly have a student-centered approach in accommodating students' needs as demonstrated by the solution made to move towards hybrid and on-line modalities in course offerings to address bottleneck issues. Beyond serving students within the department, for a Hispanic Serving Institution, it makes a lot of sense to support collaborations for purposes of interdisciplinary certificate programs as well as the prolonged health of the Spanish area and department. Supporting an interdisciplinary and broad understanding of the Spanish-speaking world, its diverse communities and cultural assets will only strengthen the program in the future. Thus, it is important to ensure that sufficient upper-division sections are regularly offered so students may complete their degrees in a timely manner while also exploring complimentary studies that can be done in reaching the 120 units needed for graduation. In this regard, Spanish faculty can collaborate with the school's academic advising team so that advisors promote and encourage minors and certificate programs early on to ensure 4 year graduation is attainable for all students.

As explained in the self-study, in an attempt to serve their students, Spanish Program faculty had been making very timely progress towards shifting their offerings to hybrid and fully on-line modalities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although they will complete their conversion of all courses to on-line by spring 2021, the issue of **room allocation** needs to be considered to ensure students can be appropriately served once we all return to our campuses. The Stevenson Hall renovation has limited available classroom space and Carson Hall needs to be updated to provide equitable learning-ready classrooms that ensure all learning and teaching styles can be accommodated and made more accessible, especially for language, literature, and culture courses.

I applaud the Spanish area's strategic response to enrollment challenges and its role as the second largest provider of FTEs for the School of Arts and Humanities. At the School level, this major contribution should result in additional resources to help the Spanish area sustain its support for French and German, as well as support campus collaboration so that all Modern Languages and Literature students are appropriately served (including second majors and all minors). Although the nature of the department is particular to the school, it does not differ from other CSU language departments in its make-up: combining a Spanish MA and BA program with a French BA, and German BA program, as well as minors in those languages. I commend the strong and effective leadership Dr. Jeffrey Reeder has provided to the department, not only in meeting its needs, but representing its faculty and interests at the school and university level.

It is also clear that current Spanish faculty are fully extended in their teaching, research, and service to the department, school, university, and community. In order to serve students, they need the support of **additional faculty and resources**. Ensuring Hispanic/Latinx students have appropriate access to needed classes, faculty, and resources is at the core of the social justice focus of the strategic plan. Given Sonoma County's demographic data, the Hispanic/Latinx community is a large young group having the most dramatic growth in the area (see <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Health/Public-Reports/Health-Need-Assessments/Demographics/>) and it therefore necessitates shifting campus resources to address current local and regional needs. Additionally, this website notes that the Hispanic/Latinx population of the region has the lowest educational attainment as well as lowest number of homeownership. Thus, there is an urgency in prioritizing the educational attainment of this particular underserved community in order for them to access social well-being. Such a goal necessitates the hire of a new, ideally underrepresented, Spanish faculty member who can help respond to all core values of the strategic plan while also addressing issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the Spanish area, department, school, and

university. The Spanish faculty are an impressive group, thoroughly dedicated to their students, particularly through their teaching and service but there are only four faculty. As noted in the self-study, since the 2006 PPR, there have only been 4 faculty, rather than 5, serving the Spanish area. This long-term reduction in faculty has and continues to limit course offerings, general workload, and inability to fully serve all students interested in the Spanish major, minor, and related fields. As reassigned time is limited and faculty are asked to do more, it is not sustainable to successfully meet the demands of students' needs, research agendas, heavy service loads, and further diversify programmatic goals. Current successes have only been met by maximizing faculty workloads and shifting course offerings from the lower-division to upper-division with the intent of serving Spanish majors. Ensuring adequate resources for research and conference presentations will also support Spanish faculty in continuing to meet retention, tenure, and promotion requirements. At the moment, interlibrary loan services are key for faculty and student research and they should continue to be supported and expanded. Where possible, such resources should continue to be shared with lecturer faculty so they can remain current in their fields. Lecturers should have access to professional development and be made aware of expectations as they participate in review cycles. In my conversation with lecturer faculty, it became clear that improved communication and resource-sharing could help them remain strong teaching faculty and key partners in students' success. For example, your *Center for Teaching and Educational Technology* is offering a seminar on integrated teaching, learning, and assessment that could be shared with all lecturer faculty at no additional cost.

