

Department of Spanish and Portuguese
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November 22, 1996

MEMO

TO: Dean Phillip Certain, L&S

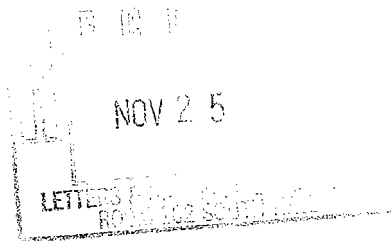
FROM: Juan C. Temprano  Chair, Spanish & Portuguese

RE: Assessment Plan

Please find attached a copy of the Assessment Plan for the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. The Plan was approved unanimously by the Departmental Committee at its meeting on Wednesday, November 20. We believe that it is a viable plan, providing the greatest amount of accurate feedback possible, from both internal and external sources, and we look forward to your comments and suggestions on it.

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enc: Assessment Plan
cc: Associate Dean Yvonne Ozzello



DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE
College of Letters and Science
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE
UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

0. Preamble

In the fall of 1994, the College of Letters and Science informed all Departments and Programs of the requirement to develop an assessment plan for each undergraduate major and in graduate education by December 31, 1996. During the 1995-96 academic year, six departments on campus participated in a pilot program to develop assessments; these pilots, along with guidance from the College, have served as a basis for the design of the present plan in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.

As a department, we understand that formal assessment of programs is a relatively new activity and as such is to a certain extent experimental. We do not necessarily expect that all aspects of this plan will meet with immediate success, but rather that we will be given sufficient leeway to adjust and review the plan in future years. We are also aware that the assessment process will require co-operation from all faculty members and support from the College. Our principal aim has therefore been to combine an efficient and accurate global assessment process, validated by external sources, with the limited resources available to us in terms of staffing and other constraints. We expect in return that the process will provide the Department with a reliable tool for analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of our programs.

1. Educational Goals and Objectives

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese plays a crucial role in preparing students for an increasingly diverse and interdependent world. In our Strategic Plan, we articulated the Department's mission, affirming that our educational purpose, therefore, is to strengthen our students' potential for communication with and understanding of other cultures, languages, and literatures, preparing them for success in the global workplace of the humanities, sciences, business, or in whatever field of endeavor they choose. To fulfill its mission, the Department must excel in several areas.

- i. Exercise leadership in teaching, research and service at the campus, state and national levels to promote awareness of the rapid social change in our multicultural world.
- ii. Offer a balanced and integrated program of study in literature, linguistics, culture and civilization, and language training to emphasize high quality, creative research and instruction at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.
- iii. Continue to pursue new knowledge through research and investigation within our fields of study.

1.A Undergraduate Major

The objectives and goals of the undergraduate major include the basic skills of advanced proficiency in oral communication and written expression, basic understanding of aspects of Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian cultures, general familiarity with aspects of Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian letters, and basic understanding of aspects of Ibero-Romance linguistics. In light of our mission, the areas most relevant to assessment must measure our ability to:

- i. offer quality and breadth of instruction within the undergraduate major program to bring our students to an advanced level of proficiency in both Spanish / Portuguese oral communication and written expression
- ii. provide an integrated yet diverse curriculum in areas of Spanish / Portuguese language, linguistics, culture, and literature to meet the needs and interests of undergraduate majors.

Our assessment of the undergraduate program must take into account the goals of the students who pursue it. These fall into three general categories: as a specialization in the area of secondary education, as a second major to combine with other fields such as business, science, and social work, or as a Liberal Arts major leading to graduate school or other professional and career opportunities. We recognize that meeting the needs of such a varied public is not easy and we may not be equally successful on all fronts. For assessment we must first identify the students' general, overall needs and expectations before measuring how we meet them.

1.B Graduate Programs

At the graduate level our goals and objectives include a detailed knowledge of an area of specialization and related supporting fields. The graduate program provides a balanced distribution in several areas of study:

In Spanish literature: (1) Medieval, (2) Golden Age, (3) Modern peninsular, (4) Spanish American, Colonial to 1900, (5) Spanish American, Twentieth Century.

In Spanish Philology/Linguistics: (1) Description and Development of Peninsular Spanish, (2) Description and Development of American Spanish, (3) Hispanic Dialectology (Peninsular and New World).

In Portuguese literature: (1) Medieval and 16th century, (2) Portuguese 17th-19th centuries, (3) Portuguese 20th century, (4) Brazilian to 1890, (5) Brazilian since 1890.

