INTRODUCTION

In our June 2001 Self Study, the Modern Language Department identified four learning goals, or what we hope for our graduates. These departmental goals also overlap nicely with the college-wide goals described in the six Student Learning Outcomes.

Graduates with a Westmont degree in Modern Languages are expected to be:

1) **Fluent in the Language**: Graduates attain near-native fluency in the foreign language (in all four skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing) and possess the tools necessary to interact gracefully with those of other cultures. Our graduates also write well in the target language, expressing themselves not only with grammatical accuracy, but also with clarity and elegance. *(cf. Standard 4: Written and Oral Communication)*

2) **Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinkers**: Our graduates are trained in how to read, interpret, contextualize, and analyze works of literature, and are knowledgeable in theories of literary analysis. They are familiar with the “great works” of their country of study, as well as the social, historical, and political context in which they were produced. Our graduates are capable of thinking critically, abstractly, and creatively. They also think broadly, making relevant connections between language and literature and other disciplines such as the arts, history, sociology, political science, and religious studies. *(cf. Standard 2: Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking)*

3) **World Christians**: Our graduates know and live the Christian faith, and are prepared to share it graciously with peoples of other languages and cultures. They have the understanding and skills necessary to engage people unlike them in terms that affirm the other as another person created in God’s image. They are sensitive to those from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds, respect alternative viewpoints, and understand and appreciate the diversity of God’s rich creation. *(cf. Standard 3: Diversity; Standard 1: Christian Orientation)*

4) **Life-long Learners**: When our majors graduate, they realize that their education is just beginning. Our graduates possess not only a love of their discipline, but of learning in general, and are motivated to continue seeking opportunities for intellectual, social, and spiritual growth throughout their lives. They are informed citizens, ready and able to contribute to their community, their society, and their world. *(cf. Standard 5: Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement)*

In our January 2004 Program Review Assessment Plan and September 2005 Report, the Modern Language Department identified two goals (1 & 3 above) to work on for the current review cycle (2004-06). In our plan we noted that we currently employ many pedagogical and assessment strategies to ascertain student fulfillment of these goals, such as exams and quizzes; compositions (with multiple rewrites) and portfolios; oral presentations; journals; and peer & self-evaluations. We also observed that although we would continue with these strategies, “our objective now is to make
assessment and documentation a more intentional activity.” We believe we accomplished this in this cycle.

We have made some adjustments to our original proposal. Upon the recommendation of the Program Review Committee (PRC), we attempted to do fewer pieces of assessment work particularly well, and we have therefore focused our energy on one goal and have engaged in more concentrated efforts on two, rather than multiple, strategies. Thus, the bulk of our efforts—and this report—focuses on Goal #1 (Language Fluency) and on two assessment strategies (#1, 2a & b). Nevertheless, because this is considered a Five-Year Report, we have also documented preliminary progress on other assessment work we have begun (departmental writing portfolio and Goal 3).

In this report we summarize our assessment methods, the data collected, and departmental reflection on the results. In this process, we discovered that at least one of our assessment strategies was flawed, and we therefore collectively designed a new (and we believe, better) one. We then collected more data using this method—refining and improving it over two semesters—and received seemingly more accurate results, though continued assessment is still needed. We discovered the importance of defining clear, realistic benchmarks and we have done so for our language courses. Indeed, this discussion alone helped us to see some holes in our language curriculum and we have made some major changes in our program as a result of these dialogues. We also met with individuals from outside the department to help us reflect more broadly on the data and to receive additional insights into both the process and the interpretation of the results. These meetings were extremely helpful for our department. As a result of our work, we have come to understand a great deal about student learning in our program; moreover, these regular opportunities to share what we are doing in our courses and to receive feedback from our colleagues has been useful and illuminating. Finally, we have used the results to modify—and hopefully improve—the Modern Language program, though we will continue assessing these changes. We conclude our report by documenting our next steps and assessment efforts for the next review cycle.

**LEARNING GOAL #1: FLUENCY IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE**

As stated above, during this review cycle, we focused primarily on Goal #1, Language Fluency:

Graduates attain near-native fluency in the foreign language (in all four skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing) and possess the tools necessary to interact gracefully with those of other cultures. Our graduates also write well in the target language, expressing themselves not only with grammatical accuracy, but also with clarity and elegance. *(cf. Standard 4: Written and Oral Communication)*

In order to assess such a broadly defined goal, we again took the advice of the PRC and broke it down into manageable pieces. To begin, we decided to focus on *grammatical knowledge/accuracy in writing (on exams, etc.) in the target language in lower-division grammar classes*, and we have defined benchmarks for each level. (We will begin assessing speaking, reading, and listening comprehension in the next cycle.) We chose to focus in this area because the new General Education Curriculum requires students to take one language class (at the level into which they place) and we thought the GE Committee might benefit from hearing how we are doing with these students. We have already
shared our work and received input from Michelle Hardley, Director of Academic Advising and Disability Services, and we will forward this document to Ray Rosentrater and the GE Committee.

Assessment Strategy 1: Language Placement Test

Our original strategy was to give all language students (in SP 1-4, FR 1-4, GS 1-4) the BYU WebCAPE Placement Exam during the first week of classes (or, for freshmen, use their summer orientation score), and again during finals week. Students take this on-line in the Stamps Lab with one of our lab assistants or the professor. The purpose of the WebCAPE (computer adaptive placement exam) is to provide individualized testing, identifying the student’s ability level with combinations of grammar, reading, and vocabulary questions. A key aspect of the exam is that students do not see the same questions twice; each time they take it the questions are generated according to their responses, thus making it impossible for them to become overly familiar with the instrument. Results are automatically emailed to the student and the Modern Language Administrative Assistant and are kept on file (electronically) in the Departmental Assessment Portfolio. Our hope was that by comparing exam results before and after the course, we would have tangible evidence if students indeed improved in their language abilities, specifically knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.  

The benchmark we set for success was taken from the BYU WebCAPE Exam average increase required to move to the subsequent level:

- 80% of students will have a 60-point improvement in their second placement score upon completion of the class

Data & Interpretation of the Results:
- We began implementation of this strategy in January 2004 and, upon the recommendation of the PRC, decided to sample students’ performance rather than assessing every student in every course. We first compiled results for 16 students who took the exam twice, once prior to their Fall 2003 class, and once following it, in January 2004. (See Placement Test Results, Fall 2003, Appendix A)

- The department met in Spring 2004 to discuss these preliminary results and was pleased to note that on average scores increased 73.4 points. Nevertheless, even a cursory examination of the data made us a bit wary of the instrument. For example, we noted that the numbers were erratic and five students’ scores actually went down. Only 9 of 16 students (56%) met our benchmark of a 60-point increase. Moreover, as the department collectively reflected on these scores we noted that there was little or no apparent correlation as to how students performed in the class—i.e. how we, their professors, assessed learning based upon exams, essays, and participation—and their

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1 Perhaps it is worth noting that we chose this particular Placement Exam after a great deal of research into approximately one hundred colleges and universities across the country. We engaged in communication with the NACFLA (North American Christian Foreign Language Association) list-serve and investigated who was using this exam and their satisfaction with it. We also spoke directly with numerous professors at the Annual NACFLA meeting, and learned that the vast majority of professors speak very highly of this instrument. The first two years we used the exam we engaged in informal assessment—departmental discussions regarding its ease of use and most importantly, its effectiveness. We discovered that the instrument is very effective in placing students into the appropriate level in combination with a brief discussion with each student regarding their prior language experience. We currently use this method—the exam & a brief discussion with each student—to place students into the appropriate language level.
second placement score. For example, some outstanding students’ scores increased minimally or even decreased, while a few struggling students experienced a dramatic increase in their scores.

• While remaining skeptical of the instrument, we decided that the sample pool was too small, not controlled (we didn’t have information for all students as to what class they were enrolled in that semester), and that we would like to try it again with greater intentionality and a bigger data set in our classes. We did so in Fall 2005\(^2\) with a sampling of students in SP 2, 3, 4, 100 & FR 1 & 3 (39 students total). The process was repeated in Spring 2006 with 11 students in SP 3. Results were tabulated in an Excel file (see Placement Test Results, Fall 2005, below, & Spring 2006, Appendix A) and discussed collectively in regular departmental meetings.

Placement Test Results, Fall 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST NAME</th>
<th>1st SCORE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>2nd SCORE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>3rd SCORE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>DIFF</th>
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<td>355</td>
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<td>12/9/05</td>
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<td>315</td>
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<td>439</td>
<td>12/14/05</td>
<td>121</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) Data was not regularly collected the 2004-05 year because we were short two department members (Docter led an off-campus program in Fall 2004, and Collier was on sabbatical in Spring 2005).
Summary of Results (2004-06)

- Fall 2004 (16 students):
  - *Average* increase of 73.4 points
  - 9/16 students (56%) met benchmark with at least a 60-point increase

- Fall 2005 (39 students):
  - *Average* increase of 65 points
  - 23/31 students (74%) met benchmark

- Spring 2006 (11 students):
  - *Average* increase of 65 points
  - 5/11 students (45%) met benchmark

(See Appendix A)

Using the Results and Next Steps:
- The department spent a great deal of time over a two-year period (January 2004-June 2006) examining the data and discussing these results. We also invited an outside consultant—Michelle Hardley, Director of Academic Advising and Disability Services—to two of our May/June 2006 discussions to help us interpret the data and its implications. Essentially, we determined that the instrument itself was flawed and not meeting our needs. We came to this conclusion based upon the following:
  - Once again, there was no correlation between how much an individual student improved or performed (in class and on exams) and their placement test scores. We confirmed this when we compared results using our new assessment strategy (described below) with the Placement Test results (see Inventory of Evidence).
Sometimes the initial scores were not accurate, thereby making a comparison of scores skewed as well. Anecdotal evidence—the oral interview with freshmen upon completion of the exam—indicates that approximately 25-35% of students are “surprised” by their initial score (believing it to be either too high or too low).

With a multiple-choice format, we found that some students “guess” well but do not master the grammar; others who have learned a great deal do not excel at this type of exam.

Perhaps most compelling, when we noticed that a few students elected to take the exam twice on the same day, we compiled their scores and noted dramatic differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE</th>
<th>FIRST</th>
<th>FIRST SCORE</th>
<th>RE-SCORE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>DIFFERENCE</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>SP-003</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>12/9/05</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the scores improved, which might indicate that students were able to relax more with the instrument. Nevertheless, the fact that a student could take the same test minutes later and receive a different score by up to 163 points alarmed us. In fact, of the six students who took the test twice on the same day, there was a 91.5 point average difference in scores.

Ms. Hardley also seriously questioned the validity of the instrument. She noted that because the exam generates questions based upon students’ answers and is different each time they take it, there is no way to assess what, precisely, is being tested, making a comparison of scores invalid. Additionally, this instrument does not let us know in which specific areas we have succeeded or failed at each level. After discussing the data and our findings with Ms. Hardley, we all agreed that our new strategy (the “mini-final”) exemplified a superior method for assessing student growth in language fluency.

Although our initial attempt to assess student learning essentially “failed,” the department and our consultant were pleased with our efforts. The process allowed us to examine the data, determine that something was wrong, and then design a much more effective instrument, described in the following section.

### Assessment Strategy 2a: “Mini-Final” Pilot Project

As a result of our Summer 2005 assessment discussions questioning the validity of the Placement Test method, we decided to experiment with a new strategy (while continuing to assess the former) as a pilot project in one language class (SP 3) in Fall 2005.

The plan was to give a “mini-final” in the first week of class to serve as a baseline. This consisted of a smaller sampling of the same questions given on the final exam in key grammar areas. We would then compare the pre- and post-test scores to determine if students were meeting the learning goals
for that level. We scheduled a meeting at the end of the semester to discuss the results and to
determine if we wanted to use this method (either along with or instead of the Placement Exam) in
other levels in the Spring.

Data:
• For the pilot project, we have data for nine students in three grammar areas covered in SP 3: (1)
present subjunctive forms and uses; (2) subjunctive v. indicative in time conjunctions; and (3) “if”
clauses. Though no benchmarks were set initially, we later determined the following (which was
further modified the following semester):

| 80% of students will conjugate and use the present subjunctive (basic uses and in time
conjunctions) and “if” clauses with at least 75% accuracy by the end of the course. |

• In December 2005, Professor Elias presented a sampling of the raw data to the department, using
four students who represented a range (from A to D) in their final exam grade (see Selected Raw
Scores, below). We also examined and discussed an Excel Table of all 9 students who participated
(see Class Results, below).

• Summary of Pilot Project Results, Fall 2005:

(1) Selected Raw Scores:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lindsey – Final grade: 93</th>
<th>Shane – Final grade: 85</th>
<th>Tiffany – Final grade: 76</th>
<th>Kyle – Final grade: 60</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Week 1</td>
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<td>Week 16</td>
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<td>Present Subjunctive</td>
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<td>19/19</td>
<td>1/7</td>
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<td>5/7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si clauses</td>
<td>0/10</td>
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(2) Class Results:

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<th>PS DIF</th>
<th>SUB/IND #1</th>
<th>SUB/IND #2</th>
<th>SUB/IND DIF</th>
<th>SI #1</th>
<th>SI #2</th>
<th>SI DIF</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
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<td>89%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td>93%</td>
<td>60%</td>
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**Interpretation of the Results & Implications:**

- The data revealed that at the beginning of the course, all students had little or no knowledge of the three grammar points tested, but by the end of the course they had—for the most part—achieved competency in these areas. For example, “Tiffany,” who received a C in the course, had no knowledge of the subjunctive or “if” clauses when the course began, as revealed by her scores of 0/7 on both subjunctive sections, and 0/10 on the “if” clauses. By the end of the semester, she was able to answer correctly 14.5/19 questions on present subjunctive (76% accuracy); 5/7 questions on subjunctive in time conjunctions (71%); and 9.5/10 questions on “if” clauses (95%). (See Mini Final, SP 3 Selected Raw Scores, Fall 2005)

- Department members were excited about both the results and the instrument. We concluded that we wanted to continue using this strategy in other classes in the spring in order to obtain more data. In our discussions, we noted the following:
  - Regarding the instrument itself, one of the strengths is its ability to assess student learning of specific grammar points at each level. The Placement Exam method did not do this for us.
  - An additional benefit of this strategy is that it reveals if students are in fact placed in the correct language level at the beginning of the course. For example, if a student’s scores revealed proficiency in the grammar pre-test, we would have information to move him or her to a higher level. (Students placing themselves in classes below their language ability has been a consistent problem for us in the past, so we were excited about this instrument’s potential.)
• Upon examining the pilot project data and comparing it to the Placement Exam results, we were able to see even more clearly that the latter method (which we continued to assess that semester) was ineffective. For example, the one student (Sage) who failed the final exam actually achieved the highest score on the post-Placement Exam. Her results using the pilot project instrument, however, were more consistent with student learning in the course: the mini-final week 16 scores revealed that she had 0% accuracy on the subjunctive in time conjunctions, and 60% on “if” clauses.