Furthermore, the faculty have responded to students' needs by shifting offerings to hybrid and fully on-line modalities but it is clear that both **additional course offerings, as well as a new full-time, tenure-track hire** would be needed to truly begin to serve all students interested in Spanish courses. A tenure track position is also necessary for the support and completion of key departmental and institutional functioning (programmatic assessment, student major and minor advising, continued community collaboration, departmental curricular innovation, continued university support of global awareness, Modern Languages and Literatures faculty participation in campus governance, etc.). In particular, the Spanish Program should have enough faculty to both cover curricular needs and continue their course-embedded assessment for every class but also offer leadership and support to their program while ensuring the workload is sustainable to complete teaching, research, and service to the university.

To better gauge the number of students impacted, I strongly recommend **using updated data from your Office of Institutional Effectiveness** that includes both students whose second major is Spanish, as well as all minors. My understanding is that Spanish is the number one minor of choice currently at Sonoma State and appropriate resources should be given to serve interested students. Current program faculty are offering student opportunities that include service-learning, the Spanish Honor Society, Spanish Club, and connections with the community that can only be increased and sustained with the support of an additional full-time, tenure-track faculty member. Co-curricular offerings are matched by meeting Student Learning Outcomes which include, in multilingual contexts, receptive and productive skills, cultural understanding, literary analysis, linguistic analysis, and information literacy.

Following the demographic shift in Sonoma State University's students, more faculty who model for students new academic and social attainment as underrepresented scholars should be added to the campus community. In identifying ideal new hires, finding a person who can further strengthen campus partnerships should be considered. I encourage **focused exploration of campus partnerships** so that a new faculty member can lead professional Spanish certificate

programs in collaboration with health and well-being (perhaps a Spanish for the Health Professions Certificate in collaboration with Santa Rosa hospitals), public service or pre-law (a Spanish for Restorative Justice or Civic Engagement Certificate aligned with local government agencies), communications (Hispanic Media/Social Media/Public Relations Certificate), and/or business (Hispanic Business Certificate for North Bay or Spanish for the food and wine industry). Unlike the efforts from the 1970s discussed in the self study, here Spanish language and culture must be at the core of new certificate programs. Bilingual, bicultural, and transnational understanding should guide the development of new certificates while the program continues to foster translingual and transcultural competence. There is no doubt, for example, that collaborations such as those established by PUERTA, positively impact the socio-economic, educational, and cultural well-being of Latinx/Hispanic students and communities in the North Bay region. Efforts to bring back the Bilingual Authorization (BILA) Waiver Program should be a priority as well. Spanish 427 students with whom I spoke specifically mentioned this request stating that it gave them great advantage when pursuing teacher credential programs and entering the job market.

Clearly, a challenge for all CSU campuses is meeting budgetary needs and Sonoma State University is no different. The Department of Modern Languages has a minimal operating budget and this challenge requires creative and strategic responses at both the school and university level. Among the possible ways to access additional resources are a strong partnership with foundation staff to secure local donations, support for public grant applications, such as *National Endowment for the Humanities* (NEH) grants for Hispanic Serving Institutions (<https://www.neh.gov/grants/education/humanities-initiatives-hispanic-serving-institutions>), and private grants such as those offered by the *Laura and John Arnold Foundation* (<https://www.arnoldventures.org/grantees>), as well as university partnerships that can maximize resources for more than one unit. For example, the minimally funded Spanish area student research presentations can be shifted to a school or campus event with participation from other departments where students are completing research projects on Hispanic/Latinx issues in both Spanish and English. Community members and partners can be invited as a means to increase the visibility and focus of the campus on addressing regional issues and moving research forward. Sonoma State's strategic communications can capture the event and promote it through local news outlets and social media. Such partnerships can then become the basis for additional funding. It may also be useful to explore partnerships with extended education or international education to see if there are winter or summer session course offerings that may bring in additional revenue to the Spanish area and MLL department. Such a decision would have to take into consideration the Spanish MA program so as to not take away resources needed for this program during the summer.

Additional campus partnerships that can further support services and resources for 1st generation students, many of whom are Spanish majors, can be found under Student Affairs. For students who lack family or community support in seeking higher education opportunities, advising centers are key in helping them navigate the complex GE requirements alongside their major while also offering post-graduation guidance. Advising partners can also maximize study abroad resources for students, helping them to understand course equivalencies and application processes for international programs. Advisors can support Pell Grant recipients in applying for the *International Gilman Scholarship* (<https://www.gilmanscholarship.org/>) to help them study abroad within and beyond the Spanish-speaking world. Furthermore, partnerships with Student Success Centers including the Career Center or the Center for Academic Success & Student Enrichment can further support students with particular needs or in succeeding beyond major requirements. Spanish area faculty are key advisors who already significantly support Koret Scholars and McNair Scholars. They

