

External Review Report

Submitted by:

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The review team visited the Department of Foreign Languages at WST on Wednesday, April 14 from 8:00 am until 4.30 pm. The team met with Dean Madonne Miner, three different groups of faculty members, the Department Chair, and a group of individuals that provide support to the Department's programs (the Department Administrative Assistant, the Humanities Librarian, and representatives from Continuing Education and Community Involvement).

STANDARD A-MISSION STATEMENT

Evaluate how effectively the mission statement articulates the following elements.

a. The expected outcomes of the program need to be clearly defined.

Concern

While the current mission statement broadly defines the Department, it does not clearly list the expected outcomes. The Department does have well defined outcomes. Without making the mission statement too long, it would be good to mention these outcomes and perhaps even mention the levels of success.

b. A process by which these accomplishments are determined and periodically assessed based upon the constituencies served by the program.

Concern

Mentioning the ACTFL levels as stated above would define the context of the assessment. In order to keep the mission statement concise, a link, or other reference, could be provided to the ACTFL site or a Departmental site, for those who want learn more about the assessment process.

c. A clearly defined educational program, including a curriculum that enables graduates to achieve the mission.

Concern

The current mission statement mentions courses in language, literature and culture. It also states that the Department prepares *students to function effectively in a foreign language while gaining an understanding and appreciation of humanistic ideals and values*. It should mention that the Department offers foci in business language, translation, and other specific areas as they develop.

d. The program mission statement must be appropriate to support the mission statements of both the College housing the program and the university.

Strength

The current mission statement currently supports the College and university mission statements. With the changes suggested above it will continue to support these.

STANDARD B: CURRICULUM

a. *The program should demonstrate that the curriculum for each degree and for any general education/service courses offered by the program is the result of thoughtful curriculum planning and review processes.*

Strength

The Department provides viable options for its language majors by offering three different emphases. The recently implemented commercial track, which offers a useful alternative to the more traditional focus on literature, and the teaching emphasis, has proven popular (according to faculty). The Department has recently strengthened its Honors requirements and its teaching major, and its overall offerings by shifting courses from variable title to regular status.

b. *The curriculum should be consistent with the program's mission.*

Strength

The breadth of languages offered in the Department along with the three curricular emphases, align with the mission to “promote global awareness and intercultural understanding by providing instruction in various languages” and “to prepare students to function effectively.”

c. *The program should be able to demonstrate that there is an appropriate allocation of resources for curriculum delivery that is consistent with the mission of the program, the number of graduates, and the number of major/minor and general education SCH produced.*

Concern

The number of majors has held fairly steady with about 115 students graduating each year since 2004 while the number of minors has declined to around 70 in the last two years from around a 100 in years prior to 2008-09. As expected, most students graduate in Spanish; German and French typically graduate 10-12 majors and minors each year.

It is of concern, however, that only a handful of students have graduated with a minor in Japanese over the past three years and that French has few declared majors. The Department *as a whole*, in collaboration with the entire College and its Dean, has to assume responsibility for increasing the number of majors and minors in these two languages. The Department should capitalize on its expertise in assessment to analyze which non-language majors combine well with language minors, how they do so, and why, and then make a case for the relevance and need of the language minors, and for the minor to be taken into account by the administration.

The Dean and the Department together must devise a strategic plan with a reasonable timeline that sets benchmarks *over several years* for strengthening low enrollment majors and minors. The current review deadline of Fall 2010 is not feasible, however. The Department must be granted sufficient time to strengthen languages that have experienced declines nation-wide, as is the case for German and Japanese, or as a result of program eliminations at the secondary level, which is the case for French in the Weber school district). Departments inside and outside the College with a stake in preserving the breadth of languages offered at WSU must be included in the effort.

The Department might consider some of the following strategies to increase majors in French and Japanese:

Could more study abroad programs (2-4 weeks long) be developed in French to encourage more interest in the program? The other languages noted that many of the non-majors that participated in a study abroad program became FL majors.