• The following two semesters we continued to administer both the Placement Test and the Mini-Final, and a comparative study of the results confirmed that the Placement Exam was an ineffective instrument and not meeting our needs. We therefore decided to discontinue this strategy.

• One of the things we learned as we discussed the pilot project was the importance of improving the “test” itself. In the pilot project, for example, only three grammar areas were examined. Additionally, the pre- and post-test questions were not the same, and therefore the level of difficulty was different as well. We decided that in future years we needed to use identical questions to validate the data.

• As we examined the data we also realized the importance of defining clear benchmarks or criteria for success at each language level as well as for each grammar point. (The benchmark we initially set for this project was not realistic.) This was also a recommendation from the Program Review Committee. They point out that with this “stepwise progression” clearly defined for students at each level, we will be better able to “link department goals and outcomes with assignments and assessment in particular courses and for particular tasks.” Over the year we worked on benchmarks for French 2 and Spanish 2, 3, & 4.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment Strategy 2b: “Mini-Final” Spring 2006</th>
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In Spring 2006 we decided to use the “mini-final” method again in two more classes, FR 2 and SP 3. We also made an effort to improve the instrument by using identical questions in the pre- and post-test, as advised by our outside consultant. Upon the recommendation of the Program Review committee, clear benchmarks were defined as well in order to allow us to more ably examine the data to see if we are achieving what we hope at each level.

**Benchmarks:**
In defining benchmarks for language learning, we continually asked ourselves the questions: What does a successful language learner look like at each level? What does it mean to say that a student has successfully learned the material at that level and is ready to proceed to the next? After much fruitful discussion, we came up with a system that differentiates between competency, proficiency and mastery. Students would be expected to be “competent” in material presented for the first time at that level, “proficient” in material reviewed and deepened at that level, and to have “mastered” material which students have seen multiple times and which they have had an opportunity to polish.

Competency, proficiency, and mastery are defined as follows for all language levels in Spanish & French:

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ML Report, p. 9
Competency (60%):  
- Students will recognize the grammatical structures (in listening and reading) at least 70% of the time  
- Students will reproduce the grammatical structures (in speaking and writing) with at least 60% accuracy

Proficiency (75%):  
- Students will recognize the grammatical structures (in listening and reading) at least 80% of the time  
- Students will reproduce the grammatical structures (in speaking and writing) with at least 75% accuracy

Mastery (85%):  
- Students will recognize the grammatical structures (in listening and reading) at least 90% of the time  
- Students will reproduce the grammatical structures (in speaking and writing) with at least 85% accuracy

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French 2 Benchmarks

At the end of FR 2, 90% of students will be competent in the following areas (first presented in FR 2):  
- Passé compose verb tense in all three regular conjugations, 24 irregular verbs, transitive and intransitive verbs  
- Future tense in all three regular conjugations and 12 irregular verbs  
- Indirect personal and impersonal pronouns, forms and word order  
- 350 new vocabulary words

At the end of FR 2, 80% of students will be proficient in the following areas (first presented in FR 1):  
- Present tense of three regular conjugations (–er, –ir, –re)  
- Present tense of 24 irregular verbs  
- Imperfect tense of regular and irregular verbs  
- Pronominal verbs, present and imperfect tenses  
- Direct object pronouns, forms and word order  
- Partitive and its pronoun, forms and word order  
- Use of falloir/plaire/manquer/intéresser-type constructions  
- 150 vocabulary words, building on recognition of 350 vocabulary words presented in French 1
Spanish 3 Benchmarks

At the end of SP 3, 90% of students will be competent in the following areas (first presented in SP 3):

- Imperative forms (formal and informal, singular and plural)
- Conjugations of present subjunctive
- Uses of the present subjunctive v. indicative in
  - expressions of influence, emotion and doubt
  - adjectival clauses
  - adverbial clauses of time
  - adverbial clauses of interdependence
- Conjugations and uses of the following new verb forms:
  - present perfect indicative and subjunctive
  - pluperfect indicative
  - future and conditional
  - imperfect subjunctive
- “If” clauses with simple tenses
- Uses of por and para
- 200+ new vocabulary words

At the end of SP 3, 80% of students will be proficient in the following areas (first presented in SP 2)

- Conjugations and uses of ser v. estar (expanded uses)
- Use of gustar-type constructions
- Conjugations and uses of the present indicative (regular & irregular verbs)
- Conjugations of uses of preterite and imperfect
- Direct and indirect object pronoun forms & usage
- 200+ review vocabulary words

Benchmarks for SP 2 & 4 can be found in Appendix B. By next fall, we plan to establish benchmarks for the remaining lower-division language levels (SP 1, FR 1,3,4) as well as reexamine the ones we currently have in place to see if any modifications need to occur (in light of the new data we collect and discuss).

