

May 1st, 2006

TO: Elaine M. Klein, Ph.D., Assistant Dean and Director, Academic Planning

FROM: Guido Podesta, Director

RE: Report on Assessment of Student Learning – Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program (LACIS)

1. Overview of the program.

The Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies Program is one of the major U.S. centers for research about this diverse area. The program is for those who seek a multi-disciplinary education on Latin America, Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal. This program offers a wide range of courses in fields such as anthropology, business, economics, geography, history, journalism, political science, sociology, Spanish and Portuguese, and other departments.

The aims of the undergraduate major include the broad exposure to Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies by requiring area content courses in several disciplines, concentrated training in one group of academic disciplines and/or professional disciplines, and a basic working knowledge of Spanish and/or Portuguese.

Currently, there are 66 LACIS majors; 13 degrees were awarded in 2004-05; 26 degrees will be awarded in May 2006.

2. Summary of the program learning objectives.

The Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program has three fundamental goals and objectives:

- Quality education and curriculum;
- intellectual and cultural enrichment;
- and infrastructural support for faculty, students, and academic staff engaged in research and learning on Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal.

These three goals are organically related to one another rather than rigidly separate. They all promote holistic, interdisciplinary approaches to the creation, learning, application, and dissemination of knowledge about Latin America, Spain, and Portugal, and a firm belief in the importance of such knowledge.

To fulfill its mission, LACIS must excel in several areas:

- Provide an interdisciplinary foundation for the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal.
- Train students in a basic working knowledge of Spanish, Portuguese, Quechua and Yucatec Maya.
- Provide concentration in one group of academic discipline and/or professional schools.

3. Description of what the program has done recently to evaluate student's achievement in those areas.

The program encourages students to declare a LACIS major as soon as possible so that the staff can begin assembling assessment files. The undergraduate advisor keeps a file on each undergraduate major (identified only by students; UW ID numbers) which include:

1. Results of oral proficiency interviews in Spanish and Portuguese as administered by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
2. A portfolio consisting of 4 pieces of written work chosen by the student. The interdisciplinary nature of our program require that the student submit papers from at least two disciplines, one paper in either Spanish and Portuguese, and a final paper of their choice. Those undergraduates who declare a LACIS 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).
3. Completed exit survey which measures the degree to which the graduates feel their training has prepared them for their intended career goals and plans. A sample copy of the survey is attached.

In order to have further instruments for undergraduate program assessment, the Program tracks students upon graduation in order to amass placement data.

In the spring of 2006 LACIS offered for the first time an undergraduate capstone seminar taught by the LACIS Associate Director. Twenty three students are currently enrolled in the course.

In May of 2005, an External Review Committee report concluded: "On the basis of interviews and program materials, we found a great deal to admire in UW-Madison's Latin American,

Caribbean, and Iberian Studies program. In spite of various funding cut-backs over many years, LACIS has remained the premier Area Studies program at UW-Madison and one of the top four or five Latin American centers *in the nation*” (a copy of the External Review is available on request).

4. Statement of “next steps”

In the past two years, the LACIS director and staff have been working on a new “Undergraduate Initiative”. A draft of the initiative was submitted to the LACIS Executive Committee at their May 11, 2005 meeting. The Committee approved to adopt the “Undergraduate Initiative” as a “project” of LACIS. A copy of the April 18, 2005 version of the “Undergraduate Initiative” document is available.

The results of the on-going assessment of the undergraduate LACIS major will be of crucial importance for the implementation of the “Undergraduate Initiative”.

LATIN AMERICAN, CARIBBEAN AND IBERIAN STUDIES PROGRAM
UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR EXIT SURVEY

Name:

Permanent address:

Major(s):

1. How did you find out about the LACIS major?

Bulletin/Catalogue

Friend

Advisor or Professor

Other

2. How many language credits did you take and at what level?

3. What are your career plans?

4. Do you intend to use your language training in your career plans? How?

5. On a scale of 1-5, where 1=low and 5=high, rate your overall experience taking LACIS courses regarding the following:

Reading load

Writing load

Your interest level in courses offered

Professors' interest and enthusiasm conveying material

Professors' accessibility

6. On a scale of 1-5, where 1=not at all and 5=a great deal, please tell us to what extent your work in the program improved your ability to:

read critically

analyze material

formulate and develop arguments

7. Does one course stand out in your memory either as good or bad? Which course? Why? (Please do not mention specific professors, but refer to courses generally by number or title).

8. On a scale of 1-5, where 1=very unsatisfactory and 5=excellent, rate the academic advising and career advising you experienced within your program.

During course work

By the LACIS undergraduate advisors

Yearly career day forums organized by LACIS

COMMENTS:

9. Looking back over your experience as a student in our program, what aspect (s) do you value the most?
10. What would you like to see changed about the way we administer the program?
11. Have you studied abroad? How long? In what program?
12. How will this degree contribute to your future goals?

S:\Undergraduate Assessment May 2006\undergrad exit survey.wpd