

Executive Summary

Q:
A brief recap or highlights of the entire program review document. (500 words or less)

- Highlight major strengths and weakness.
- Highlight areas for improvement over the next 3-6 years.

Response:

Los Angeles Valley College

Department of Foreign Languages - Program Review 2015

Executive Summary

The Department of Foreign Languages is committed to providing our students with the opportunity to increase their social awareness and broaden their educational experience by studying the culture, literature, structures, and vocabulary of the diverse languages offered. The Department seeks to advance foreign language proficiency and cross-cultural competency, teaching students the language skills and cultural knowledge necessary for succeeding in today's multi-lingual world of cultural diversity, global markets, and international political, scientific and cultural collaboration. The Department seeks to graduate A.A. majors with an advanced command of the linguistic and cultural structures of the target language and, commensurate with the College's mission, with the overall analytical, critical and communicative skills essential for them to function effectively as educated members of the global community. The Department also fulfills a service mission by offering courses for students who must meet the foreign language requirement for transfer to 4-year institutions, for students interested in language study for intellectual and cultural enrichment, and for students and faculty in other disciplines for whom a knowledge of foreign languages and cultures may be a valuable professional tool. To this end, we have developed six overarching departmental goal areas: (1) Instructional Goals; (2) Transfer Education Goals; (3) General Education Goals; (4) Multicultural and International Goals; (5) Occupational Education Goals; (6) Enrichment and Community Service Goals.

The Department offers courses leading to an Associate of Arts Degree in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Foreign Languages, as well as the new AA-T in Spanish. In Spanish, most courses are offered every semester, and majors are able to fulfill their requirements within two years. In French, we have been offering French 3 and 4 (stacked) every semester, and French 5 and 6 (stacked), French 8, and French 10 in alternating semesters. In German and Italian, the advanced courses are offered every two semesters. For the very first time, German 3 is being offered as a stand-alone course in Fall 2015, and current enrollments suggest that we can continue doing so.

Courses that satisfy Humanities requirements are likewise offered every semester. In some cases, particularly with advanced courses, it has become necessary to combine classes in order to offer them with regularity. While not ideal, combined classes provide students with continuity of a sequential program that would otherwise mean a semester break, a situation that is pedagogically unsound in language learning. In the summer of 2004, the Summer in Paris program was introduced and has been offered every summer since. Summer in Montpellier, France was approved for Summer 2009, and we have been alternating between Paris and Montpellier since 2009. Last summer we needed to cancel the Montpellier program for the first time due to low enrollment, but we hope to be able to rebuild in Summer 2015. We have submitted a proposal for Alicante, Spain for Summer 2017.

The Department of Foreign Languages was one of the first departments in the college to complete Student Learning Outcomes and assessment rubrics for all of its courses and A.A. programs. The Department has now completed Cycle 1 assessments in all courses, and we are well underway in Cycle 2. We will have completed Cycle 3 assessments by Spring 2017.

At present, there are seven full-time faculty members in the Department of Foreign Languages, approximately 10-13 part-time adjuncts. Each instructor is eminently qualified in his/her field and contributes significantly to the success of the foreign language programs. Similarly, the adjuncts are highly experienced teachers, many of whom surpass the minimum qualifications for teaching. In 2012, the Department lost its full-time Instructional Assistant as well as the language lab, and we continue to make a case for its revival. In recent years, we have been offering more classes that meet twice per week rather than daily. We have found it more efficient to have longer class meetings, and we have also found it difficult to find adjunct instructors willing to travel to campus for one hour a day. The most critical staffing need for the Department at present is a full-time, tenure-track French instructor.

The Foreign Language building underwent renovations in Summer 2005 during which time improvements were made to the restrooms, workroom, classrooms, and language laboratory. It has now been ten years since the renovation, and the building is showing its age. Poor air quality, uneven air temperature control, building cleanliness, bathroom maintenance, and overall lack of custodial care have been major issues. The Foreign Language Multimedia Laboratory formerly located in FL 101, had been closed for 2 years awaiting refurbishing, but now was converted to a regular classroom during summer 2015. Also during summer 2015, new computers were installed in each FL classroom, giving us smarter classrooms than before.

The role of instructional technology is expanding, and the number of courses taken via distance education has generated a greater demand for electronic interfacing between faculty and students. One of our departmental goals in the past was to tap into this trend by creating some hybrid and/or online courses. We have successfully converted French 5, French 6, Spanish 4, Spanish 37, Spanish 5, and Spanish 6 into hybrid courses. Currently awaiting approval for online status are French 3, French 4, Spanish 3, German 3. Soon to be added to this list is Linguistics 1. The adoption of new textbooks that are integrated with online, interactive websites allow our students to explore different themes and structures online in conjunction with the written material; students can do interactive activities and exercises, as well as access lab audios online. The need to integrate technology into the curriculum, as well as the evolving trend that has shifted the focus from grammar-oriented instruction to communicative-oriented methods, have pressed the Department to develop courses using computer-enhanced instruction to complement regular curriculum offerings. All save one of the full-time faculty are certified in ETUDES; the newly hired instructor will undergo training and expects to be certified by the end of this academic year.

The problems that need to be addressed with regard to curriculum depend on student enrollment figures and departmental allocations. While we are pleased with the overall performance of our department in terms of student success and retention, we recognize the need to improve in these areas, especially in the lower level courses across our disciplines. We need to respond to the needs of a new population of students that do not have the basic skills and rudimentary grammatical knowledge to be able to successfully study a foreign language. We can do so by striving to provide more opportunities for student learning, such as embedded tutoring, language laboratory resources, and perhaps the creation of a preparatory course as discussed in the curriculum module. We must also identify gaps and

flaws in our scheduling and schedule sections to meet student demands.

There have also been requests for Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic and Farsi. The requests for these languages reflect the composition of Valley College's student population, and the potential need for these languages in a global economy. Evolving trends in the colleges and universities, as well as in the job market, which will significantly affect our course offerings, involve the creation of courses that have more practical outcomes in the labor market. The CSU and UC systems, in response to the needs of both the business world and their students who enter it, have added courses specifically designed to enable their students to apply their language knowledge in their jobs. Language courses for the professions, as well as translation courses, are becoming increasingly more important, and our department must remain competitive.

We must also continue to offer and develop courses of a cultural nature. Colleges and universities now require a multicultural component, and culture, civilization, and literature in translation courses fulfill transfer requirements. In all of our regular courses, we have increased the amount and importance of the cultural knowledge that we impart. We are also in the planning stages of new certificate programs that would allow students to fuse their interests in two fields (i.e. German and Music); we are also writing a pilot course in Culture through Cinema that would draw a larger cross-section of students to our courses. One other project in the works is the creation of an intensive intersession course (perhaps a week-long immersion) that would prepare incoming students for the learning of a foreign language (basic grammar skills, vocabulary acquisition skills, etc.). We hope to write a grant for this project.

The Department offers a very solid program and continues to expand its offerings based on the needs and demands of the student population. Our high standards and focus on excellence in teaching helps us maintain the reputation we have earned as one of the best foreign language departments in the Los Angeles basin. Indeed, UCLA continues to tell us that our transfer students consistently perform better than average in their language courses. Many students who have already transferred to CSUN, UCLA, or USC, return to LAVC just for their foreign language courses. We are proud of our achievements and humble in our quest for improvement.

Participants

Q: Please indicate the individuals that participated in the completion of this program review.

Response:

Validation & Feedback

Validation Comments for Program

Q:

Response:

Very comprehensive summary!
*Reviewed. KD

Comments for Review Committees

Q:

Response: