

Institutional Effectiveness Report
Academic Year 2013-2014
For Modern Languages Program

Modern Languages Faculty
Coordinators of IE for Modern Languages

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Chair of Department

Program Mission and Goals

The Department of English, Modern Languages, and Philosophy offers a major in Modern Languages with tracks in French, German, and Spanish. Minors and collaterals are also offered in these languages. The Department provides the resources for students to acquire proficiency in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in French, German, and Spanish and to gain knowledge of the culture, the literature, and the civilizations of countries where these languages are spoken. Career opportunities for foreign language majors include teaching, international business, translation, interpretation, government and diplomatic professions, the military, health fields, and professions requiring a University degree with a background in the liberal arts. Modern languages majors also frequently seek graduate degrees in foreign languages or related fields.

Program goals:

- A) To prepare students to engage in conversation so that they may create within the target language when talking about familiar topics, producing complete sentences using a variety of linguistic structures in order to convey intended messages without misrepresentation or confusion.
- B) To prepare students to demonstrate proficiency in practical writing needs, such as simple messages, letters, requests for information, notes, and essays.
- C) To guide students through readings so they can understand the main ideas and supporting details and can deduce meaning of unknown vocabulary through context clues.
- D) To develop the students' listening skills so that they demonstrate competency and understanding of discourses on a variety of topics in the target language, from among a range of different dialects and in different registers such as formal, informal, literary, colloquial, conversational, etc.
- E) To cultivate students' knowledge and understanding of other cultures, and to have students demonstrate comprehension of the intersection of language and cultural awareness.

Assessment Activities

Scoring of Student-Produced Work

The following materials from twelve (12) graduating seniors were assessed in order to evaluate success in achieving program goals A, B, C, D, and E.

French

- Speaking: Recorded conversations from French Conversation (French 302). In the case that French 302 was taken abroad, oral interviews were given separately to graduating seniors and recorded for the purpose of evaluation.
- Writing: Collected essays and writing samples from French Grammar and Composition (French 301) and French literature classes (French 401 and French 402 and French 304: Masterpieces of French Literature.).
- Reading: reading response papers or other essays, final papers from French literature classes (French 401 and 402).
- Listening: Listening comprehension tests from French Conversation (French 302). In the case that French 302 was taken abroad, listening comprehension tests were given separately to graduating seniors for the purpose of evaluation.
- Culture: Student-produced cultural presentations from various classes including French Civilization (French 305); journals from students who have participated in study abroad programs in France; and cultural essays written by graduating seniors for the purpose of evaluation.

German

- Speaking: Recorded individual interviews (*Klausuren*) from German 302: Conversational German, which serve as the final exam.
- Writing: Research papers, tests requiring answers in German, and short essays from Survey of German Literature 401 and 402 and German 304: Masterpieces of German Literature.
- Reading: reading response papers or other essays, major test, and assignments above the 300 level.
- Listening: Recordings of final exam conversations from German Conversation (German 302).

- Culture: Major tests from all coursework above the 300 level and examples of work from the culture-specific course, German 305: Civilization of German-Speaking countries; or surveys from study abroad experiences.

Spanish

- Speaking: Recorded conversations from Spanish Conversation (Spanish 302).
- Writing: Collected essays from Spanish Grammar and Composition (Spanish 301).
- Reading: reading response papers or other essays, final papers from Spanish 306, 307, 401 or 402.
- Listening: Listening comprehension tests from Spanish Conversation (Spanish 302).
- Culture: Student-produced cultural presentations from culture and civilization classes (Spanish 308, 309); field experience in service-learning courses (Spanish 220, 497 (Foreign Language Teaching Methods); or journals from study abroad experiences.

Materials listed above were collected in each category from each graduating senior and used to evaluate the success in achieving program goals A, B, C, D, and E. Student work was evaluated in accordance with the following Assessment Scale: Four (4) through one (1), with four being the highest and one the lowest assessment level given. The Modern Languages faculty have established a benchmark of 2.5 as a desirable overall average for all program graduates.