can further encourage their students interested in Ph.D. programs to apply to the *CSU Pre-doctoral Fellowship* (<https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/faculty-staff/predoc>) to access resources for graduate studies. In short, much is being done by Spanish faculty to support their students but strengthening campus partnerships could further expand current efforts to maximize students' success beyond graduation. Some students shared with me that they found out about opportunities a bit late and wished they had been informed earlier. Systematic “student success maps” that mirror “curricular maps” beyond the major can be established to help students maximize opportunities during their undergraduate experience. Where appropriate, **study away opportunities can be further supported or developed** to offer ways to learn regionally about international communities during winter and summer sessions for students who cannot travel internationally. Both within and outside of the School of Arts and Humanities, strategic partnerships for purposes of study abroad or study away and certificates should be considered.

Also related to student success, retention, and graduation is the offering of an honors experience within the CSU. Currently, thirteen of the 23 CSU campuses offer Honors Programs or have Honors Colleges. Because I was at different moments asked about my involvement with Honors education during the PPR interviews, I would like to offer some thoughts in this regard, especially as a means to attract and retain strong students. Despite its history as an elitist entity on university campuses, there is in the last two decades an effort within Honors education at the national level (see <https://www.nchchonors.org/>) to move towards greater equity, diversity, and inclusion. I here speak as a 6th year director of the University Honors Program at CSUF, current member of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee of NCHC, and recently elected member to the NCHC board. In this regard, Sonoma State University is very well positioned to open an honors program aligned with its strategic plan; I here imagine for example, a university-wide Honors for Social Transformation Program that can serve the entire campus. It can be a program that addresses regional issues from an interdisciplinary perspective with local partnerships and service to the community. It can be a hub to explore health and wellness issues, address regional concerns related to civic engagement, diverse religious and cultural understanding, promote Hispanic/Latinx leadership, or further develop environmental technology in relation to your campus-run nature preserves. Honors can be an innovative space on campus where complex social problems can be studied and addressed. It can also be a way to attract and retain diverse faculty. For example, the Hispanic/Latinx community in the United States is disproportionately affected by type 2 diabetes. Through partnerships with Spanish, Nursing and Kinesiology found in your School of Science and Technology, as well connections with your School of Education, new programs could be developed that bring together improved nutrition, exercise, and social well-being for your Hispanic/Latinx communities that can be offered in both Spanish and English. There are endless possibilities for a campus-wide Honors Program and you could certainly connect it with Sonoma State University's desire to serve as an educational and cultural resource in the North Bay region.

I would like to recognize that the Spanish Program has much to be proud of given the hard work and generous dedication of Spanish faculty. Despite the small group of four, each faculty member is serving students beyond the classroom, is fully dedicated to the program, the department, the school, and university in more ways than can be expected. Dr. Jeffrey Reeder, for example, is not only serving as MLL Department Chair, he is also fully supporting Native American Studies and teaching in that area while leading your academic senate. Equal dedication to their discipline, Spanish program, and university is documented in the CVs submitted for this PPR by Dr. Robert Train, Dr. Parissa Tadrissi, and Dr. Emily Clark.

I believe the collective hard work of Spanish faculty should be further recognized and rewarded by helping the department access greater funding, approving a new diverse tenure-track hire in Spanish, supporting their data needs, helping them to bridge with other campus departments and units for purposes of developing interdisciplinary certificate programs, and improving their web presence. Despite their many undertakings, the Spanish area's accomplishments are not highlighted in the departmental website. Bolstering their web presence will no doubt support the MLL Department and Spanish Program overall. Intellectually, the department offers bicultural and bilingual understanding and innovative critical thinking, fostering tolerance and international understanding with strong local connections and community service. Nevertheless, the hard work of program faculty is not sustainable without additional resources. As noted in the self-study there are key recommendations that would greatly benefit the Spanish area, and more importantly, Sonoma State students. In particular, increasing Spanish upper-division course offerings (particularly for heritage speakers), hiring an additional diverse tenure-track faculty member, creating additional courses for heritage speakers and building more service learning experiences with support of an additional faculty, exploring campus partnerships for the creation of certificate programs, and completing online course options in Spanish should be the focus of improvements these next years.

In conclusion, the Spanish area plays a crucial role, both at the school level and the university as a whole, in forming global citizens and contributing to a campus community of international awareness and cultural understanding. It contributes to the local cultural health of the labor force, global community and the institution's status as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). I commend the Spanish area faculty for its effectiveness and urge Sonoma State University to continue to support the Modern Languages and Literatures Department in its tremendous service to underrepresented students and your campus community as a whole.