Given the educational goals stated above, our assessment of the graduate program must measure our success in the following areas:

- i. quality and breadth of instruction to convey specific, existing knowledge in the field
- ii. quality and breadth of seminar instruction to train students in research methods and approaches to humanistic investigation as well as develop their ability to read critically, analyze information, communicate ideas clearly, and formulate independent research based on bibliographic data, knowledge and critical thinking

iii. provide an integrated yet diverse curriculum in areas of Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian linguistics and literatures to meet graduate research and career interests.

The assessment of our program must take into account the varied goals of the students who pursue a graduate degree at both the M.A. and Ph.D. level. These may be M.A. students who wish to teach in secondary education, community college or prep-school levels, or who wish to pursue Ph.D. studies elsewhere, or who wish to continue graduate or professional studies in different fields. Ph.D. students may wish to follow specialities in either literature or linguistics, may wish to teach at the university level, pursue advanced research, or enter into another professional career. We recognize, again, the difficulty in meeting all the diverse interests of our program's graduate public and our success may vary in some areas. Our assessment of the graduate program must identify the varying needs and expectations of the students and measure our success in meeting them.

2. Instruments and Methods for Assessment

Given the diverse areas covered by the Spanish and Portuguese programs, we consider it appropriate to use diverse methods to arrive at a satisfactory assessment. These include language proficiency testing by means of a nationally-recognized testing procedure, the evaluation of portfolios assembled by undergraduate majors, and external and internal evaluation of our graduate programs.

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese already has in place a series of assessment activities, including course evaluation by students, visits by senior faculty members to classes given by junior faculty, visits to courses taught by teaching assistants, faculty coordination of lower- and intermediate-level language courses, T.A. evaluation of coordination, and so on. In addition, undergraduate and graduate programs undergo periodic revision and adjustment in line with recommendations from the Undergraduate and Graduate Studies Committees. We have therefore sought in the present exercise to focus on activities which will specifically evaluate the global success of our programs, in order to complement the feedback we already have on individual instruction. It should be clear that it is not the intention of this exercise to assess individual students or faculty members, nor to discourage experimentation in pedagogical approaches to coursework. Given the large number of undergraduate majors in our program, and the considerable size of the graduate population of the Department, we believe that it is reasonable to undertake assessment on a three-year basis, with staggered assessment of the undergraduate and graduate programs, as detailed below in section 3. In this way, there will always be three recent complete assessment reports available to provide input into the decennial departmental evaluations carried out by the College. More frequent assessment would not, we believe, provide more useful or balanced insight into the situation of our programs.

2.A Undergraduate Major

2.A1. National Testing and Standards

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese, in line with recent developments in proficiency testing in second language pedagogy, will administer oral proficiency interviews to graduating majors during their senior year in order to evaluate their oral expertise in Spanish / Portuguese. The most efficient system for doing this is VOCI (Video-Oral Communication Instrument), which eliminates the need for one-to-one proficiency interviews by establishing an interactive situation in which the

linguistic environment is provided by video recordings, and the student's responses are recorded on audio tape. VOCI may thus be administered to groups of students in a laboratory setting, keeping to a minimum the amount of time needed in the testing stage. Since VOCI materials are not currently available for Portuguese, graduating Portuguese majors will be interviewed in a regular oral proficiency interview situation.

Rating of the recorded speech samples will be undertaken by graduate Teaching Assistants and/or Lecturers trained by specialist faculty members. Several members of this Department, in both Spanish and Portuguese, are currently familiar with OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) testing procedures recommended by ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages); they will train lecturers / T.A.s (approximately two four-hour sessions are needed) to rate the VOCI samples. The Department will request funds from the College to remunerate lecturers / T.A.s for this work. Faculty members who perform this supervision will serve in rotation on the Department's Assessment Committee in order to carry out this task; all other faculty members will also serve in rotation on the Assessment Committee and will be involved in the evaluation of portfolios (see 2.A2, below).

The Department will acquire, with the financial support of LAISP, the necessary VOCI materials, including training tapes and site licenses, from the National Language Resource Center at San Diego State University. Identical material for Portuguese will be acquired if and when it becomes available. LAISP majors who need proficiency testing can also be included in the VOCI groups; most are joint majors with Spanish or Portuguese, and so will already be part of the Department's test groups.

