LA Capacity Assessment Languages Department AY 2022-2023

The Languages Department held a meeting on May 12th, 2023, to discuss assessment of the Language Capacity learning goal #4: Demonstrate the ability to apply their language skills to encounter cultures.

Attendance at the meeting:
Cathy Jellenik
Severine Cottrant-Estell
Cori French
Wenjia Liu
José Vilahomat
Irmina Fabricio
Stan Rauh
Rebecca Resinski
Ruth Yuste-Alonso

The meeting entailed a discussion of our assessment data and plans to improve student learning.

Summary of Direct Assessment Data: assessed via tests, quizzes, homework assignments, and/or presentations in all languages.

According to our direct assessment data, our department was effective in fostering student ability to "apply their language skills to encounter cultures":

37% of students demonstrated a **sophisticated** ability
48% of students demonstrated an **average** ability
10% of students demonstrated a **below-average** ability
5 % of students demonstrated **little to no** ability

See attached spreadsheet for breakdown by language.

Proposed Changes to Improve Student Learning
Faculty were largely pleased with student learning this year.
We did make the following observations and plans to improve:

Chinese: Faculty noted that the relative skill level that students achieve in Chinese, due to its difficulty, provides challenges to assessing this particular goal. One tool included an assignment requiring students to compose emails or phone calls in a culturally appropriate way. Another included a word-study on new vocabulary that encourages exploring how words and culture interact. Other languages expressed a desire to utilize this model. Faculty felt these tools were appropriate and were eager to see how this develops.

Classics:
   Greek: Greek 120 was not offered this year.
   Latin: For ancient languages, encountering culture essentially corresponds to understanding the language, its context, and different genres. With this in mind, Dr. Resinski has begun using a new textbook with exercises composed entirely of authentic Latin sentences. She supplements this with a variety of passages collected over time including epitaphs, fables, incantations, and even bestiaries. These tools have helped effectively address the learning goal. Possible areas for improvement include:
   - developing more supplemental handouts from primary sources, given their success

      - provide a more explicit overview of Roman history in general for context and big picture
      - use vocab more consistently as an entry point for discussing culture

French: French faculty used tools including reading comprehension assignments on articles from a range of French-speaking countries and a final-exam question asking students to consider possible trip destinations including reasons for their selections. Another tool was an assignment where students choose a French-speaking region to make comparisons to their own in regard to culture, politics, food, etc. They noticed that too many students fell under the "below average" achievement rubric, as some did not demonstrate much by way of critical thinking. A concern with these tools was their subjective nature. Perhaps more importantly, the assignments did not result in quite enough diversity in terms of the regions students selected. Faculty intends to refine the tools to promote the desired diversity.

Spanish: Spanish faculty made a concerted effort to expose students to a wide variety of geographical regions in their introductory sequence. They introduced a new assessment tool to gauge student progress here, offering a 10 question T/F test that did not count towards the final grade of students. Faculty felt the responses were in line with expectations and that no adjustments are appropriate after only one iteration of this tool.

Analysis and Summary of Indirect Assessment Data: Spanish, French, and Chinese had planned to use the student feedback forms for Indirect Assessment data. This was suggested by the assessment committee's report from April 2022. Once again, this was not possible. Despite confirming the language of the question for the feedback form with Nora Simmons, the wrong question appeared on the form – it was for a different learning goal entirely. Given that this has happened two years in a row, we are going to change our indirect assessment tool. The method used for Latin will be discussed and possibly adopted and adapted by other languages in the department. This is one way that we hope to address the committee's request to find commonalities across languages.

Latin:
 As an indirect assessment tool, Dr. Resinski asked students to write a reflective paragraph on the following question: *How do you feel about your work this year in using Latin for cultural encounters on the page and across time?* Out of 16 students, 3 responded that this was a challenging endeavor while no one felt they were unsuccessful. Other results include:
 - 12 students specifically mentioned gaining a better view of Roman society
 - 5 students specifically discussed how their cultural encounters through Latin gave them a new perspective on present-day society and/or language
 - 11 students specifically noted that using their Latin to encounter a culture was meaningful to them educationally and/or personally

Other Reflections on Assessment
Several faculty members have questions about indirect assessment, as it seems unproductive to ask students to gauge their own progress in many learning goals given that they lack the perspective necessary for such measurements. Students often just repeat back their grades or their perception of where their grade stands. Hopefully the reflective approach will produce better results, but these are not quantitative and provide a different sort of evidence.