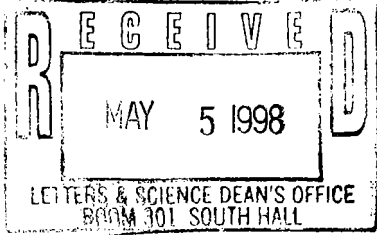


UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON

College of Letters and Science



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May 5, 1998

To: Associate Dean Yvonne Ozzello
 From: Robert J. Bickner, Chair *RJB*
 Re: Assessment Report

Attached is the Assessment Report for the Department of South Asian Studies. As you are aware, we have devoted a great deal of energy to our restructuring plan and we see that as a major effort to improve the quality and usefulness of what we do. Although this effort does not produce quantifiable results in the way that a specific assessment measurement would, I am confident that you will agree that our effort is in line with the intent of the assessment effort. As the restructuring effort continues we will consider assessment strategies in addition to our on-going effort to incorporate proficiency testing in our language classes and in addition to the review we now do of MA theses.

Department of South Asian Studies Assessment Report

The Department of South Asian Studies has been involved in an intensive scrutiny of its programs for some time. The examination of the department and its future follows two significant initiatives, the first being the separation of the department and the Center for South Asian Studies into two separate units, and the second being the Letters and Science ten year review.

The result of this scrutiny is a comprehensive restructuring proposal now being considered by the College of Letters and Science and the Graduate School. The proposal, if approved, will mean a major change in the way the department views itself as it moves to redefine its role within the campus community, having a major impact on both its undergraduate and graduate programs.

At present many of the department faculty perform what is primarily a service role of providing language instruction that is essential both for graduate students seeking to prepare for research abroad and also for major funding initiatives with campus-wide impact. While this contribution is very important, these faculty members are not specialists in South Asian Studies and so cannot contribute to degree programs, which means that the department members do not engage in shared educational activities, and, in fact, have no intellectual focus that joins them together. We have seen this as our major problem and have spent a great deal of energy attempting to devise a better way of organizing ourselves both administratively and intellectually.

As we prepare to realign our efforts we have also attended more immediate concerns. In the MA program we have replaced a written examination with an MA thesis and oral defense. We have monitored graduate student response to this change and have found it to be very positive. We are reviewing each year's MA thesis production to gauge quality.

We are also monitoring the progress of our students through language classes by introducing oral proficiency interviews for intermediate and advanced levels of instruction. Use of such interviews represents a significant investment of financial resources and faculty time for training and also for use of the measurement instrument. Professors Bickner and Rafferty have both completed training and certification as proficiency testers by the American Council for the Teaching of Languages (ACTFL) and are now leaders in the national effort to develop Thai-specific and Indonesian-specific proficiency guidelines. Professor Manindra Verma and Sheela Verma both participated in the preparation of Hindi-specific guidelines prior to their retirements. Krishna Pradhan completed ACTFL proficiency testing training during the fall of 1997 and is incorporating this measurement technique in his approach to classes in Nepali language. These measurement techniques are used for both undergraduate and graduate students, and it is our plan to have all of our language teachers develop expertise in oral proficiency measurement as opportunity and finances permit.

We plan to continue with these assessment measurements and to incorporate them into the newly restructured department.

Assessment Tools Used

Direct Indicators

1. Oral proficiency measurement (both under graduate and graduate students)
2. Review theses submitted for MA program