2.A2. Portfolio Evaluations

The Department will maintain portfolios (identified only by students' UW ID numbers) consisting of written work produced by majors in Spanish and Portuguese. All majors, at the time of declaring, will be informed of the requirement both to take the VOCI and to compose a portfolio, which must be handed in to the Department office before they graduate. The portfolio will contain a minimum of four items relating to courses above the level of 226 (Portuguese 225). There will be, obligatorily, one item each from a language course, a literature course, and for Spanish majors, a civilization course; the fourth (in the case of Portuguese majors, the third and fourth) will be chosen by the student from any course at the appropriate level. Those undergraduates who declare a Spanish / Portuguese major late in their Senior year will be required to produce items from previous courses taken in the Department (or courses at other institutions, accepted by the Department as transfer credits; this includes those earned in study-abroad programs) if they cannot make up the minimum from courses in which they are currently enrolled. The items contained in the portfolio may be papers written as course assignments; midterm or final examinations; a written report, in Spanish or Portuguese, of (an) oral presentation(s) given in a course; or a report on a course taken, written by the student in Spanish or Portuguese (minimum 300 words). Any combination of these items is permissible; students will be encouraged to seek the advice and guidance of an undergraduate adviser in putting together their portfolios. Each item in the portfolio will be identified by an ID number and a course number; names of students and faculty members will not be used. Items must also be identified as original drafts or final drafts (i.e., of work corrected by an instructor and resubmitted in the course).

2.B Graduate Programs

To assess the department's graduate program vis-à-vis its mission, as described above, the following instruments will be employed.

2.B1. Indicators of the Department's success in graduate education can be established through external review and ranking of the Department by its peers. According to the recent survey conducted by the National Research Council of faculty peers nationwide, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UW-Madison ranked seventh in the country in scholarly quality and fourth in effectiveness in teaching Ph.D. candidates.

2.B2. Other measures of success, available from departmental records, include the number of applicants for entrance into our programs, the percentage of those admitted, and available GRE scores of incoming graduate students, which all provide us with a measure of the quality of beginning MA and Ph.D. candidates. From our records, and from those kept by the Graduate School, we are also able to establish the percentage of students to complete the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, the average number of years for completion, as well as the percentage of M.A. students that continue on for the Ph.D. in either our program or elsewhere.

2.B3. We will also evaluate the placement of graduates in employment both within and outside of the academy. This information will be evaluated from our records not only to determine the percentage of graduates placed in employment positions, but also to evaluate the level and type of institutions into which our graduates are hired.

2.B4. As an important measure of the success and research productivity of our M.A. and Ph.D. graduates, the Department will conduct a survey of graduates two years after completion of their respective degrees. The survey will provide information regarding placement success, rank hired in the field, professional activity (i.e., book and article publication, papers delivered at professional meetings, and leadership positions held in professional organizations), and the measure to which the graduates feel their training has prepared them for excellence in the field. Although the information may not reflect a direct measure of quality, it will indicate a great deal about the Department's position in the field and its impact on the profession through its graduates. A sample copy of the survey instrument is attached.

2.C Other Measures

The Department considers the mechanisms outlined above to be experimental, and intends to implement them in the first cycle of assessment. One consequence of that first assessment will be a discussion of these mechanisms, to include the possibility of adjusting any aspect of them or of incorporating others, or of substituting current mechanisms by new ones.

3. The Feedback Mechanism

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese will establish a Committee of Program Assessment. All faculty members will serve, in rotation, on this committee, and there will always be at least one committee member capable of supervising the language proficiency testing. Members not involved in proficiency testing will evaluate a selection of portfolios in terms of how their content demonstrates to what extent undergraduate majors are attaining the goals of the program.

Evaluation in the Department will occur in a three-year cycle. Every three years, all undergraduates who declare a major in Spanish and Portuguese will be informed of the requirement to take the VOCI proficiency test, and to compose a portfolio; along with their declaration, they will sign a form confirming that they have received this information. This process will begin in the Fall Semester of year 1. In the Spring Semester of the following academic year (year 2) the VOCI tests will be administered. The CPA will earmark a statistically valid selection of VOCI recordings and of portfolios and evaluate them; the committee's report will be submitted to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, who will add his/her recommendations, and submit them to the Departmental Committee.

Each year, the graduate student survey will be sent out to those who completed the M.A. and Ph.D. programs two years previously; in year 3 of every triennium, the CPA will be charged with reviewing the data from national rankings, internal and external reviews, GRE scores, GPA and information on graduate admittance as well as results of the graduate survey. The committee will report in writing the program's success in attracting and retaining students, the level of students entering the program, and its success in preparing graduate students for the job market, professional careers, and independent research. The committee will submit a report of the graduate program assessment to the Director of Graduate Studies, who will add his/her recommendations, and submit them to the Departmental Committee.