Could the Department participate in more cross-curricular development?

Could the Department foster more feeder programs in the high schools?

d. Courses to support the major/minor/general education/service programs are offered on a regular basis to ensure students are able to complete graduation requirements in a timely manner.

The rotation of courses responds to students' needs with several courses offered every semester, and courses that are scheduled in the evening, for example upper division Spanish. In anticipation of the new B.A. six-credit hour requirement, the Department reduced its lower division courses from four to six credits as of January 2010.

STANDARD C: LEARNING OUTCOMES

a. Describe the expected knowledge, skills and behaviors that students will have achieved at the time of graduation.

Strength

The Department has used five measures to assess its language majors since 1999, and established a "Senior Assessment" course in 2001. Students take tests and submit assignments that are designed to demonstrate their oral and written proficiency, understanding of, and ability to analyze literary texts, and cross-cultural awareness. Successful completion of the course is required for graduation and the shift to online assessment two years ago has resulted in a 100% compliance rate.

b. Will support the goals of the program and the constituencies served.

Strength

The assessment areas align well with the program mission and goals, and students in the three majors perform well in all assessment areas. Faculty members review both the assessment and students' comments to determine whether any of the results warrant curricular adjustments to ensure that both the program goals and the students are served well with the assessment.

The Department might consider assessment of its minors and students who will graduate with the new B.A. requirement. An assessment of students who complete two 3-credit courses will reinforce the Department's focus on proficiency rather than contact hours and credits.

c. Are directly linked to the program's curriculum.

Strength

The outcomes that the Department has defined generally correspond well to the curriculum, which includes, for example, courses that focus on written expression or speaking, cultural heritage and literature. The Department might consider supplementing its common assessment with measures that are specific to the commercial track, for example students' use of business language (assuming that assessment is already built into the teaching track through licensure requirements).

STANDARD D: ACADEMIC ADVISING

a. *The Department has a clearly defined strategy for advising their major/minor, or BIS students that is continually assessed for its effectiveness.*

Strength

The declaration and clearance forms created in 2007 provide a simple and efficient means of tracking students' progress and keeping them in touch with faculty advisors.

b. *Students receive appropriate assistance in planning their individual programs of study.*

Strength

c. *Students receive needed assistance in making career decisions and in seeking placement, whether in employment or graduate school.*

N/A

STANDARD E: FACULTY

a. *Faculty size, composition, qualifications and professional development must result from a planning process which is consistent with the program's mission.*

Strength/Concern

There is a good planning process in place; however, not all faculty participate in it. This is a problem given the recent difficulties that the French major and the Japanese minor have encountered. The review team believes that preserving these programs is worthwhile and very important; however, the faculty need to do a better job of articulating a strategy for rebuilding enrollments and attracting new majors and minors. The review team is concerned that the faculty need to coordinate their efforts better, and act more aggressively, given the serious challenges these programs face.

b. *The program maintains a core of full-time faculty sufficient to provide stability and ongoing quality improvement for the degree programs offered.*

Strength

Maintain the current number of full-time faculty. Cuts in the size of the faculty would seriously compromise the program's strength.

c. *Contract/Adjunct faculty who provide instruction to students (day/evening, off/on campus) are academically and professionally qualified.*

Strength

The adjunct faculty seem well-trained. The Department should be commended for its efforts to include adjuncts in Departmental meetings and activities. They seem well-integrated into the program.

d. *The program should demonstrate efforts to achieve demographic diversity in its faculty.*

Strength

The Department offers great demographic diversity.

e. *The program should have appropriate procedures for the orientation of new contract/adjunct faculty.*

Strength

f. *Processes are in place to determine appropriate teaching assignments and service workloads, to guide and mentor contract/adjunct faculty, and to provide adequate support for activities which implement the program's mission.*

Strength

The Department Chair, Tom Mathews, has done an excellent job in guiding these processes and decisions.