Data:

- In FR 2, fifteen students (the entire class) were tested in five major grammatical areas: (1) future tense conjugations; (2) passé compose; (3) imperfect tense; (4) object pronouns; and (5) relative pronouns.
- In SP 3, sixteen students (the entire class) were tested in six major grammatical areas: (1) present subjunctive; (2) subjunctive in adverbial clauses of time; (3) future tense; (4) past subjunctive v. indicative; (5) perfect tenses: present perfect indicative, present perfect subjunctive, and pluperfect; (6) subjunctive in adverbial clauses of purpose.
- The “pre-test” was given during Week 1 of classes, usually on the first or second day; students were told that if they were familiar with the grammatical point, they could make educated guesses. If, however, they had no idea what was being asked, they could leave the answers blank. The “post-test” was the final exam, given during finals week.
• The same questions were given in the pre- and post-tests. Although the sections on the final exam were longer, we only tabulated results for the same questions students answered on both.

• Results were compiled in an Excel file (see Appendix B and below) and discussed by members of the department as well as one outside consult, Michelle Hardley, Director of Academic Advising and Disability Services.

• Summary of results: SP 3, Spring 2006 (See Appendix B)

• Summary of results: FR 2, Spring 2006 (below):

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<th></th>
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**Interpretation of the Results & Implications:**

• To help us visualize how well we were achieving our benchmarks, we plotted our results in tables indicating student competency, proficiency and mastery in each major grammar area before and after the course (in Week 1 and Week 16). French results are shown below; Spanish results can be found in Appendix B.
• In our May and June 2006 assessment meetings, the department spent several hours discussing and interpreting the results, as well as examining the instrument itself. In general, we were extremely pleased with what we saw. In our discussions, we noted the following:
  • First, we were again pleased that the instrument allows us to measure student learning in specific grammatical areas. Having clearly defined benchmarks for each level has also helped to keep us on track.
  • We were pleased to see that all students in FR 2 & SP 3 (the test groups) were placed in the correct level: by examining the pre-test scores, it was evident that no students entering the course were competent in any of the major grammar areas except the French imperfect tense, which they had already been exposed to in FR 1. The data was absolutely consistent with what we hope for in our in-coming language students.
  • The French results were extremely encouraging. In FR 2, following the course, 100% of the students achieved competency in the future tense, the imperfect, and object pronouns; 93%
(all but 1 student) achieved competency in the passé compose; and 87% (all but 2 students) achieved competency in relative pronouns. In the imperfect, 87% of students achieved proficiency. The results reveal that students enter the course unexposed to the material, but by the end of the semester most students not only achieve competency but proficiency in all grammar areas. The tables also show that many students actually achieved mastery in some areas (see Appendix B).

• In SP 3, while the instrument was improved from the previous semester—the same questions were used in the pre- and post-tests; more grammar areas were tested; and all 16 students participated, giving us a bigger data set—the results were far less encouraging. For example, although every student improved significantly and more than half the class actually achieved proficiency in all but one grammar area, we failed to meet our competency goal in five of the six areas tested (see the tables in Appendix B).

• After reviewing the Spanish results, we discovered that several changes could be made to the instrument itself:
  • First, the information was originally tested in paragraph form, meaning that if students got one part wrong, they’re more likely to get the entire section wrong. We decided that a more simple fill-in-the-blank format would give us more accurate results.
  • Second, for many areas there were only 3 or 4 questions, which skewed the percentages. We decided that we would all have a minimum of 5-6 blanks for each section in future years.
  • Third, this data lead us to a very fruitful discussion regarding grading. Professors Docter and Elias scheduled a separate meeting together to discuss and grade tests collectively in order to be more consistent in the future. We reexamined the original exams and made some modifications, including granting of partial credit: for this type of instrument, we agreed that we would not simply use a “right or wrong” approach, but examine how students were answering to determine more accurately what they knew. For example, a student might fully understand the difference between subjunctive and indicative but make a minor mistake on the conjugation; that student should be partially rewarded for understanding the grammar point tested (subjunctive v. indicative use) instead of receiving no credit when in fact much learning had occurred. We reviewed the test, worked together to make improvements and agreed that we would design the instruments for next fall as a department, not individually, and also discuss how to grade them consistently.

Using the Results:
• One of the most important changes that resulted from our discussions was redesigning the lower-division Spanish curriculum. Until recently, we had used one textbook (Puntos de Partida) for SP 1 & 2 (Introductory Spanish) and another (Pasajes/Avance) for SP 3 & 4 (Intermediate Spanish), considered review courses. The problem was that in SP 2, we were never able to complete the textbook; in fact, we regularly only covered about 2/3 of the material, and then reviewed the same material in SP 3, leaving a large hole in student learning.
• As we sat down and came up with our initial benchmarks for each level, these holes or gaps became more obvious to us. For example, students were rarely exposed to the subjunctive in SP 2 & 3, but were then expected to “review” and “master” it in SP 4, when in reality most were seeing it for the first time.
• As a result of these discussions, we decided to make SP 1, 2, & 3 true “introductory” courses (using one textbook throughout, Puntos de Partida). In other words, we made the decision to cover less material (in each course) more thoroughly. SP 4 became the only “review” course, in which
material from SP 1, 2, & 3 is expanded upon and deepened. In Fall 2006 we will collect data for SP 2, 3, & 4 to see how well we are achieving our goals for each level, and to assess if any further changes are necessary.