Exit Interviews

During the fall and spring semesters, graduating French and Spanish majors participated in exit interviews and completed questionnaires. The results from these procedures have also been used to evaluate success in achieving program goals.

Results and Evaluation

Scoring of Student-Produced Work

The results of the scoring of student-produced work show that the department's benchmarks have been met for each goal.

The chart below shows this year's results for each of the three tracks in Modern Languages as well as composite scores for the Modern Languages programs.

Goal Area	French	German	Spanish	Overall average
A: Engage in conversation creatively; convey intended messages about familiar topics using a variety of linguistic structures with little or no misrepresentation.	2.8	N/A	2.85	2.825
B: Demonstrate proficiency in practical writing needs.	2.6	N/A	3.08	2.84
C: Understand the main ideas and supporting details of a variety of written texts	3.3	N/A	3.37	3.34
D: Demonstrate competency and understanding of spoken discourses on a variety of topics in the target language.	3.3	N/A	3.4	3.35
E: Demonstrate comprehension of the intersection of language and cultural awareness.	3.0	N/A	3.26	3.13

Results of Exit Interviews

Graduating French and Spanish majors completed exit interviews. Each student responded to a questionnaire and/or scheduled a meeting with a Modern Languages faculty member to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Students who participated in Study Abroad Trips were also given surveys. These comments were taken into consideration and analyzed to help determine program strengths and weaknesses.

Program Strengths and Weaknesses

Graduates in French expressed great satisfaction with their classes, professors, and study abroad opportunities. One student wrote, “The classes are challenging, and the professors are extremely knowledgeable and helpful. From entry-level language classes to upper-level literature classes, the level and speed of the classes were always appropriate.” The graduates who studied abroad in Caen through the FMU exchange program were very pleased with this experience; one student said that spending a semester at a French university helped him grow intellectually and enriched him personally; now he feels comfortable engaging French speakers in conversation whenever he has the opportunity. On the other hand, French graduates stated that there was room for improvement in the program’s small number of courses offered each semester, as well as the variety of courses. One graduate stated that she would like to see more focused classes on specific French authors, Business French, or French pop culture. Another student said, “It would be really nice if more upper level classes were offered. I know it is a small department, but, had I not studied abroad, it would have been very difficult to complete my French/English double major.” Also, one graduate who did not study abroad said she wished her conversational skills were better. This is consistent with our self-assessment, which shows that conversational skills remain the lowest score category for graduates in French, especially for those who did not have the opportunity to study abroad.

According to their surveys, graduates in Spanish also expressed great enthusiasm for non-traditional learning opportunities outside of the classroom such as the bi-monthly *tertulias* or conversational groups that now offer students and faculty an informal opportunity to practice spoken Spanish. A study abroad trip to Spain over spring break gave nine Spanish majors the opportunity to travel abroad and experience firsthand the culture and language of Spain. Surveys from the trip indicate that the lives of the participants were greatly enriched by the experience. ACTFL’s Five C’s were brought to life, as students were able to communicate, connect and compare cultures and communities. Among other comments, one student noted: “I was surrounded by a culture far different from my own with a value system much different from my own. Often when seeing these different values in action it made me reflect on my own values.” On a number of surveys, students indicated that travel abroad was a defining moment in their decision to continue their study of Spanish. Additionally, Spanish for Health Care was offered for the first time and reached its maximum capacity, a sign of student interest in applied Spanish courses. The value of service-learning opportunities offered in Spanish at FMU, seen as “an invaluable asset to my experience,” was also noted as being significant to the students’ studies, due to the “real-world application” of the language.

