



THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of East Asian Languages and Literature
Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
Phone: (608) 262-2291
Fax: (608) 265-5731

May 3, 1998

To: Yvonne Ozzello, Associate Dean

From: Jim O'Brien, Chair *Jim*

Re: Enclosed Assessment Report for East Asian Lang. & Lit.

Please find herewith the said report. I'll skip the remarks I am tempted to make as to why we were delayed until the last minute in submitting it.

I do think we learned something about where our students are. But lets hope that L&S at least continues to call this an achievement or attainment rather than a "student outcome."

Assessment Report: East Asian Languages and Literature

Abstract:

Assessment for 1998 was confined to the undergraduate programs of the department and consisted primarily of exit interviews. These interviews were conducted by the Chinese and Japanese programs independently of one another; in the case of the latter program, the literature faculty conducted a set of interviews separate from those conducted by the language and linguistics staff.

This procedure allowed for a wider range of concerns to get expressed and for problems peculiar to each program to be voiced as well. In the Japanese program a more flexible attitude in advising was urged, while in the Chinese program the need was expressed for more careful placement and tracking of students whose background and qualifications in the language were unequal.

For the next stage in the assessment procedure the faculty in each of the programs should examine the results of the interviews conducted by the other program. A discussion needs to be pursued as to whether problems raised with respect to only one program also exist in the other program. In some cases this will clearly not be so--as, for example, problems related to rising enrollments in Chinese at a time when those in Japanese are stable if not in decline. Aside from this, each program will institute, on a trial basis at least, the measures that seem in order--more self-study help in the Chinese case, for example, and more vocational-based advising for Japanese majors.

Both the interviews and the exploratory testing conducted by the Chinese faculty indicated that the academic programs were attaining their objectives. The tests given in Chinese language, literature, and linguistics did indicate that students need to be more at home with proper names and, in certain instances, with the terminology of specialized fields. The use of the Japanese language for interviews revealed how crucial it is for students to spend a year or two in Japan as undergraduates.

Assessment Tools Used:

Direct Indicators

Local exam Chinese undergrad., 1998

Embedded testing Chinese and Japanese undergrad, 1999

Student portfolios Chinese and Japanese grad. 2000

Indirect Indicators

Exit interviews Chinese and Japanese undergrad. 1998

Alumi Surveys Graduate program 2001

Narrative:

While the department has submitted plans for assessing both its graduate and undergraduate programs in both literature and in linguistics/language pedagogy, it seemed advisable to limit our attention to undergraduates in the first year. We have also confined our implementation to exit interviews and limited exams, with the understanding that embedded questions will be added next year along with the start of portfolio collections.

The interviews were carried out during April by three groups of faculty members: Japanese literature and culture, Japanese language and linguistics, and Chinese language and linguistics. Since all three members of the Chinese literature faculty were absent (one through retirement and two through leave), assessment in this area could not be fully implemented at this time.

The Japanese Literature staff conducted two sets of exit interviews with majors scheduled to graduate in May or August of the current academic year. Nine students took part in the process, thus giving us a fairly representative sample to make tentative judgments regarding the undergraduate major.

Virtually all of our students have a double major; several have triple majors and one, as it turned out, is pursuing a quadruple major. We need to discuss how to factor this phenomenon into future assessment exercises. Questions for future assessment interviews might address potential problems for the double and triple major programs.

The students were generally satisfied with the academic training they received in the department. Criticism focussed primarily on the support structure which the department should be providing for its Japanese majors.

Advising was described as good with respect to curriculum matters. Most of the students felt that more attention should be paid to vocational opportunities in America. A few said that too much emphasis was placed on getting to Japan. Whether the faculty agrees with this and whether the faculty is in a position to develop expertise in relevant job-hunting in the United States should be discussed. Students were happy with the opportunities our program provides for study and work in Japan. They are also aware of our success in securing positions for them in the JET program, fellowships from the Japanese Ministry of Education, and other forms of support and training in Japan.

Students yearn for a greater sense of community among the cadre of Japanese undergraduate majors. Most felt this problem arose mainly because so many majors spend a year or so in Japan and lose track of their colleagues upon their return. The 4th floor reading room on the Memorial Library could help to develop an

esprit des corps; conditions there are less than ideal, a subject we will raise with Thomas Hahn when he arrives this summer to assume his duties as the East Asian collection librarian. Also, more regular extra-curricular meetings such as the Friday afternoon Japanese conversation group could serve this purpose. The students do know about the Madison Japan Association and appreciate the social opportunities it affords.

The language and linguistics faculty interviewed the same students in three groups. To judge their oral proficiency the discussion was carried on in Japanese. Their ability to talk about our language program and their plans for after graduation varied, often according to whether they had spent a year or so in the country. Despite student concern on this question, the staff intends to continue strongly urging that they spend time in Japan, especially after the fourth semester.

While students again expressed satisfaction with their training, they also expressed a wish for more kanji practice beyond the second year level, for an updating of video materials, and for a facility whereby to browse in Internet in Japanese.

Finally, since most of these students finished their undergrad language sequence a year ago, the staff recommends that future exit interviews adjust for this fact.

The Chinese linguistics and language faculty conducted an exit interview with three of the five students scheduled to graduate from their program in May, two of the three graduating with a double major. Again, general satisfaction with the program was expressed. Several problems specific to the Chinese program were noted, especially the recent increase in the enrollments making for less attention to the individual learner and the mixing of American students with foreign students with a partial ability in Chinese creating an unequal situation.

Some interesting proposals came from the students for alleviating each of these problems. However, in every instance, the proposal involved increase funding for additional staff. The only funding-neutral proposal was for more use of Chinese in so-called content courses, and this proposal was only tentatively put forward since many of the beginning learners of Chinese would not reach the necessary level of competence until near the very end of their undergraduate careers.

Special concern was expressed by the students for how to improve their speaking and listening comprehension beyond the basic language courses. The faculty who interviewed them concluded that consideration needs to be given to providing tools for self-learning beyond a certain point.

Since the Chinese staff also conducted a local test, a word needs to be added regarding that exercise. The faculty were satisfied with the students' performance. They did conclude that the students were weaker than expected in remembering Chinese proper names. They also concluded that the students could use some additional help in learning the terminology of business and other specialized areas.