- As a result of this initial data on the subjunctive, we also will consider making further curricular changes to SP 3 & 4 in an effort to more equitably distribute the material. For example, we may move the past subjunctive to SP 4 so that students in SP 3 can achieve true competency in uses of the present subjunctive. This will be determined and assessed next year.

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**Assessment Strategy 3: Departmental Writing Portfolio**

Although we focused on the strategies described above, we have begun work in the area of student writing, which will continue in the next cycle. To assess students’ ability to write well in the target language we created a departmental portfolio of students’ written work, which we will add to and discuss regularly. Our original proposal stated the following:

Students will be assigned a brief essay the first week of class (for example, an autobiography), to be turned in on paper and electronically. The professor (as always) will make comments and suggestions for improvement on the hard copy and return it to the student for multiple revisions; the electronic copy will be saved on the departmental file. At the end of the semester, students will be given a similar essay assignment. By comparing the two brief essays, we can assess if students are indeed improving in their ability to express themselves in writing (as well as their critical thinking, once implemented in upper-division literature courses). Moreover, students will be required to reexamine their first essay, compare it with the last, and write a self-assessment of their improvement (which will also be kept on file). Some of these could be excerpted (with permission) to use in our recruiting materials and on the web. Note that we already do much of this in our classes, and in SP 100 (Advanced Spanish/Composition) students keep a portfolio and reflect upon their progress throughout the semester. Nevertheless, our task now is to be more intentional about giving such assignments in all our courses and to save evidence of student growth and development in a departmental portfolio.

As our department met to discuss the plan and the essays themselves, we decided that the strategy itself was too cumbersome and not realistic. Instead, we decided to do the following:

- Collect representative samples of student writing from all language levels, using the essay portion of the final exam (when appropriate) as evidence for lower-division courses, rather than archiving multiple essays each semester from individual students.
- Determine rubrics and benchmarks for each level regarding student writing.
- When appropriate, archive and discuss representative samples of student writing from portfolios (in upper-division Spanish classes) and multiple drafts/revisions of student work when assigned (e.g. in SP 4). These revisions will help us assess growth as students receive regular feedback from their peers and the professor.

**Data & Interpretation:**
- We have collected a great deal of data for all language levels as well as Spanish 100 (see Inventory of Evidence). In May 2006 the department spent portions of two long meetings discussing writing
samples from four different lower-division language classes, focusing on grammatical accuracy for each.

- In our discussions we noted the following:
  - We were pleased when we compared student writing at the beginning and end of the semester, and when we examined multiple drafts of essays by the same student. Students greatly improved in their ability to use the studied grammatical structures correctly and in their ability to express themselves fluidly in the target language. This was especially apparent when we examined the final exams for students in SP 4 and FR 2 (the target groups for the study).
  - For example, we noted that at the beginning of the semester students in SP 4 were unable to use the subjunctive in adverbial conjunctions of time and purpose, but in the final exam essay used these structures correctly multiple times, and in creative, original structures.
  - In summary, by collectively examining student writing (and professors’ assignments), we were very pleased that students are indeed mastering the grammar, using it correctly in original sentences and paragraphs, and writing well-developed essays.

Using the Results & Next Steps:
- As we discussed what made an excellent, good, average or poor paper, Professor Docter shared a rubric for grading the grammar section (see Inventory of Evidence), which the department explored collectively. Docter and Elias also met together separately and decided to use it in all sections of Spanish next year in order to achieve consistency across sections. We will evaluate its effectiveness the following year.
- Our preliminary discussions of student writing have helped us realize the importance of having clearly defined benchmarks for student writing.
- We agreed as a department that all language sections will have an essay section of the final, and that we will collectively determine benchmarks for each language level. We will devote at least one meeting in the next two years to discussing student writing and evaluating our assessment strategy in this area.
- We will partner with members of the English Department in the next review cycle to examine their rubrics, share our strategies, and receive input from sources external to our department.
- We will discuss how and when to implement this strategy (or a modification of it) in our upper-division literature courses.

LEARNING GOAL #3: WORLD CHRISTIANS

Integrating and Assessing the Study Abroad Experience: History

In our January 2004 Plan we proposed to conduct oral exit interviews with all graduating seniors to assess their overall experience in the major. In September 2005 we modified this proposal as recommended by the PRC and elected to conduct interviews with only a sample of graduating seniors. We began this process in Spring 2004 and have data for three years (see Inventory of Evidence). Each fall, a portion of a regular department meeting was devoted to discussing the results and their implications.
As a result of our discussions, an important curricular change to our program was made: we realized from the interviews that we needed to be more intentional about preparing our majors for the study abroad experience. We therefore decided to develop a new course for our majors (described below). We see this a major success story gleaned from program review.

