

Annual Progress Report on Assessment of Student Learning for Undergraduate Programs

Academic year: 2008-2009

Department/Program: Latin American Studies

Degree program(s): Secondary Major

Person(s) preparing report: Bradley Shaw

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Summary of the 2007-2008 Annual Progress Report on Assessment of Student Learning

Since this is the first year of implementation of this program, two direct measure SLO's have been identified for assessment in 2009-2010: (1) achieve intermediate level proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese, and (2) successfully complete a research project on a topic related to Latin American Studies. A third SLO, which will be implemented in the next academic year, will include the indirect measure of an exit survey, which will render valuable information regarding the perceptions of students in the program and their own self-assessment of their accomplishments. We expect an increase in the number of students in LAS, but we will only have one or two who complete DAS 407, and perhaps the same number to complete program requirements.

Link to department web site where degree program student learning outcomes (SLOs), Alignment Matrix, and 2007-2008 APR Summary are posted

Alignment Matrix for degree program is attached or was previously submitted

1. List the student learning outcomes that were assessed during the academic year, including those for which data were gathered as well as those for which developmental work was done, such as the creation or piloting of assessment measures.

This was the first year in which Latin American Studies has submitted a progress report. It represents an initial stage of development. As an interdisciplinary program, Latin American Studies has a basic goal of developing the student's understanding of issues or problems related to Latin America by means of courses in at least four different disciplines, and ultimately, by doing a research project on a topic of personal interest related to Latin American Studies. Two learning outcomes are identified at this stage: (1) intermediate level proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese, and (2) the successful completion of a research project that gives evidence of an understanding of basic concepts or issues, critical thinking skills, the clear articulation of ideas, an appreciation of cultural diversity, and the demonstration of academic integrity through appropriate documentation.

2. For each learning outcome, describe the measures used (over a three-year period approximately one-half of the measures used are to be direct measures, and at least one direct measure must be used for each student learning outcome), the sample of students from whom data were collected, the timetable for the collection, and the forum in which the measures were administered.

The first direct measure is to certify that students have met the requirement of fourth semester proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese. The fourth semester level is the traditional standard nationally in "foreign" languages for the Bachelor of Arts degree, and it marks a level that is sufficient for students to be able to read, write, and speak functionally in a "foreign" language. It does not mean that they are

“fluent” necessarily, but it suggests that they can communicate their needs effectively, ask questions, and solve problems in their acquired language. The fourth-level is a good point of departure for them to develop a more sophisticated understanding of Hispanic American cultures or that of Brazil. By communicating in the language of the culture, students discover that their efforts are often rewarded by native speakers who appreciate their elevated level of interest and respect for their culture. We recognize “proficiency” in two ways. When students take Spanish at Kansas State or other accredited institutions, we accept a passing grade for the fourth semester course. (Portuguese is not currently taught at K-State, but the program director is able to administer a proficiency exam in that language.) There is considerable uniformity among American universities among courses at this level. Virtually all students are required to develop the “four skills” of reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Our experience with students who transfer to Kansas State, and our students who attend other universities, is that they usually have very comparable skill sets when transitioning into or out of our program. For example, independent testing by means of the nationally recognized OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) shows that most students at this level have OPI ratings of “Intermediate Mid.” This is true also in testing of reading and writing skills. The Department of Modern Languages at Kansas State stresses proficiency testing at the fourth-semester level, so passing the course shows the students’ relative ability to “do” something with the language, rather than simply knowing factual information. Students may demonstrate proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese without taking a course for credit. The program director evaluates student proficiency in a number of ways. If students take courses in high school or college in either language, this is viewed as acceptable proof of proficiency. For either Spanish or Portuguese, the program director is able to administer proficiency tests in speaking, reading, and writing.

The second direct assessment measure is the research project itself. In addition to written guidelines that provide information about the research paper, we recently developed *an evaluative rubric* for the project itself. Given the international nature of the project, DAS 407 requires that students deal with the five university SLO’s of knowledge, critical thinking, communication, diversity, and integrity. It may be that in the future we will revise the rubric, as we compare our own judgment of student success to the self-evaluation of students who complete the program.

To make such a comparison, we are developing an indirect measure which will be an exit survey of students who complete program requirements. This will allow our recent graduates to comment on their perception of the multidisciplinary curriculum’s effectiveness, and more importantly, it will help us to assess the value of the capstone activity of this program, which is the successful completion of DAS 407: Senior Research in Latin American Studies.

3. Describe the process by which faculty reviewed the results and decided on the actions and/or revisions that were indicated by them.

A faculty committee will be formed in 2009-2010 to review results and make revisions to the assessment plan, as deemed necessary. The committee will be comprised primarily of Arts and Sciences faculty in social sciences and the humanities, but the primary goal of selection will be expertise in Latin American studies research and teaching, experience in Latin America, and interest in the program.

4. Given the assessment activities and results to date, describe your plans for the coming year. (Clearly identify significant changes that have been made to degree program SLOs or to the general assessment strategy.)

We will be especially interested in applying the new rubric for DAS 407. We understand that its efficacy as a direct measure is closely related to the precision with which we are able to show that the objectives of the research paper are met. Some objectives will be easier to identify than others. Correct documentation of the paper shows an understanding of research integrity and proper formats can be

observed and evaluated. Another important function of the rubric is to make it possible for any one of several faculty project evaluators to be consistent in the evaluation of the research project itself. Enrollment in Latin American Studies dropped considerably in the last decade because of faculty retirements and departures. Many students currently enrolled in International Studies are interested primarily in Latin America, but chose the International Studies curriculum because courses in Latin American Studies were limited. In 2009, however, we have balanced offerings in a variety of departments. For this reason we expect enrollments in Latin American Studies to increase steadily. As more and more students are enrolled in the program, there will be a greater need for the Director to seek the assistance of mentors to assist students in writing their research papers. There should be a clear statement of goals and objectives that are consistent from one evaluator to the other.

We will develop an exit survey for recent graduates of the program to help us assess student attitudes regarding the relative success of the stated SLO's. Some program modification may be in order, depending on the results of the exit survey, and our own evaluation of the direct measures.