

June 15, 2008

TO: Gary Sandefur, Dean, Letters and Science  
ATTN: Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean and Director, Academic Planning

FROM: Ksenija Bilbija, Director  
Alberto Vargas, Associate Director  
Sarah Ripp, Undergraduate Advisor

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

### **1. Overview of the program.**

The Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies Program (LACIS) is one of the major U.S. centers for research, teaching and outreach dedicated exclusively to this diverse area. It has been a National Resource Center funded through the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI program since 1965.

The program is for those who seek a multi-disciplinary education on Latin America, the 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.

LACIS offers B.A. and M.A. degrees, as well as a dual LACIS MA/Law JD degree program, and a PhD minor.

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.

Appendix 1 presents a report of the enrollment and some statistics of the LACIS major in the past three years. Twenty-two BA and/or BS degrees were awarded in May 2008.

### **2. Summary of the program learning objectives.**

The LACIS 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 or Portuguese – for those who are interested, we also offer instruction in Quechua and Yucatec Maya, although proficiency in one of these languages is not required.
- Provide concentration in one area of academic discipline and/or professional schools.

We have adopted and incorporated the *Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs)* in an explicit way when crafting our assessment plan. [Table 1](#) presents an outline of the ELOs as they relate to the current stated goals of the LACIS major and the current and proposed assessment tools. This plan, and the corresponding assessment tools, will be discussed by the LACIS Executive Committee at the Fall 2008 meeting.

### **3. Description of current and proposed assessment tools**

#### Major declaration statement and course plan

The Undergraduate advisor participates in SOAR each semester in order to provide interested students with more information about the LACIS major. Within two weeks of declaring the major, students are asked to submit a statement providing a rationale for their chosen field of concentration. Students are asked to develop an area of concentration statement in order to assist them in pinpointing a common theme for their course of study. For example, a student may be interested in pursuing a future career in the fair trade coffee business in Guatemala, or he/she may simply want more in depth study related to Caribbean gender relations. In either case, the student would review the LACIS Master Course List and select 5-10 courses which he/she feels are related to their chosen area and then compose a short paragraph explaining how these courses will help him/her meet this intended course of study. The undergraduate advisor will then review the statement and discuss it with each student individually. *Appendix 2 presents a sample “area of concentration statement” (the student’s name has been omitted).*

#### Student Assessment Files

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 2 pieces of written work chosen by the student. The interdisciplinary nature of our program requires that the student submit papers from at least two disciplines – one of which should be composed in Spanish or Portuguese. Those undergraduates who declare a LACIS major late in their Senior year will be required to produce documentation (i.e., syllabi, course papers, etc.) from previous LACIS-approved courses taken at UW-Madison or elsewhere (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. As of 5/08, this survey will be administered online. We are attempting to work with the DARs coders so that the completion of this survey is listed as a LACIS major requirement on each student's DARs report. As a student nears graduation, he/she will be sent an access code (by the undergraduate advisor) and upon notification that it has been completed, a DARs exception will be submitted on his/her behalf by the advisor.  
*A sample copy of the survey is attached as Appendix 3.*

### Placement

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

This past Spring, LACIS organized its first annual "Latin American Organizations Roundtable" which featured 10+ local L.A.-affiliated NGOs working on regional issues. In many cases these organizations were offering local and international internships and volunteer opportunities – while others – post-graduation jobs.

LACIS plans to continue encouraging students to participate in UW-affiliated Service Learning projects related to the region, i.e., "Fair Trade University" (program focused on fair trade coffee based in Guatemala) and "Crossing Borders: Environmental Justice at the Mexico/U.S. Border", which includes a two week stay at the Mexico/U.S. border.