With this new course in mind and as we thought broadly about our third goal, we wanted to integrate and assess the study abroad experience more effectively. This has been a major concern of our department for the last decade. Since the required semester abroad is a key component of our curriculum and a kind of capstone experience for our majors, we wanted to be more intentional about helping our students get the most out of it by preparing them prior to departure, engaging them in guided reflection while away, and helping them successfully re-enter the home campus. In our January 2004 Plan we proposed the following:

To initiate a required 2-unit course for all Modern Language majors, tentatively titled “Christian Education in Cross-Cultural Living,” to be given once per semester. The pre-departure course would be very similar to Professor Docter’s orientation course for Westmont in Mexico (IS 195). To assess growth, students will be given three assignments during this course and again upon their return (ideally during the senior capstone course): (1) Language Placement Test, to assess improvement in linguistic ability; (2) the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI), to assess intercultural sensitivity; (3) an essay reflecting upon some aspect of the upcoming abroad experience (such as challenges they anticipate, for example). Students would then reflect in journals before, during, and after the experience, and assess their own growth and development, especially as they reread this initial essay. All results would be saved and stored in the departmental portfolio. (Note: a 2-unit capstone course/senior seminar would essentially be the second half of this course.)

As we began work on this, many modifications of the original proposal were made. To begin, we decided to focus on the following aspect of the Goal #3: [Students with a degree in Modern Languages] are sensitive to those from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds, respect alternative viewpoints, and understand and appreciate the diversity of God’s rich creation. This would be assessed in the orientation course.

More specifically, after completing the described above, students will:
- understand the profound effect culture has upon human behavior;
- gain a greater understanding of their own culture and of themselves as cultural beings;
- learn to analyze cultural behaviors and differences in an effort to become more culturally sensitive individuals.
- develop and refine skills and tools for living and learning effectively in another culture, skills which will facilitate cross-cultural understanding, communication, and adaptation.
- develop and strengthen themselves in the areas of perceptual acuity, flexibility and openness, emotional resilience, and personal autonomy.

**Assessment Strategies: Cross-Cultural Studies (SP/FR 150)**

After reviewing the original proposal, we proposed two assessment strategies:

- **IDI**: Students will take the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) the first day of class, and again during finals weeks, sixteen weeks later to assess growth in the area of intercultural sensitivity. The former will serve as a baseline. A group profile will be generated for each, to
determine if the information received in SP/FR 150 has helped students move farther along the scale from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism.

**Student Portfolios & Self-Assessments:** At the end of the course, students will turn in a portfolio demonstrating a range of writing (including a mix of critical analysis and personal reflection). Two self-assessment essays will be assigned: one for the first week of class, and one to be turned in the last day, in students’ final portfolios. The former will serve as a baseline, and students will be asked specifically to respond to questions related to the goals stated above. In the latter, students will do the same, but also be asked to reread and reflect upon what they wrote the first week, and assess their own growth, specifically related to the goals mentioned above.

(Note: clear benchmarks still need to be defined.)

**Data & Interpretation: Our Progress Thus Far**

- In May 2004, Professor Docter evaluated the Westmont in Mexico Orientation course (IS 195) to see what elements would work in the Modern Language course and what would need changing. To assess this, she used a department-designed course evaluation and student self-assessments and portfolios (archived in the department portfolio).

- In August 2004 she shared her findings with the department at our annual assessment meetings and a proposal for a new course was drafted in early fall. One major change that resulted from our discussion (and from the evidence gathered) was to make this a four-unit course and a requirement for the French and Spanish majors.

- The new course, re-titled “Cross-Cultural Studies” (FR/SP 150), was approved in Fall 2004 and given for the first time in Spring 2005, as an elective. Thirteen students enrolled. To assess student growth in the area of intercultural sensitivity, students were assigned regular essays, kept a portfolio, and wrote a final self-assessment in which they reread their earlier work and reflected upon their growth.

- The course was offered for a second time in Fall 2005, with an enrollment of thirteen students. While the curriculum remained essentially unchanged from the previous semester, some assessment strategies were refined and new ones added, thanks to an Irvine Diversity Grant.

- Much data has been collected thus far, including the following:
  - Students’ initial and final self-assessments for Spring and Fall 2005 (26 students total)
  - Selected samples from student portfolios (both semesters)
  - IDI pre- and post-class group profiles (Fall 2005)
  - IDI pre- and post-class individual profiles (Fall 2005, 13 students)

- Professor Docter met with a faculty member outside the department, Anthropology Professor Laura Montgomery, to discuss and analyze the IDI results from Spring 2005. Overall, both professors were encouraged by the class’s movement toward ethnorelativism.

- Although much data has been gathered, the entire department still needs to discuss and interpret it, document our findings, and act on it. This will be one of our “next steps” for the next cycle.
NEXT STEPS

Ongoing Activities:

As we think about our next review cycle (2006-11), the Modern Language Department will engage in the following ongoing general activities:

• We will schedule at least one department meeting each semester to discuss student learning/assessment, and a series of longer meetings each summer (in May/June or August).
• We will make an ongoing effort to solicit feedback from sources external to our department.
• Minutes from all such meetings will be carefully recorded and archived to document our growth in these matters and to hold us accountable.
• We will annually update our Departmental Assessment Portfolio and Inventory of Evidence.
• We will consider if we may be able to use any data from college-wide sources such as the Senior Interview, Senior Survey, Alumni Survey, NSEE, and the GE Annual Report as we consider our own goals.
• We will annually conduct oral interviews with a sample of graduating Modern Language seniors and discuss our findings at a department meeting each fall. We will also how to modify the instrument in order to obtain more information specific to our learning goals.
• We will discuss what results other departments, GE, or the entire faculty might benefit from knowing and how these results will get communicated.
• When some of the assessment strategies yield “success stories,” we will be more intentional about using them in departmental recruiting materials, alumni mailings, and on our web page.