As the assessment scores demonstrate, the weakest area in student performance in Spanish is speaking (see Appendix 1). The implication of the lower score in this area would indicate that students are not given sufficient opportunities to speak Spanish in and outside of class. This area’s need for improvement is further affirmed by one student’s comment on an exit survey: “I would like a greater emphasis on the oral application of the language.” Another student stated, “I would like to see students talking more Spanish

in class than what they do. [...] There are students that do not understand when read[ing] Spanish, they struggle in making complete sentences, and still are going to have their degree and probably work in places that ask for Spanish.”

The small number of course offerings was also seen as a program deficiency, as well as a lack of Spanish faculty to enable expansion of the scope of course offerings. A lack of consistency in the quality of instruction according to instructor was also expressed. It was also suggested that the upper-level courses not be offered back to back on the same days.

Actions Already Taken for Program Improvement:

The greatest improvement in recent years has been the placement of students in foreign institutions through our international exchange programs. Currently our French majors have been strong here, visiting the University of Caen in northern France on a regular basis for over a decade. Students in German have benefitted from the summer program in German Language and Culture hosted by our exchange partner, the University of Applied Sciences in Schmalkalden, Germany. This program has been in existence since 2004 where the FMU Professor of German has been a guest lecturer since that time. Recently, FMU has begun a partnership program with the University of Koblenz-Landau, located in the state of Rheinland-Pfalz, South Carolina’s sister state in the Federal Republic of Germany. Spanish students also had the opportunity to study in Cuernavaca, Mexico, until recent years when that program was suspended due to political tensions there. Dr. García Otero has identified several prospective universities in Spain that would be suitable for establishing an exchange agreement with FMU.

In Spring, 2014, a study abroad trip to Spain gave nine Spanish majors the opportunity to travel abroad and experience firsthand the culture and language of Spain. Another trip to Spain for Spanish honors students is in the works. FMU also recently inaugurated an agreement with Coastal Carolina University to cooperate in international exchange programs. This will provide mutual opportunities for students at both institutions to benefit from an extended choice of foreign programs. All of these opportunities should help improve student performance in all skill areas, particularly in speaking and culture.

Within the Spanish discipline, students now have the opportunity to participate in service-learning projects, which greatly enhance their cultural awareness of the Hispanic population in their own community. Spanish for Health Care now exists for nursing and other students interested in health care. Foreign Language Teaching Methods is also offered to assist our students who are interested in the teaching profession. (Spanish 497, Special Topics)

In response to interviews with graduating French majors, as a first step to broadening the French curriculum, a new course was added to the 2014-15 academic catalog; namely, Introduction to Business and Professional French. This is a departure from our traditional literature-based program and will be of particular use to students who plan to study in FMU’s business exchange program with the university in Poitiers, France.

The Modern Languages program has also made a great effort at recruitment and retention of quality majors. In Spring, 2013 both our departmental web site and bulletin board were updated by faculty. Additionally, a “Muffins with Modern Languages” event was held and attended by over 60 students who were presented with information about our Modern Language Majors, Minors, Collaterals, and Study Abroad Programs.

Future Suggestions for Program Improvement:

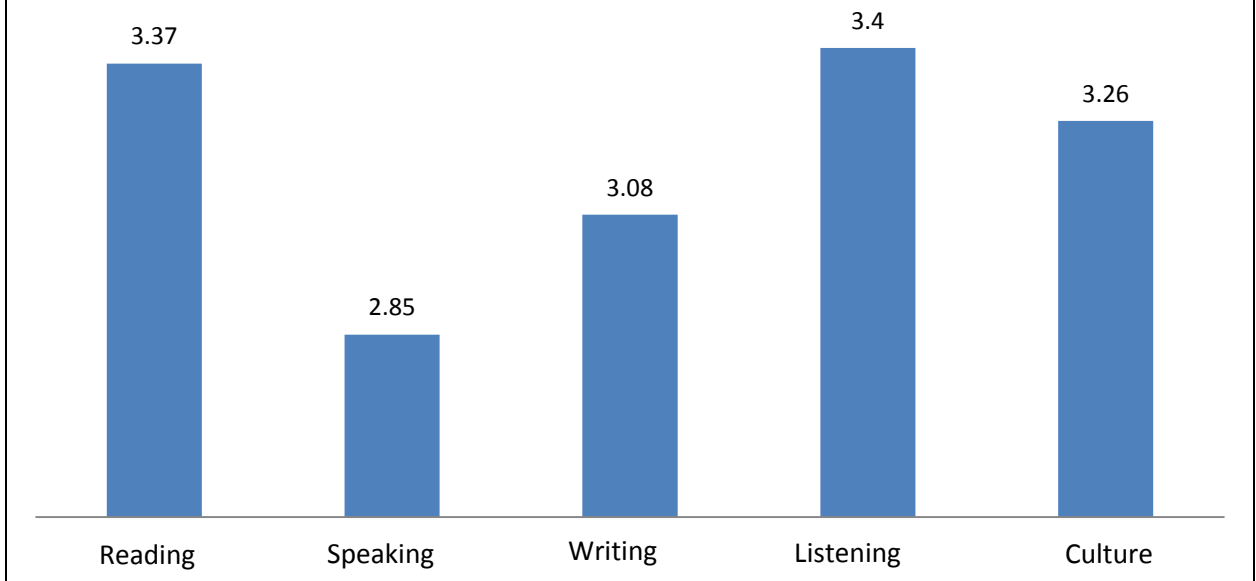
One action that might improve French conversational skills would be the creation of a language table similar to the Spanish *tertulias*. One such conversational group met once last year but a French language table has yet to become a regular event. Another way to improve conversational skills for students who do not get the chance to study abroad would be to look into new digital resources including digital workbooks and possibly an online course. Other new courses could be created and added to the catalog or taught as seminar classes as a means to broaden the French curriculum. Finally, additional staff would be a plus, as this would be the only practical way to actually be able to offer more upper-level course offerings.

The Spanish Program deficiencies seem to point toward a need for a more cohesive program, in which all instructors are striving toward a similar set of communicative skills for students. Relying on adjunct faculty to teach over half (56% annually) of the General Education Spanish course offerings each semester is not a viable way to sustain and continue building a quality program (see Appendix 2). While the program goals are in writing and have been defined by the Spanish faculty, adjunct faculty are contracted only to teach classes and hold office hours. There is no incentive for them to invest any further in a program that does not invest in them. The end result is a fractured program. For example, upon reviewing one adjunct instructor’s syllabus last semester, it was discovered that not all of the program’s set objectives were being followed. In the future, the Spanish faculty will work in conjunction with the chair to ensure that all adjunct instructors are adhering to the program’s standards. Moreover, to alleviate the program’s dependence on adjunct instructors, the Spanish faculty will continue to advocate for an additional tenure-track line in Spanish.

Over the next year, the Spanish faculty will explore the advantages and disadvantages of offering a common final exam for the General Education sequence, as a means of achieving improved cohesion and ensuring that all instructors strive toward the same result. The *tertulias* will continue to be offered to provide students with an opportunity to practice speaking in Spanish. In addition, students will be encouraged to seek study abroad opportunities in Spanish-speaking countries. Given the continued safety concerns for student travel to Mexico, Dr. García Otero has identified several prospective universities in Spain that would be suitable for establishing an exchange agreement with FMU.

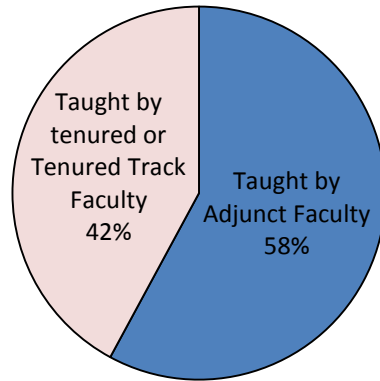
Spanish Program Assessment Scores 2013-2014

■ Spanish Program Assessment Scores 2013-2014



Appendix 1

Basic Language Courses Fall 2013



Basic Language Courses Spring 2014

