

### **Chinese Program Assessment, 2017-2018**

The start of my (Wenjia Liu) full time employment in the Languages Department six years ago officially started the Chinese Program. Other than establishing the minor and developing the curriculum, one of the major tasks is to develop various co-curricular activities.

These activities started with the go-to cultural activities common in many colleges with a Chinese program. The very first ones are the most important festivals in Chinese cultures, Mid-Autumn Festival and Lunar New Year. Since Asian Cultures Club celebrate these two festivals with big events, I then decided to have Chinese students contribute in another way—performing as a group (either singing a song or reading a poem in Chinese). On the one hand, it reinforces the idea of celebration; on the other hand, it increases the visibility of the Chinese program. Besides the festivals, I also regularly organize events on Chinese calligraphy, painting, games, movies, etc. to increase the interests in Chinese cultures among Chinese students, as well as students on campus in general.

The second category of co-curricular activities is directly related to students' Chinese proficiency, trying to creating as many opportunities to use the language as possible. The most successful event we do every year is the Chinese Immersion Weekend, usually in corporation with UCA. Based on students' survey, we modify our program every year. It turned from a more casual talk based event to a game-oriented event because of the large amount of participating students and their different proficient levels. Students, especially those who just started Chinese, expressed their anxiety to speak only Chinese and needed more guidance and formalized activities so that they could practice the language with goals. So now we always have various games and activities other than the casual talks during meals. Another change we have made based on the surveys and our observation is to turn Saturday night event into a cultural immersion during which English is allowed. Students were too tired after a whole day of focusing on trying to speak only Chinese and needed a mental break. At this point, a cultural activity which allows them to speak English fulfills their interests in the Chinese cultures, but gives them a break from the intensive demands of the immersion requirement.

Moreover, I have also tried various other kinds of activities to increase students' exposure to the language. These include language exchange partners with the Chinese international students on campus, WeChat (a chatting app) language exchange partners with Dianchi College students, Chinese Hour, Chinese Lunch, etc. These activities did give students more opportunities to use the language, but we have also encountered many different obstacles. For activities like the former two, the English level of Chinese students and the Chinese level of my students are so different that it to some extent discouraged my students. Moreover, as I required my students to conduct the conversations, the other side didn't, so it created some stress and anxiety to my students that they had to initiate the chats every time. Because Chinese is such a small program, the problem of the latter two is the consistency issue when I didn't require students to participate. Our students are all very busy—even if I offered extra credits for Chinese Hour, they would only feel free enough to participate in the first two weeks

or it were always the same students who participated. Overall, each of these activities had its own merits, but also its own problems. I am still experimenting different ways to more successfully engage students to actively practicing the language. I am going to conduct Chinese Conversation Hour again next semester based on students' needs, but hopefully in a more student-oriented way so that more students can be involved.

The last kind of co-curricular activities probably can't be strictly categorized here. It is the new summer study-abroad program I plan to lead every other year, starting in the summer of 2016. Funded by the Murphy Foundation, the program features intensive language classes with East China Normal University in Shanghai, China and various excursions and language encounters with me. Students will be put into the immersion environment where they have to and are asked to navigate with their language skills. At the end of the program last year, I talked with all students and did a survey after they came back. The general feedback was that they were very satisfied the education at the ECNU and various excursions and language encounters led by me, but were stressed out by their classes because we jointed ECNU's regular semester classes in may, towards the end of their semester. The common suggestion from the students was to have our future students join the classes from the very beginning, which means summer classes in July. However, this means the excursions and other activities, which give them supplementary and necessary experience in the actual daily usage of the language and rich cultural experiences, will be in the heat of 110 degrees. I am planning to follow students' suggestion in the summer of 2018 and see how the heat impacts the excursions and other language experiences.

The goal of my assessment plan of academic year 2018-2019 is to add a Chinese minors' interview dinner and survey so that we can have more solid data for future changes in the Chinese program. The current changes have been based on some informal conversations with students, but I believe a more formal format of it will make the message clearer to students as well as outside reviewers. Because I don't offer literature classes every year and I will next year, I would like to assess the learning goal, "critically analyze different types of Chinese literary texts (in English) within their own cultural, social and political contexts." I expect all the Chinese minor seniors to be taking this class, so their papers will be a critical part in the assessment, which will allow me to see the direct results. Meanwhile, I will also have an interview dinner and survey with students—this will include all learning goals. I shall develop the rubrics for assessing the papers as well as the survey and interview questions before the spring semester.