Goal-Specific Activities:

To help keep us focused and accountable, we have proposed to accomplish the following during the next review cycle, understanding that the ongoing nature of assessment will undoubtedly necessitate modifications to our plan and/or its timeline for implementation:

Goal #1: Language Fluency

• Mini-Final (2006-07):
  • Over the next academic year (2006-07) we will administer the “mini-final” to all French and Spanish language classes.
  • Docter & Elias will work together in August 2006 to achieve consistency in the Spanish pre- and post-tests and their grading.
  • We will establish benchmarks for remaining language classes (SP 1; FR 1, 3, 4) and evaluate their effectiveness.
  • We will devote at least one lengthy meeting in May 2007 to discussing the assessment strategy, the data, and their implications. We will consider the following questions: Is the instrument still effective? Are the benchmarks realistic? Are we getting the results we hoped for? What do the results mean for our program? What changes can be made? In light of what we learn, we will continue evaluating if the curricular changes made to the Spanish program have been effective.
• We will invite at least one faculty or staff person outside the department to review the material with us and invite his/her recommendations.
• In our May 2007 meetings we will determine how long to continue this strategy or a modification of it.
• If we determine this to be an effective strategy, we will determine how we want to assess listening and reading comprehension using a modification of this instrument.

• **Writing Portfolio (tentatively 2007-09):**
  • We will use the rubric for evaluating grammar on essays (presented by Docter) in all Spanish classes by the 2007-08 academic year and evaluate its effectiveness in terms of student learning (i.e. giving students an opportunity to do multiple rewrites) in our Summer 2008 assessment meetings.
  • By the 2007-08 year we will require an essay portion on the final exam in all French and Spanish language classes.
  • Over the next three years we will continue to collect representative samples of student writing (from the final exam). We will also determine if we want to archive and discuss samples of multiple drafts/revisions of student work as a possible way of assessing student growth.
  • In our summer 2008 meetings we will define benchmarks for student writing in language classes and refine our assessment strategy.
  • We will partner with members of the English Department in the next review cycle to examine their rubrics, share our strategies, and receive input from sources external to our department.

• **Filming Oral Presentations (2009-11):**
  • In order to assess students’ oral performance in the target language we propose the following: we will film (on digital video) students giving a brief oral presentation during the first week of the semester and again at the end. Performance indicators will be established by members of the department. Ideally, both clips will be viewed and discussed by the professor and student. One departmental meeting each year would be devoted to viewing representative samples, discussing the strategy itself, evaluating the results, and determining if curricular or pedagogical changes are necessary.
  • By summer 2009 we will design the pilot project, i.e., the specific kinds of questions to be asked, the tenses and structures to be used, etc. in order to link the strategies to specific learning objectives and thereby assess more accurately student learning.
  • In Fall 2009 we will implement the strategy in one language class.
  • We will discuss the results of the pilot project in Spring 2010, and consider implementing it in additional classes the following academic year(s).

**Goal #3: World Christians**

• **IDI (2006-07)**
  • The department will invite Dr. Laura Montgomery to one of their assessment meetings to discuss results of the IDI exam given in SP/FR 150 (Spring 2006). We will work together to establish realistic benchmarks and document our findings in our annual report.
  • Because we only have results for one class (13 students), we will implement this strategy in SP/FR 150 in Spring 2007 (pending funding) to have a bigger data set and more information with which to work.
• **SP/FR 150 Student Portfolios (2006-07)**
  - Professor Docter will compile representative samples of student writing (mainly from the final self-assessment) for collective departmental discussion and reflective at an assessment meeting in the next academic year.
  - We will determine benchmarks for this assessment strategy.
  - Ideally, we will discuss our findings with a member of the Off-Campus Programs Committee and/or GE.

• **SP/FR 183 Student Portfolios (2006-07)**
  - We will analyze and discuss data collected by Professor Docter in her 20th Century Latin American Poetry Seminar last Fall 2005, as it relates to our departmental goals for diversity.

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**For Further Discussion**

In our January 2004 Plan we mentioned our intention to create a 2-unit capstone course for all graduating Modern Language majors in the following review cycle (see our Assessment Plan for a detailed description of the proposed course). While this continues to remain one of our goals, we will need to revisit the timeline for implementation. We are currently in the midst of a job search for another FTE and in departmental discussions regarding the future direction of the department. In light of this, we will undoubtedly wait before beginning such a large project. Nevertheless, we mention this here so as to not lose sight of this goal for the future.