g. *Teaching is systematically monitored to assess its effectiveness, and revised periodically to reflect new objectives and to incorporate improvements based on appropriate assessment methods. For both contract and adjunct faculty, there is evidence of:*

- Effective creation and delivery of instruction
- Ongoing evaluation and improvements of instruction
- Innovation in instructional processes

Strength

The Department has in place an annual review, as well as a three year review process. In addition, it relies on course evaluations. All of these together offer a rich picture of faculty activities, strengths, and weaknesses.

h. *A formal periodic review must exist for all faculty.*

All contract faculty are reviewed annually by the Department Chair and Dean not only for teaching but also scholarship and service. In addition, all contract faculty participate in a triennial review where these three areas are examined again. Adjunct faculty are routinely reviewed by the Department Chair. (Although I'm assuming this, almost all chairs routinely review the adjunct's evaluations)

STANDARD F: PROGRAM SUPPORT

Evaluate the nature and adequacy of the program support based on the following elements.

a. *The number and capabilities of the support staff are adequate to meet the mission and objectives of the program.*

Strength

The support staff is dedicated, well qualified, and effective in supporting the program.

b. *Administrative support is present in assisting in the selection and development of support staff.*

Strength

The Departmental secretary has served for 40 years. As such, she probably assists in the development of Departmental administrators.

Although adjuncts are not considered staff, it should be noted that the almost all adjuncts that we spoke with commented on Tom Mathews' support with reviews, syllabi development, and assessment.

c. *The facilities, equipment, and library support needs are adequate to meet the mission and goals of the Department.*

Strength

The Department's temporary location in Wasatch Hall during the construction of Elizabeth Hall caused a decline in enrollment. However, the Department is pleased with the classrooms, furniture, and technology in Elizabeth Hall. Along with the new labs, the College is supporting the technology with support staff. The Department wisely introduced a course fee to help cover future technology purchases. The library has a good selection of books in foreign languages. In addition, the library provides a speedy interlibrary loan service. The staff is responsive to new requests. This past year they added 60 DVDs of Spanish films.

STANDARD G: RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES

a. *If there are formal relationships between the program and external communities of interest they should be clearly defined.*

Strength

The Foreign Language Department has a strong relationship with the Community Involvement Center and its Director, Brenda Kowalewski. Of particular note is the international service learning opportunities that the Spanish Dept. has developed, and which other programs within the Dept. might profitably emulate. Indeed, the Spanish program has become integral to the success of many of the Community Center's initiatives.

Other communities which it has linked with include sister universities, including the University of Bayreuth, Université d'Orléans, Kansai-Gaidai University in Japan, and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Spain; study-abroad programs in France, Spain, Guatemala, and Costa Rica; and a variety of professional organizations oriented toward foreign language teaching.

b. *Such relationships should have a clearly defined role and evidence of their contribution to the program.*

Strength

The relationships with foreign universities and study-abroad programs clearly contribute to the vitality of the program. The community and service-learning activities fit well with both the Dept. and the University's mission, given Weber State's Carnegie classification as an institution with substantial service learning opportunities.

c. *If the program has an external advisory committee, it should meet regularly and minutes of the meetings be made available.*

N/A

STANDARD H: PROGRAM SUMMARY

a. *The program must show how it has implemented any recommendations from the previous review and what effect these changes had on the program. If any recommendations were not implemented the program should explain why they were not put into place.*

Strength

Since its last review in 2004-2005, the Department has continued to build on its strengths, in particular in assessment and responsiveness to students' needs. It has also addressed the weaknesses that the most recent review had found, including the creation of a new Language Learning Center and Computer Lab; better integration of adjunct faculty through office space

and workshop participation; and regularization of advising and uniform course evaluation, which moved online as of Spring 2009. In addition, the commercial track for majors and minors, also prompted by the review, responds to the practical needs of foreign language majors and provides a viable alternative to a more traditional focus on literature, and the teaching emphasis.