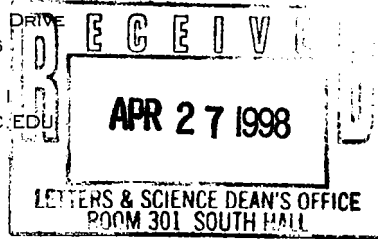




University of Wisconsin-Madison

LATIN AMERICAN AND IBERIAN STUDIES PROGRAM

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April 27, 1998

To: Associate Deans Fitzpatrick, Nagel, and Ozzello

From: Alda Blanco, Director, Latin American and Iberian Studies Program *AB*

Re: Report on Assessment Activities for Undergraduate Latin American and Iberian Studies Major (1997-8)

Attached please find a copy of our abstract and brief report on the activities LAISP has initiated to assess our undergraduate major during the 1997-98 academic year. An electronic version of this report will be sent immediately. If there are any questions, please call me at 262-2811. Thank you.

**College of Letters and Science
Assessment Report**

(Due back to your Academic Associate Dean by May 1, 1998)

Department or Program Name: Latin American and Iberian Studies Program

Abstract: (This should be a brief summary of no more than 300 words that can be used in the College's report to the Provost's Office. The abstract should indicate the focus of assessment activities during the 1997-98 academic year. It should indicate what actions the department or program is taking to change its program as a result of the assessment. It should indicate whether the assessment was of the Undergraduate Major, the Graduate Program, or both.)

Assessment Tools Used: (Using the attached chart, please specify which assessment activities have taken or will take place in your department or program. Indicate also the year when these activities took place or will take place. If you used other tools, please describe them.)

Direct Indicators

| | Undergraduate Major | Graduate Program |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| National Exams | _____ | _____ |
| Local Exams | _____ | _____ |
| Capstone Course(s) | _____ | _____ |
| Embedded Testing | _____ | _____ |
| Student Portfolios | _____ x _____ | _____ |
| Review theses & dissertations | _____ x _____ | _____ |
| Performance Evaluations | _____ x _____ | _____ |
| Pre and Post Testing | _____ x _____ | _____ |

Indirect Indicators

| | Undergraduate Major | Graduate Program |
|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Student Surveys | _____ x _____ | _____ |
| Exit Interviews | _____ x _____ | _____ |
| Alumni Surveys | _____ x _____ | _____ |
| Employer Surveys | _____ x _____ | _____ |
| External Reviews | _____ x _____ | _____ |

Report on Implementation of Assessment Plan for the Latin American and Iberian Studies Undergraduate Major 1997-98

Abstract

Beginning in the early fall of 1997, the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program (LAISP) instituted a requirement that all new undergraduate students declaring a LAISP major sign a form stating their willingness to participate in the assessment process. The form includes information on the following three procedures now required before declared majors can graduate with a B.A. from the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program: 1) the taking of mandatory oral proficiency exams for Spanish, Portuguese and Quechua; 2) the completion of an exit survey; and 3) the creation of undergraduate assessment files/portfolios (which includes the results of the oral exams, a selection of papers from at least two fields in at least two languages, and the exit surveys). Since the new policy has been in place, nearly twenty students have declared the LAISP major and portfolios have been opened for each. The Plan for Assessment of the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs submitted by LAISP on December 31, 1997 includes a timeline for completion of each of these procedures. Additionally, a comprehensive feedback mechanism has been established with the recent creation of the Committee of Program Assessment (CPA) made up of volunteer members of the LAISP faculty whose mandate is to earmark a statistically valid selection of assessment files/portfolios and evaluate them. This committee also reviews the results of the exit surveys completed by graduating LAISP majors. The Program Director receives the committee's report and adds her recommendations before submitting them to the Executive Committee of LAISP.

In early 1998, an undergraduate survey was distributed to nearly 200 current and former LAISP undergraduate majors (1992-97) which included questions about the quality of academic and career advising, how the LAISP major compared to other majors, and the overall impression of the LAISP undergraduate major. Preliminary results indicate general satisfaction with the major, yet also point to a need to strengthen advising for career and volunteer-related opportunities in the Latin American area. The data obtained from the undergraduate surveys have led to new LAISP programming for the next academic year to include annual offerings of career days, internship and volunteer placement seminars. In sum, a comprehensive assessment plan for the Undergraduate Program is in place and fully operational.

Brief Narrative on Implementation of Assessment Plan for the Latin American and Iberian Studies Undergraduate Major (1997-98)

Introduction

In accordance with the provisions established by the College of Letters and Science, the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program is submitting this brief two-page report on the specific activities undertaken to assess the quality of our Undergraduate Program. A report assessing the Graduate Program will not be submitted at this time, since the first-cycle of assessment (1997-98) concentrated on the Undergraduate Program. As was noted in LAISP's Plan for Assessment submitted in December of last year, "given the large number of undergraduate majors, our necessary reliance on faculty housed outside of LAISP to carry out the assessment and evaluation project, and our limited staff (two part-time undergraduate advisors), we propose to undertake assessment on a three-year basis, with staggered assessment of the undergraduate and graduate programs."

Establishment of Three New Assessment Initiatives

Beginning in the early fall of 1997, the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program (LAISP) instituted a requirement that all new undergraduate students interested in declaring a LAISP major sign a form stating their willingness to participate in the assessment process. The form included information on the following three procedures now required before declared majors can graduate with a B.A. from the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program: 1) the application of mandatory oral proficiency exams for Spanish, Portuguese and Quechua; 2) the completion of exit surveys; and 3) the creation of undergraduate assessment files/portfolios. Since the new policy has been in place, nearly twenty students have declared the LAISP major and portfolios have been opened for each. The Plan for Assessment of the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs submitted by LAISP on December 31, 1997 includes a timeline for completion of each of these procedures. Additionally, a comprehensive feedback mechanism has been established with the recent creation of the Committee of Program Assessment (CPA) made up of volunteer members of the LAISP faculty. Before discussing the mandate of the CPA, more details of the three assessment procedures follow:

1. *Mandatory Oral Proficiency Exam* - In conjunction with the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the instructors of Quechua, students will be required to take an oral proficiency exam prior to graduation. LAISP undergraduates who declared their major in the fall of 1997 must take their oral proficiency by the spring of 1999. Subsequent students must take their oral proficiency no later than three semesters following their declaration, with the exception of Seniors who must take it the semester they declare the LAISP major.

2. *Completion of Exit Survey* - The exit survey, to be administered upon completion of the LAISP undergraduate major, will measure the degree to which the graduates feel their training has prepared them for their intended career goals and plans and will provide the necessary data for LAISP to keep in touch with them as they move into different areas of graduate education and professional employment.

3. *Undergraduate Assessment Files* - At the time of declaration an undergraduate assessment file or portfolio is opened for each new student which will include: 4 papers (from at least two disciplines) one of which will be written in Spanish or Portuguese. One final paper is also requested. The results of the oral proficiency interview and exit survey will also be included in the student portfolio. Those undergraduates who declare a LAISP major late in their Senior year will be required to produce items from previous courses taken in the Program (or courses at other institutions, accepted by the Program as transfer credits; this includes those earned in study-abroad programs).

Feedback Mechanism

LAISP has established a voluntary Committee of Program Assessment (CPA) from our affiliated faculty whose responsibility will be to evaluate a selection of student files in terms of how their content demonstrates to what extent undergraduate majors are attaining the goals of the program. The CPA members will earmark a statistically valid selection of assessment files/portfolios and evaluate them. The committee will also review the results of the exit survey completed by graduating LAISP majors. The committee's report will be submitted to the Program Director who will add her/his recommendations, and submit them to the Executive Committee of LAISP. The CPA will also be responsible for reviewing the data from internal or external reviews focussing on the undergraduate major. Recommendations from the CPA to the Executive Committee will focus upon: 1) ways in which the LAISP programs are successful in preparing students in the goals set out by the Program; 2) ways in which changes in requirements might improve the attainment of those educational goals; and 3) changes in the methods of evaluation if the CPA believes that current practices do not accurately reflect the quality of the undergraduate program.

Undergraduate Advising Survey

In February of 1998, an Undergraduate Advising Survey was sent to nearly 200 current and former LAISP undergraduate majors (1992-1997) whose preliminary results indicate general satisfaction with the major. However, the results also point to a need to strengthen advising for career and volunteer-related opportunities in the Latin American area. The data obtained from the undergraduate surveys will help guide future LAISP programming to include a more regular offering of career days, internship and volunteer placement seminars and other specific activities noted consistently in the surveys.

Conclusion

In sum, a comprehensive assessment plan for the Undergraduate Program is in place and fully operational. Program changes to improve the overall quality of the LAISP Undergraduate Major will continue to be institutionalized once data from the different assessment components is procured. Similar assessment initiatives involving the Graduate Program will be launched in the fall of 1998 and a report on the extent of those activities will follow soon thereafter.