The CPA's reports, and the Directors' recommendations, should address the following issues:

- a) Ways in which the Spanish and Portuguese programs are successful in leading students toward the educational goals set out by the Department.
- b) Ways in which changes in curriculum, requirements, and so forth, might improve the attainment of those educational goals.
- c) Changes in the measures or methods of assessment if the CPA believes that current practices do not accurately reflect the quality of the programs.

4. Timetable for Implementation

If this plan is approved by the Dean and the L&S Academic Planning Council in the proposed timeframe (second semester of 1996-97), the Department envisages the first assessment cycle as taking place in the triennium 1997/8-1999/2000. In the Fall Semester of 1997-98, the process of establishing portfolios will begin for those undergraduates who declare a Spanish or Portuguese major or joint major. The first portfolio evaluations will take place, and the first VOCI tests will be administered, in the Spring Semester of 1998-99, though rater training could begin in the preceding Fall Semester. Before the end of the 1998-99 academic year, the CPA will present its first report on the assessment of the undergraduate major program. Beginning in 1997-98, the graduate surveys will be sent out to all those who completed a postgraduate degree two years earlier. The first assessment report on the graduate program will be due before the end of the 1999-2000 academic year.

SURVEY FOR GRADUATE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Dear Department of Spanish and Portuguese Alumnus/a:

As part of a plan designed to improve our graduate program, we are asking you who have completed a UW-Madison Spanish or Portuguese graduate degree in the last two years to answer this brief questionnaire and return it to us, if at all possible by (DATE)_____ (later responses will also be helpful if you cannot complete the survey by the date indicated). Your answers will help us improve our graduate program, so please take the time necessary to respond to this questionnaire. As you respond to the questions, we would request that you refrain from mentioning specific professors or students by name. Please limit your comments to refer to the program in general and/or specific courses by title or number. Enclosed is a stamped return envelope for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Department Chair

1. How many years ago did you graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate program? _____

2. What is your current occupation (check as many as apply)?

Employed full-time (where and in what capacity?) _____

Employed part-time (where and in what capacity?) _____

Unemployed

Graduate school (where and what field?) _____

Other professional school (what field?) _____

3. How did you find out about the graduate program at Madison?

Bulletin/Catalogue _____

Friend _____

Advisor or Professor _____

Other _____

4. How many semesters did you attend the UW-Madison program? _____

What degree(s) did you complete? _____

In what specialization? _____

5. On a scale of 1-5, where 1=low and 5=high, rate your overall experience taking graduate courses

regarding the following:

Reading load _____

Writing load _____

Your interest level in courses offered _____

Professors' interest and enthusiasm in 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 _____

conduct individual research in your field _____

be prepared to teach in your field _____

be able to teach in breadth of related fields _____

7. Does one graduate 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 to 5, where 1=very unsatisfactory and 5=excellent, rate the advising and professional direction you experienced within your program.

During course work _____

In connection with dissertation work _____

Relating to employment interview and placement process _____

COMMENTS:

9. Looking back over your experience as a graduate student in our program, what aspect(s) do you value the most?

10. What would you like to see changed about the way we teach and/or administer the program?

11. Please comment on the value of the graduate education you received in our program with relation to:

---your perception and understanding of the field of study

---your perception and understanding of academic profession

---your perception and understanding of teaching at the college level

12. How would you rate, on a scale of 1-5, where 1=very unsatisfactory and 5=excellent, the amount of financial support provided by the department during your years of study?_____

COMMENTS:

13. How would you rate, on a scale of 1-5, where 1=very unsatisfactory and 5=excellent, the amount of mentoring provided through the department during your years of study?_____

COMMENTS:

14. If you received only a M.A. degree from our program and have since enrolled in another graduate or professional program, please rate how our program has prepared you for your subsequent studies, using a scale 1-5, where 1=very unsatisfactory and 5=excellent._____

Please indicate the major reason for not continuing in the program at Madison.

15. Please list your book and monograph publications.

Titles published while enrolled in Madison program:

Titles published since receiving degree:

16. Please list your article publications.

Titles published while enrolled in Madison program:

Titles published since receiving degree:

17. Please list professional papers you have delivered.

Papers read while enrolled in Madison program:

Papers read since receiving degree:

18. Please list any professional titles or leadership positions you hold in professional organizations.

19. Overall, please indicate the measure to which your training at Madison prepared you for excellence in the field of teaching and research.

FURTHER COMMENTS:

(OPTIONAL, FOR FUTURE MAILING) MY RETURN ADDRESS IS:

MY E-MAIL ADDRESS IS:

PLEASE RETURN BY _____ TO:

**Department of Spanish and Portuguese
1018 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin 53706**

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