

Dean's Response to the Department of Foreign Languages'
Program Review and Departmental Response

November 2, 2010

In Spring of 2010, the Department of Foreign Languages was reviewed by a team of three faculty members: Dr. Johanna Watzinger-Tharp, Associate Dean of the College of Humanities, University of Utah; Dr. Susan Matt, chair of the History Department, WSU; and Mr. Jim Jacobs, chair of the Department of Visual Arts, WSU. Overall, the team's review of the department was very positive; the Languages (LANG) department is meeting its mission, effectively serving both majors and non-majors. The team described LANG's progress since its 2004 review as "notable."

Recommendations and Responses:

1. Improve the department's mission statement.
Happily, before the team's visit, but after writing its self-study, the department revised its mission statement. The new statement, with its emphasis on global awareness and intercultural understanding, reflects accurately what the department's priorities are.
2. Devise a multi-year strategic plan for strengthening low-enrollment majors and minors.
The department hopes to complete, by June 30, 2011, a detailed strategic plan to increase enrollments. LANG already has taken steps to increase enrollments and I feel sure the department will continue to work creatively to woo students to language study. The department and I are hopeful that with recent university-wide changes in BA/BS requirements and with LANG's shift from 4-credit-hour introductory courses to 3-credit-hour courses, the department as a whole will benefit.
Although the threat of budget cuts is no longer as pressing as in the past two years, programs with relatively few majors, minors, and overall sch's will continue to be scrutinized. As Dean, I believe it is important to offer a range of languages; but when I have to allocate limited budget dollars to faculty lines, I generally must send those dollars to areas where student interest is so strong we have closed classes.
3. The faculty needs to coordinate their planning and decision making so each faculty member feels an active part of the process.
The department notes that it will make a conscious effort to engage all faculty members. This seems to me a reasonable response.
4. LANG might consider supplementing its common assessment with specific track assessments.
LANG rightly responds (it seems to me) that the department has made a conscious decision to base outcomes and assessment on proficiency in the language, not in various content areas. I support the department's response.
- 5 & 6. The department might assess its minors and students who graduate under the new BA; and the Department might assess students who complete two 3-credit courses.
LANG currently is considering various groups for inclusion in assessment. The department will make a determination about which groups will yield the most beneficial information and move forward in data collection.

7. Maintain the current number of full-time faculty.

The reviewers' report was written before the department and my office learned of two upcoming retirements: one in French (December 31, 2010) and one in Spanish (June 30, 2011). I have promised LANG they may search for a faculty member in Spanish (retaining that line), but could not make the same promise with respect to the line in French. For the near future, we will cover coursework in French with one tenure-line faculty member, supplemented, when needed, with adjuncts. I plan to evaluate enrollments in both French and Japanese every year for the next few years. In the long run, we may see fruit from the dual-immersion programs now operative in various school districts; meanwhile, I hope both of these single-faculty programs can grow and hold their own.

I commend the department for offering ASL and Chinese, and for thinking about future growth in these areas.

LANG benefits from a strong, engaged, committed faculty. The department has hired well; both senior and junior faculty work creatively with students and participate actively in improving our campus community. Most of the faculty also is involved in research and service in regional, national, and international forums.