### Capstone Seminar

In the Spring of 2006, LACIS offered, for the first time, an undergraduate capstone seminar (as International Studies 603) taught by the LACIS Associate Director, with an enrollment of twenty five students. The seminar was offered again in Spring 2007 and Spring 2008 with an enrollment of nineteen students in each semester. The student's evaluations of the Seminar have been positive with an overall performance assessment of the instructor of 4.81, 4.55

and 4.73 respectively. LACIS plans to offer this Seminar as LACIS 610 once the review of the new course follows its approval procedure.

#### **4. Impact of Assessment Efforts and Next Steps**

The assessment efforts had been very useful for the program and for the students. The enrollment in the major is increasing, and the student satisfaction is high.

We are aiming to maintain the reputation of our program stated in an external review three years ago. 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).

LACIS staff plans to conduct a thorough review and analysis of data about the undergraduate major and present the results at the upcoming XXVIII International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association scheduled for June 2009 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

#### **5. LACIS Graduate Program**

LACIS offers a Master of Arts in Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies. The graduate program is “vigorous and appropriately managed” as stated in the March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007 letter from Dean Martin Cadwallader to Professor Guido Podesta, former Director of LACIS. *We are attaching a copy of this letter as Appendix 4.*

**Table 1.** LACIS Assessment Tools in the context of Essential Learning Outcomes and Program Goals.

Essential Learning Outcomes	LACIS goals and objectives	Assessment Tools
<p>Knowledge of human cultures &amp; the physical and natural world with special emphasis on Latin America, Caribbean and/or Iberian Peninsula</p> <p><i>Study in four areas: Arts &amp; Humanities; Social Sciences; Physical and Biological Sciences</i></p> <p><i>Focused by engagement with big questions, contemporary and enduring</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• broad exposure to Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian studies <i>by requiring students to take area and language content courses</i></li> </ul>	<p>Depth – Field of concentration statement and plan in the major</p> <p>Study Abroad debriefing report**</p>
<p>Intellectual and practical skills</p> <p><i>Communication; Quantitative; Information; Inquiry, analysis, critical &amp; creative thinking; Teamwork &amp; Problem Solving</i></p> <p><i>Practiced extensively, across the curriculum</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spanish and/or Portuguese proficiency</li> <li>• Optional: Basic knowledge of Quechua or Yucatec Maya</li> </ul>	<p>Student assessment file</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign Language proficiency</li> <li>• Written samples</li> <li>• Exit Survey</li> <li>• Awards**</li> </ul> <p>Honors project</p>
<p>Personal &amp; Social responsibility</p> <p><i>Local &amp; Global civil knowledge &amp; engagement; Intercultural competence; Ethical reasoning; Lifelong learning</i></p> <p><i>Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• career-related advice and opportunities including volunteer work and internships with international organizations</li> </ul>	<p>Internships</p> <p>Service-Learning Opportunities</p> <p>Extra-curricular activities**</p>
<p>Integrative learning</p> <p><i>Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies</i></p> <p><i>Application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flexibility which allows students to take courses of interest, study abroad, and develop innovative academic projects</li> </ul>	<p>Capstone Seminar</p> <p>Post graduation placement</p> <p>Alumni Survey**</p> <p>Analysis of Data**</p>
		<p>** Indicates new or proposed assessment tool</p>

## Appendix 1

### Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Undergraduate Student Statistics (2005-2008)

	Total Graduates	Female	Male	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Hispanic	White	Unreported Ethnicity	Study Abroad Participant
2005-2006	40	26	14	2	7	31	0	28
2006-2007	28	20	8	0	7	19	2	12
2007-2008*	30	24	6	0	2	25	3	20
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Averages:</b>		<b>71%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>61%</b>

\*Two students expected to graduate in August 2008 -- this data reflects the inclusion of their information

## Appendix 2



### LACIS UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE AREA OF CONCENTRATION STATEMENT

We ask that you develop an area of concentration statement in order to assist you in pinpointing a common theme for your course of study. For example, you may be interested in pursuing a future career in Caribbean Gender Relations or learning more about the Culture & History of Latin America. In either case, you would review the LACIS Master Course List and select 5-10 courses which you feel are related to your chosen area of concentration and then compose a short paragraph explaining how these courses will help you meet your intended course of study. *Please note that this list is simply meant to guide you through your program – we understand that some courses may not be available when you would like to take them; however, please consult the LACIS Advisor if you would like to make significant changes to your area of concentration or the courses you proposed to take.*

