March 26, 2009

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 Activity Report on Student Learning – Latin American,
               Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program (LACIS)

1. <u>Overview of the program.</u>

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

2. <u>Activity Report</u>

Since our last report submitted on June 2008 we have continued to implement our main
assessment tools for the undergraduate:

- <u>Major declaration statement and course plan</u>

  All of our undergraduate students complete a statement providing a rationale for their
  chosen field of concentration. We have learned that students would welcome more
  orientation in selecting the courses that best fit their interests, including study abroad
  courses. In order to improve the orientation we have developed an instrument to follow
  up with students and keep track of their plans. We have also strengthened ties with the
  study abroad office in order to be more effective in orienting students in their course
  selection and plans. We are also exploring options to expand the gateway courses for our
  majors in order to provide more alternatives to fulfill students interests while
  maintaining the degree integrity.

- <u>Student Assessment Files</u>

    - All of our students fulfill the oral proficiency interviews in Spanish and Portuguese as administered by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. We have learned that some heritage students need more options to fulfill the language requirement as they already come with fluency in the language in question and do not need to take as many basic courses as other students.

    - The written work portfolio of each student has shown us that students perform well in their interdisciplinary writing skills.

    - The exit survey has shown us that most students are highly satisfied with the education they receive in our program. In general students express that their training has prepared them for their intended career goals and plans.

- <u>Placement</u>

We continue to develop our alumni database and make efforts to stay in touch with our graduates to learn about their experiences with their job search and professional development. To strengthen the connection between our graduates and local support organizations we continue to convene the annual "Latin American Organizations Roundtable", which featured 10+ local L.A.-affiliated NGOs working on regional issues. In many cases these organizations offer local and international internships and volunteer opportunities – while others – post-graduation jobs. We have learned that both students and the local organizations find this forum of high value. This is also an indication that the learning outcomes are relevant to the needs of local organizations. Our graduates also receive modest support to carry out an internship in the region.

We also continue to encourage our 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. These experiences are very useful to students and offer an alternative to study abroad courses.