***If applicable, please submit this form to the LACIS Advisor within 2 weeks of declaring the major.***

**Title of your area of concentration:** International Relations in the Development of Free Trade Horticulture

**Statement:** As I've been going through my college career I've had a hard time deciding what major to take on. I've always loved helping people and the Spanish language and knew I wanted to do something life changing with it. As an environmentalist, I'd love to help international farmers produce and market their goods here in the United States. I'd love to incorporate the Spanish language, culture, horticulture, and international business all into one, and LACIS is the perfect fit for me with this broad array of interests. I wish to help people market their healthy, quality goods while allowing people in the United States to purchase and enjoy these international goods for themselves.

**Proposed Courses:**

1. The Growth and Development of Nations in the Global Economy
2. World Vegetable Crops
3. Tropical Horticulture
4. International Business
5. Food, Culture, and Society
6. Spanish-Intermediate Language Practice with Emphasis...
7. Environmental Conservation
8. Economic Problems of Developing Nations
9. Livestock Production and Health in Agricultural Development
10. International Trade and Finance

## Appendix 3



### UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR EXIT SURVEY

Name:

Permanent Email Address:

Upon graduation, would you like to be added to the LACIS list-serve as an alumni?

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. Did you study abroad? If yes, where?

6. Did you complete an internship? If yes, where/what?

7. 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: \_\_\_\_\_

8. 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: \_\_\_\_\_

9. 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).

10. 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**FINAL COMMENTS:**

11. Looking back over your experience as a student in our program, what aspect(s) do you value the most?
12. What would you like to see changed about the way we administer the program?
13. How will this degree contribute to your future goals?
14. Anything else you'd like us to know/consider?

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
LACIS Advisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



March 26, 2007

Professor Guido Podesta  
Chair  
Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies Program  
209 Ingraham Hall  
CAMPUS MAIL

*Guido*  
Dear ~~Professor Podesta~~:

One component of the decadal program review required by UW System is a review of a unit's graduate program and a decision by the Graduate School Executive Committee about such things as program quality and recommendations for improvement. An evaluation of the LACIS graduate program has been some three years in the making, but I am pleased to share with you that the Executive Committee, at its March 9, 2007 meeting, unanimously agreed that the program is vigorous and appropriately managed.

That judgment was a long time in coming. The LACIS program was formally reviewed in early 2004 by a committee appointed predominantly by the Dean of the College of Letters and Science. One of the committee members who was appointed by the Graduate School, Prof. Michael Schatzberg, brought the review summary to a GFEC meeting later that year. But because the review team had concentrated almost entirely on issues unrelated to the graduate program, GFEC members voted to table a vote until LACIS could supplement its self-study with information germane to its graduate program.

That supplementary material arrived in late fall 2006 and was thoroughly reviewed by Prof. Schatzberg, who then shared his evaluation with GFEC members at the March 9 meeting. Prof. Schatzberg was pleased with the program's progress since 2004. For example, he lauded some "notable additions" to the faculty that will enhance the program's already excellent national reputation, as well as several changes in graduate advising that will bring that important task into line with both student numbers and program resources. "On the whole," noted Prof. Schatzberg, "LACIS has responded positively and diligently to the concerns of the 2004 report. I thus recommend that GFEC accept the report and commend LACIS for the strides they have made."

We have indeed accepted the report and do commend LACIS for its high quality work.

Sincerely,

Martin Cadwallader  
Vice Chancellor for Research  
and Dean of the Graduate School

xc: Suzanne Broadberry, Graduate School  
Sharon Dunwoody, Graduate School  
Elaine Klein, College of Letters & Science

Graduate School

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